



FARLEX

IDIOMS & SLANG DICTIONARY



The Most Complete Collection of Idioms
& Slang in the English Language

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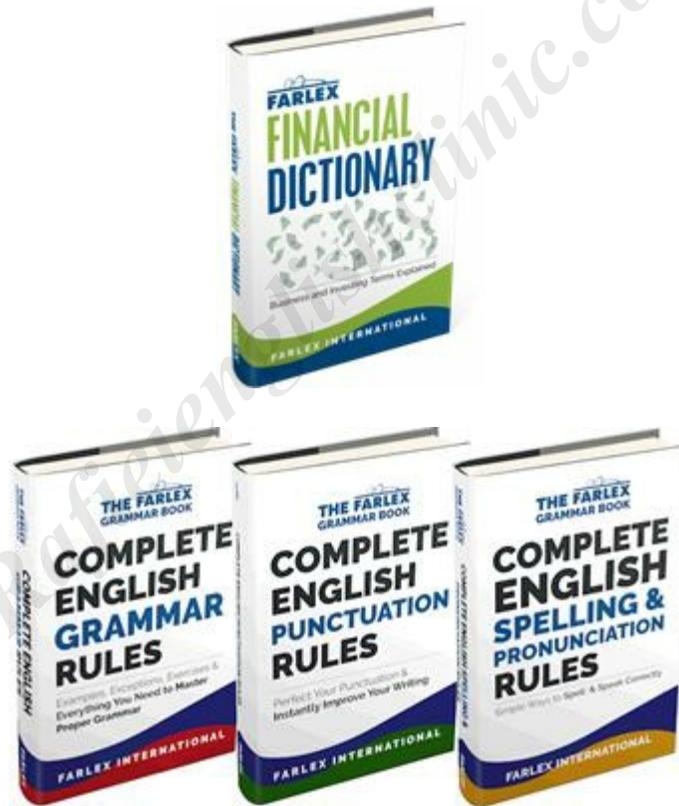
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The Farlex Idioms and Slang Dictionary

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Preface

It could be argued that if you don't know idioms, you don't really know English. That's because the exquisitely robust corpus of the English language is full of idioms, slang, phrasal verbs, and all kinds of expressions whose meanings cannot be understood from their individual words alone, or even gleaned from the sum of their parts. In other words, native speakers typically know what an idiom means simply from having heard it used their whole lives. But challenge those native speakers to explain why an idiom means what it means, and you'll likely hear a long pause—or an attempt to define the idiom with (oops!) another idiom.

Try this experiment: go a whole day without using any idioms, slang, or phrasal verbs (which include ubiquitous phrases like "pick up" and "put down"), and see how long you can last. After about five minutes, you'll realize why this book contains more than 17,000 unique entries. And if you find it easy to avoid using idioms, you probably need this book most of all: idioms may sometimes be confusing, but they color the English language with unparalleled richness, providing us with nearly unlimited opportunities to say things in highly specific and nuanced ways. Without them, we'd be much less able to express ourselves clearly and succinctly.

Of course, idioms should be used with care, precision, and discretion, or else our speech and writing will become littered with clichés and devoid of meaning. Use this dictionary to enrich and hone your vocabulary, to better understand the origins and meanings of the phrases you hear and say every day, and to enjoy the full possibility of English expression.

Get to know idioms, and get to know English even better.

Editor's Note

This book is written according to the standard styles and spellings used in American English. While major differences between American and British English are usually addressed, some information in the book might not coincide with the styles, tendencies, or preferences of other English-speaking communities.

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all on her own
all one
all one
all (one's) eggs in one basket
all (one's) geese are swans
all (one's) life is worth
all (one's) life's worth
all or nothing
all-out
an all-out effort
all out of steam
all-out war
all over
all over creation
all over Hell and half of Georgia
all over hell's half acre
all over (one's) face
all-over oneself
all over (someone)
all over the board
all over the earth
all over the map
all over the place
all over with
all politics is local
all present and accounted for
all quiet on the Potomac
all quiet on the Western Front
all right
all right for you
all right with (one)
all rights reserved
all righty
all right(y) already
all roads lead to Rome
an all-rounder



all set
all set to go
all shapes and sizes
all shook up
all show and no go
all-singing, all-dancing
all sizzle and no steak
all skin and bones
all smiles
all spruced up
all sweetness and light
all systems (are) go
all talk (and no action)
all talk and no cider
all talk and no trousers
all that
all that glistens is not gold
all that glitters is not gold
all the
all the best
all the better
all the difference in the world
all the feels
all the livelong day
all the marbles
all the more reason for
all the more reason to
all (the) one
all the one
all the rage
all the same
all the tea in China
all the thing
all the time
all the time in the world
all the way
all the way down the line



all the way live
all the way to Eger and back
(all) the world over
all the world's a stage
all the worse for wear
all their eggs in one basket
all their geese are swans
all their life's worth
all their lives are worth
all there
all things being equal
all things come to those who wait
all things considered
all things must pass
all things to all men
all things to all people
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all to smash
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all up
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all wool and no shoddy
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anaconda mortgage
ancient history
and a half
and all
and all that
and all that jazz
and be done with it
and change
and counting
and crap
and hang the cost
and his mother
and how
and monkeys might fly out of my butt
and no messing
and one (more) for luck
and shit
and so forth
and so on
and so on
and so on and so forth
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anonymous tip
another country heard from
another county heard from
another day, another dollar
another kettle of fish
another lie nailed to the counter
another matter
another nail in (one's) coffin
another nail in the coffin
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answer for
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any minute now
any moment



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[apple never falls far from the tree](#)
[apple of discord](#)
[the apple of \(one's\) eye](#)
[apple polisher](#)
[\(one's\) applectart](#)
[apples and oranges](#)
[apply for Chiltern Hundreds](#)
[apply oneself](#)
[apply to](#)
[apply within](#)
[appoint \(one\) to](#)
[apportion out among](#)
[appraise at](#)
[apprentice \(one\) to](#)
[apprise \(one\) of](#)
[approach \(one\) about](#)
[appropriate for](#)
[approve of](#)
[April showers bring May flowers](#)
[apron string](#)
[apron-string hold](#)
[apron-string tenure](#)
[apron strings](#)
[apropos of](#)
[arbitrate between](#)



[arbitrate in](#)
[arch cove](#)
[arch dell](#)
[arch doxy](#)
[arch over](#)
[arch rogue](#)
[ardent admirer](#)
[Are you a man or a mouse?](#)
[are you blind](#)
[are you deaf?](#)
[Are you having a laugh?](#)
[are your ears burning?](#)
[area of influence](#)
[argue against](#)
[argue back](#)
[argue for](#)
[argue \(one\) into](#)
[argue \(one's\) way out \(of\)](#)
[argue out](#)
[argue \(someone/something\) down](#)
[argue the point](#)
[argue the toss](#)
[argue with](#)
[arguing for the sake of arguing](#)
[arise from](#)
[ark ruffian](#)
[an arm and a leg](#)
[arm candy](#)
[arm in arm](#)
[arm to the teeth](#)
[arm up](#)
[armchair general](#)
[armed and dangerous](#)
[armed to the teeth](#)
[armpit of the universe](#)
[armpit of the world](#)
[arm's length](#)



an army marches on its stomach
army volunteer
around and around
around Robin Hood's barn
around the bend
around the clock
around the corner
around the horn
arouse (one) from
arrange for
arrange (something) with
arrive at
arrive (somewhere) (up)on the stroke of
arrive (up)on the scene
arse about
arse about face
arse around
arse end of nowhere
arse over tip
arse over tit
arsy-varsy
arsy-versy
art is long and life is short
artful dodger
an article of faith
artificial language
(the/an/one's) artistic style
as a dog returns to his vomit, so a fool repeats his folly
as a duck takes to water
as a (general) rule
as a last resort
as a matter of course
as a matter of fact
as a pig loves marjoram
as a result of (something)
as a side note
as a token of (something)

as a whole
(as) (a)like as (two) peas in a pod
as all get out
as American as apple pie
as an aside
as as they come
(as) awkward as a cow on a crutch
as bad as all that
as bald as a coot
(as) baleful as death
as best (one) can
as big around as a molasses barrel
as big as all outdoors
as big as life
(as) black as a raven
(as) black as a raven's feather
(as) black as a raven's wing
(as) black as a skillet
(as) black as ink
(as) black as Newgate's knocker
(as) black as (one) is painted
(as) black as (one's) hat
(as) black as the ace of spades
(as) black as the devil
(as) black as the minister's coat
(as) black as thunder
(as) blind as a bat
as bold as Beauchamp
as bold as brass
(as) bright as a button
(as) bright as a new pin
(as) broad as a barn door
(as) brown as a berry
(as) busy as a beaver (building a new dam)
(as) busy as a hibernating bear
(as) certain as death and taxes
(as) clean as a hound's tooth

(as) clear as a bell
as clear as black and white
(as) clear as crystal
(as) clear as mud
(as) close as two coats of paint
(as) cocky as the king of spades
(as) cold as a welldigger's ass (in January)
(as) comfortable as an old shoe
(as) common as an old shoe
as common as muck
(as) conceited as a barber's cat
(as) cool as a cucumber
(as) crooked as a barrel of fish hooks
(as) cross as a bear
(as) cross as a bear with a sore head
as cross as two sticks
as drunk as a lord
as easy as 1-2-3
(as) easy as falling off a log
as easy as falling off of a log
as easy as pie
as easy as rolling off a log
as ever trod shoe-leather
as far as
as far as I can see
as far as it goes
as far as (one) knows
as far as possible
as far as (someone/something) is concerned
as far as (something) goes
as far as the eye can see
(as) fast as lightning
(as) flat as a strap
as follows
as for
(as) free as a bird
as fuck

as good as
as good as gone
as good as (one's) word
as green as a gooseberry
as he pleases
as hell
as I expected
as I live and breathe
as I see it
as I was saying
as if
as if (one) owns the place
as if (one's) life depends on it
as if that were not enough
as if the sun shines out (someone's) backside
as if there was/were no tomorrow
as if there's no tomorrow
as is
as it comes
as it happens
as it is
as it so happens
as it stands
as it were
as large as life
as like as peas in a pod
as likely as not
as long as
as luck may have it
as luck would have it
(as) mad as a hornet
(as) mad as a wet hen
(as) mad as hops
as many
as many as
as much
as much as



[as much as a fish needs a bicycle](#)
[as much as a hole in the head](#)
[as much as anything \(else\)](#)
[as much as \(one's\) life is worth](#)
[as neat as a new pin](#)
[\(as\) neat as ninepence](#)
[\(as\) nice as ninepence](#)
[as of](#)
[as often as not](#)
[\(as\) often as not](#)
[\(as\) old as the hills](#)
[as one man](#)
[as \(one\) pleases](#)
[as opposed to](#)
[as per](#)
[as per usual](#)
[as pissed as a fart](#)
[\(as\) quick as a bunny](#)
[\(as\) quick as a flash](#)
[\(as\) quick as lightning](#)
[\(as\) quiet as the grave](#)
[\(as\) rare as hens' teeth](#)
[\(as\) rare as rocking horse crap](#)
[\(as\) rare as rocking horse poo](#)
[\(as\) rare as rocking horse shit](#)
[as regards](#)
[\(as\) right as a trivet](#)
[\(as\) right as ninepence](#)
[\(as\) round as Giotto's O](#)
[\(as\) scarce as hens' teeth](#)
[\(as\) sick as a dog](#)
[as sick as a parrot](#)
[\(as\) sick as a parrot](#)
[\(as\) silent as the dead](#)
[\(as\) silent as the grave](#)
[\(as\) slow as molasses](#)
[\(as\) slow as molasses in January](#)

(as) smooth as a baby's bottom
(as) smooth as silk
as (something) as they come
as soon as
as soon as possible
as straight as a die
as such
(as) sure as a gun
(as) sure as death and taxes
(as) sure as shooting
as the actress said to the bishop
as the actress said to the pope
as the crow flies
as the day is long
as the next girl
as the next guy
as the spirit moves (one)
as the twig is bent, so is the tree inclined
as the wind blows
as they please
(as) thick as a brick
(as) thick as a shit
(as) thick as a short plank
(as) thick as two short planks
(as) thin as a rail
(as) thin as a rake
(as) thin as a stick
as things stand
as though
as to
as usual
as we speak
as well
as well as
as yet
as you know
as you make your bed, so you must lie on it

as you sow, so shall you reap
ascertain from
ascribe to
aside from
ask a silly question and you get a silly answer
ask after
ask around
ask around about
ask back
ask down
ask for
ask for it
ask for the moon
ask for trouble
ask my arse
ask no questions and hear no lies
ask (one) in(to)
ask (one) out
ask (one) over
ask (someone) around
ask (someone) round
ask (something) of
ask up
asking price
asleep at the switch
asleep at the wheel
asphalt jungle
aspire to
ass-backwards
ass end of nowhere
ass in a lion's skin
ass in a sling
(one's) ass is on the line
(one's) ass off
ass over teacup
ass over teakettle
assail with



assault and battery
assault the ear
assent to
assert (one)self
assess at
assign (something) to
assimilate (oneself/someone/something) into
assimilate with
assist in
assist (one) at
assist with
associate with
assume liability for
assume the mantle
assume the position
assure (one) of
astound (one) with
at 6s and 7s
at a boy
at a canter
at a crossroads
at a dead end
at a disadvantage
at a discount
at a gal
at a girl
at a glance
at a good clip
at a loss
at a loss for words
at a low ebb
at a moment's notice
at a pinch
at a premium
at a price
at a push
at a rate of knots

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[at a set time](#)
[at a \(single\) blow](#)
[at a \(single\) stroke](#)
[at a sitting](#)
[at a snail's pace](#)
[at a stand](#)
[at a stretch](#)
[at a time](#)
[at a word](#)
[at about](#)
[at all](#)
[at all costs](#)
[at all hours \(of the day and night\)](#)
[at all times](#)
[at an early date](#)
[at an end](#)
[at an impasse](#)
[at anchor](#)
[at any cost](#)
[at any price](#)
[at any rate](#)
[at arm's length](#)
[at around](#)
[at bat](#)
[at bay](#)
[at beck and call](#)
[at behest](#)
[at best](#)
[at best](#)
[at bottom](#)
[at close quarters](#)
[at close range](#)
[at convenience](#)
[at cross purposes](#)
[at death's door](#)
[at death's doorstep](#)
[at door step](#)

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[at each other's throats](#)
[at earliest convenience](#)
[at ease](#)
[at ease](#)
[at elbow](#)
[at every turn](#)
[at expense](#)
[at face value](#)
[at fault](#)
[at fingertips](#)
[at first](#)
[at first blush](#)
[at first glance](#)
[at first hand](#)
[at first light](#)
[at first sight](#)
[at full blast](#)
[at full speed](#)
[at full strength](#)
[at full stretch](#)
[at full throttle](#)
[at full-tilt boogie](#)
[at grade](#)
[at great length](#)
[at half-mast](#)
[at hand](#)
[at hazard](#)
[at heart](#)
[at heels](#)
[at her beck and call](#)
[at her behest](#)
[at her best](#)
[at her best](#)
[at her convenience](#)
[at her door step](#)
[at her earliest convenience](#)
[at her ease](#)

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[at her elbow](#)
[at her expense](#)
[at her fingertips](#)
[at her knee](#)
[at her leisure](#)
[at her mercy](#)
[at her mother's knee](#)
[at her own game](#)
[at her own peril](#)
[at her own risk](#)
[at her request](#)
[at her wit's end](#)
[at her worst](#)
[at home](#)
[at home with](#)
[at issue](#)
[at it again](#)
[at its best](#)
[at its lowest ebb](#)
[at large](#)
[at latter Lammas](#)
[at least](#)
[at leisure](#)
[at length](#)
[at liberty](#)
[at loggerheads](#)
[at \(long\) last](#)
[at loose ends](#)
[at most](#)
[at my beck and call](#)
[at my behest](#)
[at my best](#)
[at my best](#)
[at my convenience](#)
[at my door step](#)
[at my earliest convenience](#)
[at my ease](#)

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at my elbow
at my expense
at my fingertips
at my heels
at my knee
at my leisure
at my leisure
at my mercy
at my mother's knee
at my own game
at my own peril
at my own risk
at my request
at my wit's end
at my worst
at night
at no time
at odds
at once
at one
at one blow
at one blow
at one fell swoop
at one sitting
at one stroke
at one time
at one time or another
at (one's) beck and call
at one's best
at (one's) best
at (one's) convenience
at (one's) doorstep
at (one's) earliest convenience
at (one's) ease
at (one's) elbow
at (one's) expense
at (one's) fingertips



at (one's) heels
at (one's) knee
at one's leisure
at (one's) leisure
at (one's) mother's knee
at (one's) own game
at (one's) own peril
at (one's) own risk
at (one's) wit's end
at one's worst
at opposite poles
at pains
at pains to
at peace
at peace with
at play
at point-blank range
at present
at random
at regular intervals
at rest
at risk
at sea
at sea level
at sight
at sixes and sevens
at (some time) sharp
at (someone's) behest
at (someone's) mercy
at (someone's) request
at (something's) lowest ebb
at stake
at that
at that rate
at the appointed time
at the back of (one's) mind
at the best of times



at the bottom of the food chain
at the bottom of the heap
at the bottom of the hour
at the bottom of the ladder
at the chalkface
at the coalface
at the crack of dawn
at the cutting edge
at the dot
at the double
at the drop of a hat
at the eleventh hour
at the end of nowhere
at the end of (one's) fingertips
at the end of (one's) rope
at the end of (one's) tether
at the end of (one's) tether
at the end of the day
at the end of the line
at the expense of
at the feet of
at the forefront
at the Greek calends
at the hands of
at the height of
at the helm
at the high port
at the instance of
at the last gasp
at the last minute
at the latest
at the least
at the mercy of
at the moment
at the most
at the outset
at the point of

at the present time
at the ready
at the rear of
at the receiving end
at the right spot at the right time
at the same time
at the summit of (one's) success
at the top of (one's) game
at the top of (one's) lungs
at the top of (one's) voice
at the top of the food chain
at the top of the hour
at the top of the ladder
at the top of (the/one's) agenda
at the very least
at the (very) outside
at the very worst
at the wheel
at the worst
at the zenith of
at this juncture
at this moment
at this moment in time
at this point
at this point in time
at this rate
at this stage (of the game)
at times
at top speed
at variance (with)
at war
at will
at wit's end
at work
at worst
at your beck and call
at your behest



at your best
at your best
at your convenience
at your door step
at your earliest convenience
at your ease
at your elbow
at your expense
at your fingertips
at your heels
at your knee
at your leisure
at your leisure
at your mercy
at your mother's knee
at your own game
at your own peril
at your own risk
at your request
at your service
at your worst
Athanasian wench
atomic cocktail
atone for
attaboy
attach to
attack is the best form of defense
an attack of
attagal
attagirl
attend to
attention whore
attest to
Attic salt
Attic wit
attire (someone/oneself) in
attract to



[attribute to](#)
[attune to](#)
[au courant](#)
[au naturel](#)
[auction off](#)
[audition for](#)
[augur well for](#)
[Aunt Sally](#)
[an auspicious occasion](#)
[autem bawler](#)
[autem cackler](#)
[autem cackletub](#)
[autem dipper](#)
[autem diver](#)
[autem goggler](#)
[autem mort](#)
[autem prickear](#)
[\(one's\) autumn years](#)
[avail \(oneself\) of](#)
[avant la lettre](#)
[ave her no quarter](#)
[avenge \(oneself\)](#)
[avenue of escape](#)
[average bear](#)
[average Jane](#)
[average Joe](#)
[average out \(to\)](#)
[average up](#)
[avert \(something\) \(away\) from](#)
[avoid \(someone or something\) like the plague](#)
[avowed intent](#)
[awake to](#)
[awake\(n\) from](#)
[award to](#)
[away from it all](#)
[away from \(one's\) desk](#)
[away game](#)

away with the fairies
awe inspiring
awesome sauce
awkward as a cow on a crutch
an awkward customer
AWOL
aye aye
aye aye, sir

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B

[babbling idiot](#)

[babe in arms](#)

[babe in the woods](#)

[babe magnet](#)

[baby blues](#)

[baby boomer](#)

[baby bump](#)

[baby killer](#)

[baby up](#)

[babysit for](#)

[babysitter test](#)

[bachelor party](#)

[bachelorette party](#)

[back-alley](#)

[back and edge](#)

[back and fill](#)

[back and forth](#)

[back-assward](#)

[back at you](#)

[back atcha](#)

[back away](#)

[back-breaking](#)

[back burner](#)

[back-cloth star](#)

[back-door](#)

[back down](#)

[back East](#)

[back forty](#)

[back-handed compliment](#)

[back in the day](#)

[back in the game](#)

[back in the saddle](#)

[back into a corner](#)

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[back in\(to\) circulation](#)
[back in\(to\) \(the\) harness](#)
[\(one's\) back is up](#)
[back number](#)
[back of \(one's\) hand](#)
[back of \(the\) beyond](#)
[back of the black stump](#)
[back-of-the-envelope calculation](#)
[back off](#)
[back office](#)
[back on \(one's\) feet](#)
[back on track](#)
[back order](#)
[back out \(of something\)](#)
[back the wrong horse](#)
[back-to-back](#)
[back-to-back-to-back](#)
[back to basics](#)
[back to earth](#)
[back to square one](#)
[back to the drawing board](#)
[back to the salt mines](#)
[back up](#)
[back us into a corner](#)
[back water](#)
[backassward](#)
[backbreaking](#)
[backcloth star](#)
[backdoor](#)
[backdoor man](#)
[backed and filled](#)
[backed away](#)
[backed down](#)
[backfire on](#)
[backhanded compliment](#)
[backing off](#)
[backoffice](#)

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[backpedal](#)
[backroom boy](#)
[backseat driver](#)
[backseat driver](#)
[backslider](#)
[backstabber](#)
[backstairs influence](#)
[backward\(s\) about coming forward](#)
[backward\(s\) and forward\(s\)](#)
[backwater](#)
[bacon-faced](#)
[bacon-fed](#)
[bad actor](#)
[a bad apple](#)
[bad as all that](#)
[bad-ball hitter](#)
[bad blood](#)
[bad boy](#)
[bad break](#)
[bad bunch](#)
[a bad carpenter blames his tools](#)
[a bad carpenter blames his tools](#)
[bad check](#)
[bad company](#)
[a bad egg](#)
[a bad excuse is better than none](#)
[bad form](#)
[bad hair day](#)
[bad iron](#)
[bad joke](#)
[bad lot](#)
[bad luck](#)
[bad money drives out good](#)
[bad name](#)
[bad news travels fast](#)
[bad off](#)
[bad omen](#)



[a bad penny](#)
[a bad penny always turns up](#)
[bad sort](#)
[bad taste in \(one's\) mouth](#)
[a bad time](#)
[bad time](#)
[bad times](#)
[bad to the bone](#)
[bad trip](#)
[bad trot](#)
[bad word](#)
[bad workers always blame their tools](#)
[a bad workman always blames his tools](#)
[a bad workman blames his tools](#)
[badassery](#)
[badge bunny](#)
[badger game](#)
[badger into](#)
[badger to death](#)
[badly off](#)
[badly off for \(something\)](#)
[bae](#)
[bag and baggage](#)
[bag it](#)
[a bag lady](#)
[bag of bones](#)
[\(one's\) bag of tricks](#)
[bag of wind](#)
[bag on](#)
[bag that!](#)
[bail \(one\) out of jail](#)
[bail out](#)
[bail up](#)
[bait and switch](#)
[bake up](#)
[bake up a storm](#)
[a baker's dozen](#)



[baker's half dozen](#)
[balance out](#)
[balance \(something\) against \(something else\)](#)
[balance \(something\) with \(something else\)](#)
[balance the accounts](#)
[balance the books](#)
[balance wheel](#)
[a balancing act](#)
[bald as a coot](#)
[bald-faced liar](#)
[bald-faced lie](#)
[bale up](#)
[baleful as death](#)
[balk at](#)
[balk at the idea \(of something\)](#)
[ball and chain](#)
[a ball-breaker](#)
[ball her eyes out](#)
[ball hog](#)
[ball of fire](#)
[ball \(someone\) out](#)
[ball the jack](#)
[ball up](#)
[balled-up](#)
[baller](#)
[ballpark estimate](#)
[ballpark figure](#)
[balls of \(the/one's\) feet](#)
[balls-out](#)
[balls to the wall](#)
[balls up](#)
[balum rancum](#)
[bamboo ceiling](#)
[bamboozle](#)
[ban from](#)
[banana oil](#)
[banana republic](#)



[a banana skin](#)
[Banbury story](#)
[Banbury story of a cock and a bull](#)
[Banbury tale](#)
[Band-Aid](#)
[Band-Aid solution](#)
[Band-Aid treatment](#)
[band together](#)
[bandage up](#)
[bandy about](#)
[bandy with](#)
[bane of \(one's\) existence](#)
[bang around](#)
[bang away](#)
[bang \(away\) at](#)
[bang for \(one's/the\) buck](#)
[bang goes \(something\)!](#)
[bang her head against a stone wall](#)
[bang in](#)
[bang into](#)
[bang on](#)
[bang \(one's\) head against a brick wall](#)
[bang \(one's\) head against a wall](#)
[bang out](#)
[bang \(something\) against](#)
[bang straw](#)
[bang the drum](#)
[bang to rights](#)
[bang up](#)
[bang-up cove](#)
[a bang up job](#)
[banged up](#)
[banish from](#)
[bank account](#)
[Bank Night](#)
[bank on](#)
[bankbook](#)



[banker's dozen](#)
[bankers' hours](#)
[banker's hours](#)
[bankroll](#)
[banned from](#)
[banyan day](#)
[baptism by fire](#)
[baptism of fire](#)
[bar from](#)
[bar none](#)
[bar off](#)
[bar sinister](#)
[bar star](#)
[bar up](#)
[barbarian cruelty](#)
[bare metal](#)
[bare necessities](#)
[bare \(one's\) breast](#)
[bare \(one's\) heart](#)
[bare \(one's\) soul](#)
[bare \(one's\) teeth](#)
[bare \(something\) to \(someone\)](#)
[barefaced liar](#)
[barefaced lie](#)
[barely made it](#)
[barely made it on time](#)
[barf out](#)
[barfly](#)
[bargain-basement](#)
[bargain-bin](#)
[bargain for](#)
[bargain on](#)
[bargaining chip](#)
[bargaining counter](#)
[barge in on](#)
[barge in\(to\)](#)
[bark at](#)

[bark at the moon](#)
[\(one's\) bark is worse than \(one's\) bite](#)
[\(one's\) bark is worse than \(one's\) bite](#)
[bark up the wrong tree](#)
[a barking dog never bites](#)
[barking dogs seldom bite](#)
[Barkis is willin'](#)
[Barmecide feast](#)
[barmy on the crumpet](#)
[barn find](#)
[barnburner](#)
[barrage of criticism](#)
[barred from](#)
[barrel along](#)
[barrel in\(to\)](#)
[barrel of fun](#)
[barrel of laughs](#)
[barrel of monkeys](#)
[barrel out \(of\)](#)
[barrow boy](#)
[barrow man](#)
[barter away](#)
[barter for](#)
[barter off](#)
[barter with](#)
[base instinct](#)
[base motive](#)
[base on balls](#)
[base \(one's\) opinion on](#)
[base over apex](#)
[base \(up\)on](#)
[basement battler](#)
[bash around](#)
[bash in](#)
[bash \(someone's\) brains in](#)
[bash \(something\) against](#)
[bash the bishop](#)

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[bash up](#)
[basic](#)
[basic bitch](#)
[basic decency](#)
[bask in](#)
[basket case](#)
[basket house](#)
[bass-ackward](#)
[bass-ackwards](#)
[bastardly gullion](#)
[bat a thousand](#)
[bat an eye](#)
[bat an eyelash](#)
[bat an eyelid](#)
[bat around](#)
[bat five hundred](#)
[bat for both sides](#)
[bat for the other side](#)
[bat for the other team](#)
[bat \(one's\) eyelashes](#)
[bat \(one's\) eyes](#)
[bat the breeze](#)
[bathe in](#)
[bathtub gin](#)
[bats in the belfry](#)
[batshit](#)
[batshit crazy](#)
[batten down the hatches](#)
[batter down](#)
[batter up](#)
[battered and bruised](#)
[batting on a losing wicket](#)
[batting on a sticky wicket](#)
[battle against](#)
[battle cry](#)
[battle for](#)
[a battle of nerves](#)

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[battle of the bulge](#)
[a battle of wills](#)
[a battle of wits](#)
[a battle royal](#)
[battle \(something\) out](#)
[bawl \(one's\) eyes out](#)
[bawl out](#)
[bay at](#)
[bay for blood](#)
[BBC English](#)
[be 10 a penny](#)
[be 6 feet under](#)
[be a barrel of laughs](#)
[be a bed of nails](#)
[be a bird in a gilded cage](#)
[be a bit much](#)
[be \(a bit\) on the expensive side](#)
[be \(a bit\) on the heavy side](#)
[be \(a bit\) on the large side](#)
[be a blessing in disguise](#)
[be a bundle of laughs](#)
[be a bundle of nerves](#)
[be a card-carrying member \(of something\)](#)
[be a chapter of accidents](#)
[be a closed book](#)
[be a crock of shit](#)
[be a cut above](#)
[be a dab hand](#)
[be a dead cert](#)
[be a dead loss](#)
[be a dead ringer for](#)
[be a different kettle of fish](#)
[be a dime a dozen](#)
[be a far cry from](#)
[be a fate worse than death](#)
[be a figment of \(one's/the\) imagination](#)
[be a fine figure of a \(man or woman\)](#)

be a force to be reckoned with
be a (fully) paid-up member of something
be a game of two halves
be a happy camper
be a hard act to follow
be a howling success
be a huckleberry above a persimmon
be a huckleberry above (one's) persimmon
be a huckleberry over (one's) persimmon
be a laugh a minute
be a law unto (one)self
be a licence to print money
be a license to print money
be (a little) slow on the uptake
be a load off (one's) mind
be a long shot
be a loud mouth
be a man
be a matter of opinion
be a matter of record
be a mixed blessing
be a nasty piece of work
be a one-way street
be a pain in the arse
be a pain in the neck
be a patch on
be a piece of cake
be a pretty sight
be a recipe for (something)
be a roaring success
be a rough trot
be a sight for sore eyes
be a sign of the times
be a slave to (something)
be a (something) in the making
be a (something) through and through
be a (something) to (one's) fingertips

be a sure thing
be a tall order
be a thing of the past
be a thorn in (one's) flesh
be a thorn in (someone's) side
be a waste of space
be a weight off (one's) shoulders
be a whole other kettle of fish
be (a/the) model of
be above board
be absorbed by (something)
be afraid of (one's) (own) shadow
be after her scalp
be after (one's) blood
be ahead of the game
be ahead of the pack
be alive and kicking
be alive and well
be alive with
be-all and end-all
be all beer and skittles
be all brawn and no brain(s)
be all dressed up and nowhere to go
be all ears
be all eyes
be all fingers and thumbs
be (all) for (someone or something)
be all fun and games
be all fur coat and no knickers
be all heart
be all in
be all in a day's work
be all in (one's/the) mind
be all moonlight and roses
be all mouth
be (all) of a piece
be (all) part of life's rich pageant



be (all) part of life's rich tapestry
be (all) shot to hell
be (all) skin and bone(s)
be all smiles
be all sweetness and light
be all talk (and no action)
be all that
be all (the) one (to someone)
be all the rage
be all the worse for wear
be all things to all men
be all thumbs
be all very well
be all wet
be along the lines of (something)
be an apology for
be an easy touch
be an open book
be another kettle of fish
be another matter
be another of life's great mysteries
be another thing
be anybody's guess
be armed to the teeth
be around
be as American as apple pie
be as as they come
be as bald as a coot
be as black as is painted
be (as) blind as a bat
be as bright as a button
be as brown as a berry
be (as) busy as a bee
be (as) clean as a whistle
be as clear as crystal
be as clear as day
be as clear as mud



be (as) cold as ice
be as cool as a cucumber
be as cute as a button
be as daft as a brush
be as dead as a dodo
be (as) dead as a doornail
be as deaf as a post
be as dry as a bone
be as dull as dishwater
be (as) easy as ABC
be (as) easy as falling off (of) a log
be (as) easy as one-two-three
be (as) easy as pie
be (as) easy as rolling off (of) a log
be as fit as a fiddle
be (as) flat as a pancake
be (as) fresh as a daisy
be as full as a boot
be as gentle as a lamb
be as good as dead
be as good as gold
be as good as gone
be as good as new
be as good as (one's) word
be (as) green as a gooseberry
be as happy as a sandboy
be as happy as Larry
be (as) hard as nails
be as high as a kite
be as honest as the day is long
be as keen as mustard
be as light as a feather
be (as) mad as a hatter
be as mad as a hornet
be as mad as a hornet
be as mad as a March hare
be as mad as hops

be as nice as pie
be (as) nutty as a fruitcake
be as oil and water
be as old as Methuselah
be (as) old as the hills
be as plain as the nose on (one's) face
be (as) pleased as punch
be as poor as church mice
be (as) pure as the driven snow
be (as) quiet as a mouse
be as regular as clockwork
be (as) right as rain
be as safe as houses
be as scarce as hen's teeth
be as sharp as a tack
be (as) sick as a dog
be (as) sick as a parrot
be (as) silent as the grave
be as slippery as an eel
be (as) snug as a bug in a rug
be (as) sober as a judge
be (as) solid as a rock
be as (something) as they come
be as sound as a bell
be (as) sound as a dollar
be (as) stiff as a board
be as stiff as a ramrod
be as straight as a die
be (as) strong as an ox
be (as) stubborn as a mule
be (as) thick as a brick
be (as) thick as a shit
be (as) thick as a short plank
be (as) thick as thieves
be (as) thick as two short planks
be (as) thin as a rail
be (as) thin as a rake

[be \(as\) thin as a stick](#)
[be \(as\) tough as old boots](#)
[be \(as\) ugly as sin](#)
[be as white as a sheet](#)
[be \(as\) white as snow](#)
[be as/like oil and water](#)
[be asking for trouble](#)
[be asleep at the switch](#)
[be asleep at the wheel](#)
[be at a crossroads](#)
[be at a loose end](#)
[be at a loss](#)
[be at daggers drawn](#)
[be at death's door](#)
[be at each other's throats](#)
[be at half-mast](#)
[be at home](#)
[be at it](#)
[be at it hammer and tongs](#)
[be at loggerheads](#)
[be at odds \(with\)](#)
[be at \(one's\) beck and call](#)
[be at \(one's\) wit's end](#)
[be at pains](#)
[be at peace with the world](#)
[be at sea](#)
[be at sixes and sevens](#)
[be at the bottom of \(something\)](#)
[be at the end of \(one's\) rope](#)
[be at the end of \(one's\) tether](#)
[be at the helm](#)
[be at the mercy of \(something\)](#)
[be at the right spot at the right time](#)
[be at the wheel](#)
[be au fait with](#)
[be away with the fairies](#)
[be back in business](#)

[be back in harness](#)
[be back on the rails](#)
[be backward in coming forward](#)
[be bad news](#)
[be bag](#)
[be bang on](#)
[be barking mad](#)
[be \(batting\) on a losing wicket](#)
[be \(batting\) on a sticky wicket](#)
[be beat](#)
[be before \(one's\) time](#)
[be behind the eight ball](#)
[be behind the times](#)
[be below par](#)
[be below the belt](#)
[be beside \(oneself\)](#)
[be beside the point](#)
[be better off dead](#)
[be beyond \(one's\) ken](#)
[be beyond the pale](#)
[be big of \(one\)](#)
[be big on](#)
[be bitter and twisted](#)
[be blasted to smithereens](#)
[be blind as a bat](#)
[be blind to](#)
[be blotto](#)
[be blown away](#)
[be blown to smithereens](#)
[be bomb](#)
[be bone dry](#)
[be bone idle](#)
[be bored to death](#)
[be born yesterday](#)
[be bound and determined](#)
[be brain dead](#)
[be bright and breezy](#)

[be bright-eyed and bushy-tailed](#)
[be broad in the beam](#)
[be brother's keeper](#)
[be brought down a notch \(or two\)](#)
[be brought down a peg \(or two\)](#)
[be brought in from the cold](#)
[be brought to account](#)
[be built like a brick shithouse](#)
[be built like a tank](#)
[be built on sand](#)
[be bulging at the seams](#)
[be burnt to a crisp](#)
[be busted](#)
[be busy as a bee](#)
[be call](#)
[be card-carrying member](#)
[be careful](#)
[be careful not to \(do something\)](#)
[be carried out feet first](#)
[be carved in stone](#)
[be cast in cement](#)
[be cast in concrete](#)
[be cast in the same mould](#)
[be caught in a time warp](#)
[be caught in the crossfire](#)
[be caught in the middle](#)
[be caught off \(one's\) guard](#)
[be caught on the hop](#)
[be caught short](#)
[be caught with \(one's\) pants down](#)
[be center stage](#)
[be chafing at the bit](#)
[be chalk and cheese](#)
[be chasing tail](#)
[be child's play](#)
[be chomping at the bit](#)
[be clean as a whistle](#)

[be cleaned out](#)
[be close to home](#)
[be close to the bone](#)
[be close to the mark](#)
[be clued in](#)
[be cocksure of \(oneself\)](#)
[be cold as ice](#)
[be cold comfort](#)
[be comme il faut](#)
[be compos mentis](#)
[be comprised of](#)
[be conspicuous by \(one's\) absence](#)
[be cooked](#)
[be cooked](#)
[be cooked to a turn](#)
[be cooking on gas](#)
[be cut adrift](#)
[be damned](#)
[be dead and buried](#)
[be dead as a doornail](#)
[be dead from the neck up](#)
[be dead from the waist down](#)
[be dead in the water](#)
[be dead meat](#)
[be dead on \(one's\) feet](#)
[be dead on the vine](#)
[be dead to the world](#)
[be department](#)
[be devils advocate](#)
[be done in](#)
[be done like a \(dog's\) dinner](#)
[be done to a turn](#)
[be done to death](#)
[be done with it](#)
[be doped to the gills](#)
[be down](#)
[be down in the dumps](#)



be down in the mouth
be down on (one) like a ton of bricks
be down on (one's) luck
be (down) on (one's) uppers
be down on (someone or something)
be down to (do something)
be down to (someone)
be down to (something)
be down with (something)
be dragged kicking and screaming
be dressed to kill
be dressed (up) to the nines
be duck soup
be duty bound
be dying for (something)
be easy as 1-2-3
be easy as a-b-c
be easy as falling off a log
be easy as pie
be easy as rolling off a log
be easy meat
be easy on the ear
be easy on the eye(s)
be economical with the truth
be even (with someone)
be every inch (something)
be expecting
be fair game
be far and away
be fast on the draw
be fed up to the back teeth
be few and far between
be fighting fit
be fighting for (one's/its) life
be fighting mad
be first among equals
be first past the post

be fit to be tied
be flat as a pancake
be flat broke
be (flat) on (one's) back
be floating on air
be flying high
be footloose and fancy-free
be for
be for the asking
be for the best
be for the birds
be for the high jump
be for the taking
be fresh as a daisy
be fresh from
be fresh out of
be full of beans
be full of bull
be full of crap
be full of holes
be full of (oneself)
be full of piss and vinegar
be full of the joys of spring
be fully paid-up member
be funeral
be gagging for it
be gagging for (something)
be game
be gathered to (one's) fathers
be given no quarter
be glad to see the back of (someone)
be going great guns
be going spare
be gone on
be good
be grateful for small blessings
be grateful for small mercies

[be green as a gooseberry](#)
[be green with envy](#)
[be gunning for](#)
[be had](#)
[be had](#)
[be had up \(for something\)](#)
[be half-cut](#)
[be half-dead](#)
[be half the battle \(won\)](#)
[be half the \(something\) \(one\) used to be](#)
[be hanging over \(one\)](#)
[be hard as nails](#)
[be hard hit \(by something\)](#)
[be hard on](#)
[be hard-pressed](#)
[be hard put](#)
[be hard up](#)
[be head over heels \(in love\)](#)
[be heavy going](#)
[be held in high esteem](#)
[be held in high regard](#)
[be hell-bent on](#)
[be hell on wheels](#)
[be here to stay](#)
[be hers for the asking](#)
[be hers for the taking](#)
[be herself](#)
[be higher than a kite](#)
[be his bag](#)
[be his brother's keeper](#)
[be his department](#)
[be his funeral](#)
[be his last resort](#)
[be his main squeeze](#)
[be his own man](#)
[be his own master](#)
[be his own worst enemy](#)

be his pigeon
be his strong point
be his strong suit
be history
be hit for six
be home and dry
be home and hosed
be home free
be honor-bound to do (something)
be hopping mad
be hot and cold
be hot off the press
be hot stuff
be hounded (by someone or something)
be huckleberry
be hunky-dory
be ill at ease
be in 7th heaven
be in a bad way
be in (a bit of) a jam
be in a (blue) funk
be in a blue funk
be in a dream world
be in a fix
be in a groove
be in a hole
be in a lather
be in a pickle
be in a rut
be in a sorry state
be in a spin
be in a spot of bother
be in a stew
be in a sticky situation
be in a tight corner
be in a tight spot
be in a tough spot

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[be in a transport of delight](#)
[be in aid of](#)
[be in altitudes](#)
[be in another world](#)
[be in apple-pie order](#)
[be in arms](#)
[be in bad odor with](#)
[be in bad with \(someone\)](#)
[be in bed with](#)
[be in blood](#)
[be in business](#)
[be in cahoots](#)
[be in cloud-cuckoo land](#)
[be in clover](#)
[be in contact with \(one\)](#)
[be in cups](#)
[be in deep shit](#)
[be in deep water](#)
[be in dire straits](#)
[be in dotage](#)
[be in eclipse](#)
[be in fighting trim](#)
[be in fine fettle](#)
[be in for](#)
[be in for a shock](#)
[be in for a surprise](#)
[be in for a treat](#)
[be in for it](#)
[be in full cry](#)
[be in full flow](#)
[be in full swing](#)
[be in good company](#)
[be in hand](#)
[be in hospital](#)
[be in hot water](#)
[be in it for](#)
[be in line](#)

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be in line for
be in luck
be in mint condition
be in (one's) altitudes
be in (one's) blood
be in (one's) cups
be in (one's) dotage
be in (one's) element
be in (one's) face
be in (one's) good books
be in (one's) hands
be in (one's) pocket
be in over (one's) head
be in pole position
be in pursuit
be in Queer Street
be in safe hands
be in seventh heaven
be in (someone's) shoes
be in tall cotton
be in the air
be in the balance
be in the black
be in the catbird seat
be in the chips
be in the clear
be in the club
be in the dark
be in the doghouse
be in the doldrums
be in the driving seat
be in the eye of the storm
be in the firing line
be in the first flush of
be in the frame
be in the front line
be in the grip of

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be in the groove
be in the hole
be in the know
be in the Land of Nod
be in the land of the living
be in the lap of the gods
be in the limelight
be in the loop
be in the market for
be in the money
be in the pink
be in the pipeline
be in the pocket
be in the public eye
be in the pudding club
be in the red
be in the right place at the right moment
be in the right place at the right time
be in the right spot at the right time
be in the running
be in the saddle
be in the same ballpark
be in the same boat
be in the short strokes
be in the soup
be in the spotlight
be in the swim (of things)
be in the thick of it
be in the thick of things
be in the throes of
be in the wind
be in the wrong
be in too deep
be in touch
be in two minds
be in well (with)
be in with a chance

be in with (someone)
be in your altitudes
be in your blood
be in your cups
be in your dotage
be in your element
be in your face
be in your good books
be in your hands
be in your line
be in your pocket
be in your shoes
be it as it may
be joined at the hip
be jolly hockey sticks
be just a pretty face
be just another pretty face
be just before you're generous
be just the job
be just the same (to someone)
be just what the doctor ordered
be keen about
be keen on
be kept in the dark (about something)
be kept in the loop
be kept on a short leash
be kept on a tight leash
be kicked to the curb
be kicked upstairs
be knee-deep in
be knee-high to a grasshopper
be knocked down a notch (or two)
be knocked down a peg (or two)
be knocked out cold
be knocked out of the box
be knocking on heaven's door
be laid to rest

[be larger than life](#)
[be last resort](#)
[be left hanging \(in the air/in midair\)](#)
[be left holding the baby](#)
[be left holding the bag](#)
[be left in the dark \(about something\)](#)
[be left in the lurch](#)
[be left \(out\) in the cold](#)
[be left to \(one's\) own devices](#)
[be left to \(one's\) own resources](#)
[be level pegging](#)
[be light-headed](#)
[be light years away](#)
[be light years away from](#)
[be like a bear with a sore head](#)
[be \(like\) a bird in a gilded cage](#)
[be like a bull in a china shop](#)
[be like a cat on a hot tin roof](#)
[be like a child in a sweetshop](#)
[be like a deer caught in the headlights](#)
[be like a dog with a bone](#)
[be like a dog with two tails](#)
[be like a fish out of water](#)
[be like a kid in a candy store](#)
[be like a red flag to a bull](#)
[be like a red rag to a bull](#)
[be like a spare prick at a wedding](#)
[be like Fort Knox](#)
[be like herding cats](#)
[be like looking for a needle in a haystack](#)
[be like oil and water](#)
[be like oil and water](#)
[be like painting the Forth Bridge](#)
[be like rearranging \(the\) deckchairs on the Titanic](#)
[be like ships in the night](#)
[be like ships that pass in the night](#)
[be like taking candy from a baby](#)

be like talking to a brick wall
be like two peas in a pod
be like watching grass grow
be like watching paint dry
be (like) water off a duck's back
be little love lost between (two people)
be (living) on another planet
be locked in a time warp
be long in the tooth
be looking for trouble
be losing it
be lost for words
be lost in translation
be lost on (someone)
be mad as a hatter
be mad as a hornet
be mad as hops
be made for
be made of sterner stuff
be main squeeze
be man enough
be measuring for drapes
be measuring the drapes
be meat and drink to (someone)
be miles away
be mine for the asking
be mine for the taking
be model of
be money for jam
be money for old rope
be more Catholic than the Pope (himself)
be more fun than a barrel of monkeys
be more trouble than it's worth
be mother
be much of a muchness
be music to (one's) ears
be my bag



[be my brother's keeper](#)
[be my department](#)
[be my funeral](#)
[be my guest](#)
[be my last resort](#)
[be my own man](#)
[be my own master](#)
[be my own worst enemy](#)
[be my pigeon](#)
[be my strong point](#)
[be my strong suit](#)
[be myself](#)
[be near the knuckle](#)
[be near to impossible](#)
[be neither fish nor fowl](#)
[be neither one thing nor the other](#)
[be new to the game](#)
[be nip and tuck](#)
[be no ball of fire](#)
[be no bed of roses](#)
[be no fool](#)
[be no good to man or beast](#)
[be no great shakes](#)
[be no joke](#)
[be no laughing matter](#)
[be no love lost between \(two people\)](#)
[be no match for](#)
[be no mean feat](#)
[be no oil painting](#)
[be no picnic](#)
[be no quarter given](#)
[be no question of \(doing\) \(something\)](#)
[be no question that \(something will happen/is the case\)](#)
[be no screaming hell](#)
[be no skin off \(one's\) back](#)
[be no slouch](#)
[be no spring chicken](#)

be no use to beast or man
be none the wiser
be not a bed of roses
be (not) a patch on
be (not) a pretty sight
be (not) all beer and skittles
be (not) all fun and games
be not all it's cracked up to be
be (not) all moonlight and roses
be not anything to write home about
be (not) as black as (someone/something) is painted
be (not) backward in coming forward
be (not) big on (something)
be (not) comme il faut
be not for the faint-hearted
be not half bad
be not having any (of it)
be not in Kansas anymore
be not just a pretty face
be not just another pretty face
be not long for this world
be not much between the ears
be not much cop
be not much to look at
be (not) on speaking terms
be (not) (one's) bag
be not (one's) bag
be (not) (one's) brother's keeper
be not (one's) cup of tea
be (not) (one's) department
be not (oneself)
be (not) out of the woods
be not right in the head
be not rocket science
be not short of a bob or two
be not short of a penny (or two)
be not something to write home about

be not the done thing
be (not) the end of the world
be not the full quid
be (not) the marrying kind
be not up to scratch
be not up to snuff
be not up to the mark
be (not) well up on (something)
be not what it's cracked up to be
be not worth a brass farthing
be not worth a plug nickel
be not worth writing home about
be not your bag
be not your bag
be not your brother's keeper
be not your cup of tea
be not your department
be nothing (much) to write home about
be nothing short of (something)
be nothing special
be nothing to shout about
be nutty as a fruitcake
be of a piece
be of like mind
be of no account
be (of) no use to man or beast
be of (one's) own making
be of sound mind
be of two minds
be of unsound mind
be off
be off base
be off beam
be off-color
be off-kilter
be off like a prom dress (in May)
be off (one's) chump

[be off \(one's\) dot](#)
[be off \(one's\) guard](#)
[be off \(one's\) nut](#)
[be off \(one's\) rocker](#)
[be off \(one's\) trolley](#)
[be off the beaten path](#)
[be off the beaten track](#)
[be off the grid](#)
[be off the ground](#)
[be off the hook](#)
[be off the mark](#)
[be off the radar](#)
[be off the rails](#)
[be off the reservation](#)
[be off the \(starting\) blocks](#)
[be off the table](#)
[be off the wall](#)
[be off to a false start](#)
[be OK](#)
[be old as the hills](#)
[be on](#)
[be on a collision course](#)
[be on a hiding to nothing](#)
[be on a losing wicket](#)
[be on a rampage](#)
[be on a roll](#)
[be on a short leash](#)
[be on a sticky wicket](#)
[be on a tight leash](#)
[be on about \(something\)](#)
[be on acid](#)
[be on air](#)
[be on another planet](#)
[be on back](#)
[be on cloud nine](#)
[be on course for](#)
[be on edge](#)

[be on everyone's lips](#)
[be on full alert](#)
[be on good terms with \(someone\)](#)
[be on guard](#)
[be on hand](#)
[be on her tail](#)
[be on her uppers](#)
[be on ice](#)
[be on in years](#)
[be on \(its/one's\) last legs](#)
[be on \(one's\) ass](#)
[be on \(one's\) best behavior](#)
[be on \(one's\) best behavior](#)
[be on \(one's\) conscience](#)
[be on \(one's\) good behavior](#)
[be on \(one's\) mettle](#)
[be on \(one's\) pat](#)
[be on \(one's\) Pat Malone](#)
[be on \(one's\) shit list](#)
[be on \(one's\) tod](#)
[be on pins and needles](#)
[be on Queer Street](#)
[be on red alert](#)
[be on relief](#)
[be on relief](#)
[be on short leash](#)
[be on song](#)
[be on speaking terms](#)
[be on \(the\) air](#)
[be on the anvil](#)
[be on the back burner](#)
[be on the back foot](#)
[be on the ball](#)
[be on the blink](#)
[be on the breadline](#)
[be on the brink of \(doing something\)](#)
[be on the bum](#)

[be on the cards](#)
[be on the case](#)
[be on the crest of a wave](#)
[be on the dole](#)
[be on the edge of \(something\)](#)
[be on the expensive side](#)
[be on the fiddle](#)
[be on the fritz](#)
[be on the front foot](#)
[be on the game](#)
[be on the gravy train](#)
[be on the heavy side](#)
[be on the hook](#)
[be on the horn](#)
[be on the horns of a dilemma](#)
[be on the hush](#)
[be on the hush-hush](#)
[be on the large side](#)
[be on the level](#)
[be on the line](#)
[be on the lines of \(something\)](#)
[be on the lookout](#)
[be on the loose](#)
[be on the make](#)
[be on the march](#)
[be on the mend](#)
[be on the money](#)
[be on the piss](#)
[be on the pull](#)
[be on the radar \(screen\)](#)
[be on the ragged edge](#)
[be on the rampage](#)
[be on the razzle](#)
[be on the right lines](#)
[be on the right track](#)
[be on the rocks](#)
[be on the ropes](#)

[be on the run](#)
[be on the same wavelength](#)
[be on the sick list](#)
[be on the side of the angels](#)
[be on the skids](#)
[be on the square](#)
[be on the table](#)
[be on the threshold of \(something\)](#)
[be on the tip of \(one's\) tongue](#)
[be on the wagon](#)
[be on the warpath](#)
[be on the wing](#)
[be on the wrong end of \(something\)](#)
[be \(on\) the wrong side of \(an age\)](#)
[be on the wrong track](#)
[be on thin ice](#)
[be on tight leash](#)
[be on to a good thing](#)
[be on to \(someone\)](#)
[be on to \(something\)](#)
[be on tod](#)
[be on top of the world](#)
[be on track](#)
[be on uppers](#)
[be on welfare](#)
[be one age with \(someone\)](#)
[be one brick short of a \(full\) load](#)
[be one card short of a full deck](#)
[be one card shy of a \(full\) deck](#)
[be one flesh](#)
[be one in a million](#)
[be one in the eye for](#)
[be one of a kind](#)
[be one over \(the\) eight](#)
[be one sandwich short of a picnic](#)
[be one step ahead](#)
[be one's bag](#)

[be one's brother's keeper](#)
[be one's department](#)
[be \(one's\) for the asking](#)
[be \(one's\) for the taking](#)
[be \(one's\) last resort](#)
[be \(one's\) own man/woman/person](#)
[be \(one's\) own master](#)
[be \(one's\) own worst enemy](#)
[be \(one's\) pigeon](#)
[be \(one's\) strong point](#)
[be one's strong suit](#)
[be \(one's/the\) main squeeze](#)
[be oneself](#)
[be only a matter of time](#)
[be onto a winner](#)
[be open to \(something\)](#)
[be our funeral](#)
[be out for blood](#)
[be out for the count](#)
[be out for/after \(someone's\) scalp](#)
[be out in force](#)
[be out in left field](#)
[be out like a light](#)
[be out of action](#)
[be out of bounds](#)
[be out of fix](#)
[be out of house and home](#)
[be out of humour](#)
[be out of it](#)
[be out of kilter](#)
[be out of line](#)
[be out of \(one's\) brain](#)
[be out of \(one's\) depth](#)
[be out of \(one's\) element](#)
[be out of \(one's\) face](#)
[be out of \(one's\) hair](#)
[be out of \(one's\) hands](#)

[be out of \(one's\) head](#)
[be out of \(one's\) league](#)
[be out of \(one's\) mind](#)
[be out of \(one's\) shell](#)
[be out of \(one's\) skull](#)
[be out of \(one's\) tree](#)
[be out of order](#)
[be out of place](#)
[be out of pocket](#)
[be out of sorts](#)
[be out of square](#)
[be out of step](#)
[be out of the ark](#)
[be out of the picture](#)
[be out of the question](#)
[be out of the way](#)
[be out of the woods](#)
[be out of this world](#)
[be out of touch](#)
[be out of touch with \(someone or something\)](#)
[be out of tree](#)
[be out of your brain](#)
[be out of your depth](#)
[be out of your element](#)
[be out of your face](#)
[be out of your hair](#)
[be out of your hands](#)
[be out of your head](#)
[be out of your league](#)
[be out of your line](#)
[be out of your mind](#)
[be out of your shell](#)
[be out of your skull](#)
[be out of your way](#)
[be out on a limb](#)
[be out on \(one's\) ear](#)
[be out on \(one's\) feet](#)

[be \(out\) on the piss](#)
[be \(out\) on the razzle](#)
[be out on the tiles](#)
[be out on the town](#)
[be out there](#)
[be out to lunch](#)
[be over \(someone or something\)](#)
[be over the hill](#)
[be over the hills and far away](#)
[be over the hump](#)
[be over the moon](#)
[be over the top](#)
[be own man](#)
[be own master](#)
[be own worst enemy](#)
[be packed \(in\) like sardines](#)
[be packing \(heat\)](#)
[be paid-up member](#)
[be par for the course](#)
[be part of life's rich pageant](#)
[be part of life's rich tapestry](#)
[be part of the furniture](#)
[be past it](#)
[be past \(the/one's\) sell-by date](#)
[be penny-wise and pound-foolish](#)
[be pie-eyed](#)
[be pigeon](#)
[be pipped at the post](#)
[be pipped to the post](#)
[be pissed off](#)
[be pissing in\(to\) the wind](#)
[be plain sailing](#)
[be played like a fiddle](#)
[be pleased as punch](#)
[be plugged into \(something\)](#)
[be PO'd](#)
[be poles apart](#)

be potty about (something)
be prepared
be pulled down a notch (or two)
be pulled down a peg (or two)
be pulled out of her ass
be punch-drunk
be pure as the driven snow
be pushing up (the) daisies
be put behind bars
be put in (one's) place
be put out of business
be put out of humour
be put out of sorts
be put through the hoop
be put through the mangle
be put through the wringer
be put to rights
be put to the sword
be putty in (one's) hands
be quick off the mark
be quick on the draw
be quids in
be quiet
be quiet as a mouse
be quite something
be rained off
be rained out
be raring to go
be ready to roll
be (really) something
be rid of
be riding high
be right as rain
be (right) on the money
be right there
be (right) up (one's) arse
be right with you

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be ripe for the picking
be ripped to shreds
be rolling in dough
be rolling in dough
be rolling in it
be rolling in money
be rolling in wealth
be rotten to the core
be run off (one's) feet
be running on empty
be running on fumes
be rushed off (one's) feet
be sacrificed on the altar of
be scared shitless
be scattered to the four winds
be second to none
be seeing you
be set aback
be set in cement
be set in concrete
be set to rights
be several bricks short of a (full) load
be several cards short of a (full) deck
be several cards short of a full deck
be shackled up with (someone)
be shaken up
be short on looks
be shortlisted
be shot
be shot to hell
be shot to pieces
be shown the ropes
be sick
be sick and tired of (something)
be sick as a dog
be sick as a parrot
be sick of (something)

be sick to death of (something)
be silent as the grave
be (sitting) in the catbird seat
be sitting on a gold mine
be (sitting) on (one's) tail
be (sitting) on top of the world
be sitting pretty
be six feet under
be skating on thin ice
be skin and bone
be sleeping at the switch
be sleeping at the wheel
be sleeping with the fishes
be sloshed to the gills
be slow off the mark
be slow on the uptake
be smashed to smithereens
be snatched from the jaws of death
be snowed under
be snug as a bug in a rug
be so bold as to
be soaked through
be soaked to the bone
be soaked to the skin
be sober as a judge
be soft on (someone)
be sold a pup
be solid as a rock
be (someone's) call
be (someone's) funeral
be (someone's) huckleberry
be (someone's) strong suit
be something
be sorry
be sound as a dollar
be spitting in(to) the wind
be spoiled for choice

[be spoiling for](#)
[be spoiling for a fight](#)
[be spoilt for choice](#)
[be spoon-fed](#)
[be spot on](#)
[be squashed \(in\) like sardines](#)
[be staring \(one\) in the face](#)
[be stark raving mad](#)
[be stiff as a board](#)
[be still in the game](#)
[be still my beating heart](#)
[be still my heart](#)
[be storming mad](#)
[be streets ahead](#)
[be \(strictly\) for the birds](#)
[be strong as an ox](#)
[be strong point](#)
[be struck dumb](#)
[be stubborn as a mule](#)
[be stuck in a groove](#)
[be \(stuck\) in a rut](#)
[be stuck in a time warp](#)
[be stuffed like a turkey](#)
[be stuffed to the gills](#)
[be swept off \(one's\) feet](#)
[be swimming with the fishes](#)
[be tailor-made](#)
[be taken aback](#)
[be taken as read](#)
[be taken at face value](#)
[be taken by surprise](#)
[be taken down a notch \(or two\)](#)
[be taken down a peg \(or two\)](#)
[be taken for granted](#)
[be taken ill](#)
[be taken in by \(someone\)](#)
[be taken to task \(by someone\)](#)

be taken to the cleaners (by someone)
be taken under the wing of (someone)
be tall in (one's)/the saddle
be tarred and feathered
be ten a penny
be thankful for small mercies
be that as it may
be the bee's knees
be the best of a bad bunch
be the best of a bad lot
be (the) bomb
be the business
be the butt of the joke
be the cat's whiskers
be the chief cook and bottle washer
be the day hell freezes over
be the dead spit of (someone)
be (the) devil's advocate
be the end of (one)
be the end of the world
be the exception that proves the rule
be the last word in (something)
be the life and soul of the party
be the light of (one's) life
be the living end
be the main squeeze
be the making of (one)
be the marrying kind
be the model of
be the pits
be the spice of life
be the tip of the iceberg
be the toast of (some place)
be the toast of (the town)
be the way to go
be the wrong side of
be theirs for the asking

[be theirs for the taking](#)
[be themselves](#)
[be there or be square](#)
[be thick as a brick](#)
[be thick as a shit](#)
[be thick as a short plank](#)
[be thick as thieves](#)
[be thick as two short planks](#)
[be thin as a rail](#)
[be thin as a rake](#)
[be thin as a stick](#)
[be thrilled to bits](#)
[be thrilled to death](#)
[be thrilled to pieces](#)
[be thrown in the deep end](#)
[be thrown off balance](#)
[be tied to \(one's\) mother's apron strings](#)
[be tied \(up\) in knots](#)
[be tight-arsed](#)
[be tight-assed](#)
[be tipping \(it\) down](#)
[be tired and emotional](#)
[be tired to death of \(something\)](#)
[be toast](#)
[be toes up](#)
[be too clever by half](#)
[be torqued off](#)
[be touch-and-go](#)
[be touching cloth](#)
[be touching cotton](#)
[be tough as old boots](#)
[be trapped in a time warp](#)
[be turfed](#)
[be turfed out](#)
[be two a penny](#)
[be ugly as sin](#)
[be under a microscope](#)

[be under par](#)
[be under \(someone's\) spell](#)
[be under \(someone's\) wing](#)
[be under the cosh](#)
[be under the microscope](#)
[be under the pump](#)
[be under the spell of \(someone\)](#)
[be under the wing of \(someone\)](#)
[be up against it](#)
[be up and down](#)
[be up arse](#)
[be up \(one's\) ass](#)
[be up the duff](#)
[be up the pole](#)
[be up the spout](#)
[be up the stick](#)
[be up to ninety](#)
[be up with the chickens](#)
[be up with the crows](#)
[be up with the lark](#)
[be waiting in the wings](#)
[be \(walking\) on thin ice](#)
[be water off a duck's back](#)
[be well away](#)
[be well in \(with\)](#)
[be well up on](#)
[be well versed in \(something\)](#)
[be whistling Dixie](#)
[be whistling in the dark](#)
[be white as a sheet](#)
[be white as snow](#)
[be wide open](#)
[be wide open to \(something\)](#)
[be wise to \(someone or something\)](#)
[be wise to \(someone/something\)](#)
[be worth \(one's\) while](#)
[be written all over \(one's\) face](#)

be yours for the asking
be yours for the taking
be yourself
a beached whale
beam down
Beam me up, Scotty
beam up
beam with pride
bean counter
bean queen
bear a grudge (against someone)
bear a hand
bear a resemblance to (someone/something)
bear arms
bear away the bell
bear down (on)
bear false witness
bear fruit
bear his breast
bear his teeth
bear hug
bear in mind (that)
bear necessities
bear off (of something)
bear (one's) cross
bear (one)self
bear out
bear testimony to (something)
bear the bell
bear the brunt (of something)
bear the burden (of something)
bear the palm
bear the sight of (someone or something)
bear (up)on (something)
bear watching
bear with (something/someone)
bear witness to (something)

[beard \(one\) in \(one's\) den](#)
[beard the lion](#)
[beard the lion in his den](#)
[bearer of bad news](#)
[bearing a grudge](#)
[beast of burden](#)
[beast with two backs](#)
[beat](#)
[beat a dead horse](#)
[beat a \(hasty\) retreat](#)
[beat a path to \(one's\) door](#)
[beat \(about/around\) the bush](#)
[beat against \(something/someone\)](#)
[beat all](#)
[beat all hollow](#)
[beat at](#)
[beat back](#)
[beat Banaghan](#)
[beat Banagher](#)
[beat down](#)
[beat feet](#)
[beat her up](#)
[beat it](#)
[beat off](#)
[beat on \(something\)](#)
[beat \(one\) at \(one's\) own game](#)
[beat \(one\) hollow](#)
[beat \(one\) to the punch](#)
[beat \(one\) to within an inch of \(one's\) life](#)
[beat \(one's\) brains out](#)
[beat \(one's\) breast](#)
[beat \(one's\) gums](#)
[beat \(one's\) head against a stone wall](#)
[beat \(one's\) head against a/the wall](#)
[beat \(one's\) meat](#)
[beat \(oneself\) up](#)
[beat out](#)

beat (someone) down to size
beat (someone or something) all hollow
beat (someone) to a pulp
beat (someone) to it
beat (someone) to (something)
beat (someone) to the draw
beat (someone/something) into (something)
beat (someone's) brains in
beat (something) out of (someone/something)
beat (something) to death
beat swords into ploughshares
beat the bishop
beat the bush
beat the bushes (for someone or something)
beat the clock
beat the crap out of (someone)
beat the drum (for)
beat the Dutch
beat the gun
beat the heat
beat the hell out of (someone)
beat the (living) daylights out of (someone)
beat the pants off (of) (someone)
beat the rap
beat the socks off (of) (someone)
beat the stuffing out of (someone)
beat the system
beat the tar out of (someone)
beat their brains in
beat their brains out
beat their breast
beat their gums
beat their head against a wall
beat them at their own game
beat them down
beat them down to size
beat them hollow

[beat them into](#)
[beat them to](#)
[beat them to a pulp](#)
[beat them to it](#)
[beat them to the draw](#)
[beat them to within an inch of their life](#)
[beat themselves up](#)
[beat time](#)
[beat to death](#)
[beat to the punch](#)
[beat up](#)
[beat your meat](#)
[beating a dead horse](#)
[beating a hasty retreat](#)
[beating about the bush](#)
[beating at](#)
[beating back](#)
[beating Banaghan](#)
[beating Banagher](#)
[beating it](#)
[beating off](#)
[beating on](#)
[beating one's brains out](#)
[beating out](#)
[beating out](#)
[beating the drum](#)
[beating the rap](#)
[beating the system](#)
[beating their head against a wall](#)
[beating them down](#)
[beating them down to size](#)
[beats all](#)
[beats into](#)
[beats me](#)
[beautiful people](#)
[beauty is in the eye of the beholder](#)
[beauty is only skin deep](#)



[beauty mark](#)
[beauty queen](#)
[beauty sleep](#)
[beauty spot](#)
[beaver away](#)
[because of](#)
[beck and call](#)
[beckon to \(someone\)](#)
[Becky with the good hair](#)
[become of \(someone\)](#)
[become one flesh](#)
[become reconciled with \(someone or something\)](#)
[becoming on \(someone\)](#)
[bed and board](#)
[bed blocker](#)
[bed down](#)
[bed in](#)
[a bed of roses](#)
[bedazzle](#)
[beddy-bye](#)
[bedeck with \(something\)](#)
[bedroom community](#)
[bedroom eyes](#)
[a bee in \(one's\) bonnet](#)
[beef](#)
[beef to \(the\) heel](#)
[beef to \(the\) heel like a Mullingar heifer](#)
[beef to the hoof](#)
[beef up](#)
[beefcake](#)
[beefed out](#)
[beeline it for \(some place\)](#)
[been around \(the block\)](#)
[been there](#)
[been there, done that](#)
[been there, done that, bought the T-shirt](#)
[been there, done that, got the T-shirt](#)

[been to the rodeo](#)
[been to the wars](#)
[beer and skittles](#)
[beer goggles](#)
[beer me](#)
[beer muscles](#)
[beer up](#)
[bee's knees](#)
[the bee's knees](#)
[before last](#)
[before long](#)
[before \(one\) can blink](#)
[before \(one\) can say Jack Robinson](#)
[before \(one\) could blink](#)
[before \(one's\) time](#)
[before \(one's\) time](#)
[before \(one's\) very eyes](#)
[before the wind](#)
[before you can say "knife"](#)
[before you know it](#)
[beg for \(someone/something\)](#)
[beg of](#)
[beg off](#)
[beg on bended knee](#)
[beg \(something\) from \(someone\)](#)
[beg the question](#)
[beg to differ](#)
[beg, borrow, or steal](#)
[beggar \(all\) description](#)
[beggar's bush](#)
[beggars can't be choosers](#)
[begin by \(doing something\)](#)
[begin to see daylight](#)
[begin to see the light](#)
[begin with \(someone or something\)](#)
[beginner's luck](#)
[beginning of the end](#)

[beguile \(someone\) into \(doing something\)](#)
[beguile \(someone\) out of \(something\)](#)
[beguile \(someone\) with \(something\)](#)
[behind bars](#)
[behind closed doors](#)
[behind in \(something\)](#)
[behind its time](#)
[behind \(one's\) back](#)
[behind \(one's\) time](#)
[behind schedule](#)
[behind the bit](#)
[behind-the-counter](#)
[behind the curve](#)
[behind the eight ball](#)
[behind the scenes](#)
[behind the times](#)
[behind the wheel](#)
[behind time](#)
[behind you!](#)
[beholden to \(someone\)](#)
[behoove \(one\) to \(do something\)](#)
[being that](#)
[belabor the point](#)
[belch out](#)
[belch up](#)
[belemnite battlefield](#)
[Belgravian](#)
[Belieber](#)
[believe in \(someone or something\)](#)
[believe it or not](#)
[believe me](#)
[believe nothing of what you hear, and only half of what you see](#)
[believe \(one's\) eyes](#)
[believe \(something\) of \(someone\)](#)
[believe you me](#)
[bell out](#)
[bell the cat](#)

[bellow out](#)
[bells and whistles](#)
[belly laugh](#)
[belly out](#)
[belly up](#)
[belly up to the bar](#)
[belong to \(someone or something\)](#)
[belong under \(something\)](#)
[below average](#)
[below \(one's\) breath](#)
[below par](#)
[below the belt](#)
[below the salt](#)
[belt a drink down](#)
[belt and braces](#)
[belt down \(something or someone\)](#)
[belt out](#)
[belt the grape](#)
[belt up](#)
[bench jockey](#)
[benchmark](#)
[bend back](#)
[bend before \(something\)](#)
[bend down](#)
[bend forward](#)
[bend in](#)
[bend in the wind](#)
[bend \(one's\) ear](#)
[bend \(one's/the\) elbow](#)
[bend over](#)
[bend over backwards](#)
[bend the law](#)
[bend the rules](#)
[bend the rules](#)
[bend the truth](#)
[bend with the wind](#)
[beneath contempt](#)

[beneath \(one's\) dignity](#)
[beneath the salt](#)
[beneath \(the/someone's\) radar](#)
[benefit by \(something\)](#)
[benefit from \(something\)](#)
[the benefit of the doubt](#)
[benevolent overlord](#)
[bent cop](#)
[bent double](#)
[bent on a splice](#)
[bent on \(doing something\)](#)
[bent out of shape](#)
[bequeath \(something\) to \(someone\)](#)
[bereft of \(someone or something\)](#)
[beset with](#)
[beside \(oneself\)](#)
[beside the cushion](#)
[beside the point](#)
[besiege with \(something\)](#)
[besmirch \(someone or something\) with \(something\)](#)
[the best bet](#)
[\(one's\) best bib and tucker](#)
[best-case scenario](#)
[the best defense is a good offense](#)
[best \(do something\)](#)
[best is the enemy of \(the\) good](#)
[best-kept secret](#)
[the best-laid plans](#)
[the best-laid plans go astray](#)
[the best-laid plans of mice and men](#)
[the best-laid plans of mice and men oft go astray](#)
[the best-laid schemes](#)
[the best-laid schemes go astray](#)
[the best-laid schemes of mice and men](#)
[best of a bad lot](#)
[best of both possible worlds](#)
[best of both worlds](#)

[best of luck](#)
[the best of men are but men at best](#)
[best of the bunch](#)
[the best part of \(something\)](#)
[best regards](#)
[the best thing since sliced pan](#)
[the best things come in small packages](#)
[the best things in life are free](#)
[best wishes](#)
[bestie](#)
[bestow on \(someone\)](#)
[bet a huckleberry to a persimmon](#)
[bet on it](#)
[bet on \(someone or something\)](#)
[bet on the wrong horse](#)
[bet \(one's\) boots](#)
[bet the farm](#)
[bet the ranch](#)
[bet with \(someone\)](#)
[bet you dollars to donuts](#)
[bet your bottom dollar](#)
[bet your life](#)
[bête noire](#)
[betrothed to \(someone\)](#)
[better be an old man's darling than a young man's slave](#)
[better be going](#)
[better be the head of a dog than the tail of a lion](#)
[better dead than red](#)
[better get moving](#)
[better get on her horse](#)
[\(one's\) better half](#)
[\(one's\) better half](#)
[the better half of \(something\)](#)
[better keep quiet about it](#)
[better keep still about it](#)
[better late than never](#)
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[better luck next time](#)
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[better off](#)
[better off dead](#)
[better off than \(someone\)](#)
[better \(oneself\)](#)
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[better than nothing](#)
[better than sex](#)
[better the devil you know](#)
[better the devil you know than the devil you don't](#)
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[better \(to be\) safe than sorry](#)
[better you than me](#)
[betting on](#)
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[between hawk and buzzard](#)
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[between jobs](#)
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[between the devil and the deep blue sea](#)
[between the hammer and the anvil](#)
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[between wind and water](#)
[between you and me](#)
[between you, \(and\) me, and the bedpost](#)
[between you, me, and the lamppost](#)
[betwixt and between](#)
[bevy of beauties](#)
[beware of Greeks bearing gifts](#)
[beware of \(someone or something\)](#)

[beware the ides of March](#)
[beyond a reasonable doubt](#)
[beyond a/the shadow of a doubt](#)
[beyond belief](#)
[beyond caring](#)
[beyond description](#)
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[beyond help](#)
[beyond her ken](#)
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[beyond me](#)
[beyond measure](#)
[beyond \(one's\) depth](#)
[beyond \(one's\) ken](#)
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[beyond price](#)
[beyond question](#)
[beyond reach](#)
[beyond recall](#)
[beyond reproach](#)
[beyond the black stump](#)
[beyond the call of duty](#)
[beyond the horizon](#)
[beyond the pale](#)
[beyond words](#)
[BFD](#)
[bffl](#)
[bias against \(someone or something\)](#)
[biased against \(someone or something\)](#)
[Bible-basher](#)
[Bible-thumper](#)
[biblical](#)
[bid adieu to \(someone or something\)](#)
[bid \(someone or something\) adieu](#)

[bid \(something\) down](#)
[bid \(something\) for \(something\)](#)
[bid \(something\) on \(something\)](#)
[bid up](#)
[bide \(one's\) time](#)
[big and bold](#)
[big and burly](#)
[the Big Apple](#)
[big around as a molasses barrel](#)
[big as all outdoors](#)
[big as life](#)
[a big ask](#)
[big boned](#)
[big boy](#)
[big-boy pants](#)
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[big brass](#)
[big break](#)
[big brother](#)
[Big Brother is watching you](#)
[\(the\) big bucks](#)
[big bully](#)
[big cheese](#)
[big deal](#)
[big drink of water](#)
[big enchilada](#)
[the big eye](#)
[big eyes](#)
[big fat](#)
[a big fish](#)
[a big fish in a small pond](#)
[a big frog in a small pond](#)
[big-girl pants](#)
[a big girl's blouse](#)
[big gun](#)
[big guy](#)
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[big hitter](#)
[big in \(something or somewhere\)](#)
[big jump](#)
[big kahuna](#)
[big leagues](#)
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[big moment](#)
[a big mouth](#)
[big name](#)
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[big ol'](#)
[big old](#)
[big ole](#)
[big on \(something\)](#)
[big picture](#)
[a big send-off](#)
[a big shot](#)
[big sleep](#)
[big spender](#)
[big stink](#)
[big talk](#)
[big tent](#)
[big things come in small packages](#)
[big ticket](#)
[big time](#)
[big top](#)
[big up](#)
[a big wheel](#)
[big with child](#)
[big with \(someone\)](#)
[big year](#)
[bigger fish to fry](#)
[bigger than the sum of its parts](#)
[the bigger they are, the harder they fall](#)
[the bigger they are, the harder they fall](#)
[the bigger they come, the harder they fall](#)

[the biggest frog in the puddle](#)
[bigly](#)
[bigmouth](#)
[bilk \(one\) out of \(something\)](#)
[bill and coo](#)
[Bill Cosby sweater](#)
[bill of goods](#)
[a bill of health](#)
[bill \(one\) for \(something\)](#)
[billet-doux](#)
[billow out](#)
[bind over](#)
[bind \(someone or something\) together](#)
[bind \(something or someone\) down](#)
[bind up](#)
[binge and purge](#)
[binge-watch](#)
[bio queen](#)
[biological clock is ticking](#)
[bird-brain](#)
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[a bird in the hand](#)
[a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush](#)
[bird of \(one's\) own brain](#)
[bird of passage](#)
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[birds of a feather](#)
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[birth tourism](#)
[a bit](#)
[bit back](#)
[a bit beyond \(one's\) ken](#)
[bit by bit](#)
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[a bit from column A a bit from column B](#)
[a bit green](#)
[bit head off](#)
[bit her in the arse](#)
[bit her in the ass](#)
[bit her tongue](#)
[bit into](#)
[bit it off](#)
[a bit much](#)
[a bit obtuse](#)
[a bit of a sticky situation](#)
[a bit of a stretch](#)
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[bit of fluff](#)
[a bit of how's your father](#)
[a bit of rough](#)
[bit of skirt](#)
[a bit off](#)
[bit off more than he can chew](#)
[bit on it](#)
[a bit on the side](#)
[a bit out of it](#)
[a bit part](#)
[bit player](#)
[bit rough and ready](#)
[bit rough around the edges](#)
[a bit too much](#)
[bitch about \(someone or something\)](#)
[bitch and moan](#)
[a bitch of \(something\)](#)
[bitch off](#)
[bitch up](#)
[bitchy resting face](#)
[bite back](#)
[bite into \(something or someone\)](#)
[bite me](#)

[a bite of the cherry](#)
[bite of the reality sandwich](#)
[bite of the reality sandwich](#)
[bite off](#)
[bite off more than \(one\) can chew](#)
[bite on \(something or someone\)](#)
[bite \(one's\) head off](#)
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[bite \(one's\) nails](#)
[bite \(one's\) thumb at](#)
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[bite \(someone\) in the arse](#)
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[bite the big one](#)
[bite the biscuit](#)
[bite the bullet](#)
[bite the dust](#)
[bite the hand that feeds \(you\)](#)
[bite the ice](#)
[a bite to eat](#)
[bite your tongue!](#)
[bites the big one](#)
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[bits and bobs](#)
[bitten by the same bug](#)
[a bitter pill](#)
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[blab around](#)
[blab out](#)
[black and blue](#)
[black and white](#)
[black as a raven](#)
[black as a raven's feather](#)
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[black as a skillet](#)
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[black as ink](#)
[black as is painted](#)
[black as Newgate's knocker](#)
[black as the ace of spades](#)
[black as the devil](#)
[black as the minister's coat](#)
[black as thunder](#)
[black babies](#)
[black book](#)
[a black day](#)
[black eye](#)
[Black Friday](#)
[black gold](#)
[black gum](#)
[black hole](#)
[Black Lives Matter](#)
[black look](#)
[black magic](#)
[Black Maria](#)
[a black mark](#)
[a black mark beside \(one's\) name](#)
[black on black](#)
[black out](#)
[the black ox has trod upon \(one's\) foot](#)
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[black rider](#)
[Black Russian](#)
[the black sheep of the family](#)
[black-silk barge](#)
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[black triangle](#)
[blacklist](#)
[blackmail \(someone\) into \(something\)](#)
[blah, blah, blah](#)
[blame Canada](#)
[blame for \(something\)](#)

[the blame for \(something\)](#)
[blame game](#)
[blame on \(someone\)](#)
[blanch at \(something\)](#)
[blanch with \(an emotion\)](#)
[blank canvas](#)
[a blank check](#)
[a blank cheque](#)
[blank look on \(one's\) face](#)
[blank out](#)
[blanket \(someone or something\) with \(something\)](#)
[blanket term](#)
[blare out](#)
[blast away](#)
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[blast off](#)
[blast \(someone or something\) to kingdom come](#)
[blast to smithereens](#)
[blasted to smithereens](#)
[blaze away at \(someone or something\)](#)
[blaze down on \(someone or something\)](#)
[blaze \(the/a\) trail](#)
[blaze up](#)
[blaze with \(something\)](#)
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[blazing star](#)
[bleach out](#)
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[bleed \(someone or something\) dry](#)
[bleed \(someone\) white](#)
[bleed the lizard](#)
[bleed to death](#)
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[bleep out](#)
[blend in\(to\) \(something\)](#)

[blend together](#)
[bless my stars](#)
[bless \(one\) with \(something\)](#)
[bless \(one's\) cotton socks](#)
[bless \(one's\) heart](#)
[bless \(one's\) lucky star\(s\)](#)
[bless the world with \(one's\) heels](#)
[bless you](#)
[bless your pointy little head](#)
[blessed](#)
[the blessed event](#)
[blessed is he who expects nothing, for he shall never be disappointed](#)
[blessed with \(something\)](#)
[a blessing in disguise](#)
[blew a fuse](#)
[blew a hole in](#)
[blew a kiss](#)
[blew a raspberry](#)
[blew a strawberry](#)
[blew away the cobwebs](#)
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[blew her out of the water](#)
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[blew it wide open](#)
[blew itself out](#)
[blew off](#)
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[blew sky high](#)
[blew smoke](#)
[blew something to smithereens](#)
[blew the coals](#)
[blew the gaff](#)
[blew the lid off](#)
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[blew them a kiss](#)
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[a blight on the land](#)
[blimp out](#)
[a blind alley](#)
[blind as a bat](#)
[blind date](#)
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[blind \(someone\) with science](#)
[blind spot](#)
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[blink at \(something\)](#)
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[blood in the water](#)
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[blood money](#)
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[blood sister](#)
[blood will have blood](#)
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[blood, sweat, and tears](#)
[bloodied but unbowed](#)
[bloodshot eyes](#)
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[bloody minded](#)
[bloom is off the rose](#)
[bloom is off the \(something\)](#)
[bloom of youth](#)
[blossom forth](#)
[blossom into \(something\)](#)
[blossom out](#)
[a blot on \(one's\) escutcheon](#)
[a blot on the escutcheon](#)
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[blot out](#)
[blotto\(ed\)](#)
[blow a fuse](#)
[blow a gasket](#)
[blow a hole in \(something\)](#)
[blow a kiss](#)
[blow a raspberry](#)
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[blow brains out](#)
[a blow-by-blow account](#)
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[blow him out of the water](#)
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[blow \(someone\) a kiss](#)
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[blow \(something\) to smithereens](#)
[blow \(something\) up out of proportion](#)
[blow \(something\) wide open](#)
[blow the coals](#)
[blow the coop](#)
[blow the gaff](#)
[blow the joint](#)
[blow the lid off \(something\)](#)
[blow the whistle \(on\) \(someone or something\)](#)

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[blow this popsicle stand](#)
[blow this taco stand](#)
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[blow us out of the water](#)
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[blow you a kiss](#)
[blow your brains out](#)
[blow your chance](#)
[blow your cool](#)
[blow your cover](#)
[blow your doors off](#)
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[bluff \(one's\) way into \(something\)](#)
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[blurt out](#)
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[blush with \(an emotion\)](#)
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[board with \(someone\)](#)
[boarded up](#)
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[boast about \(someone or something\)](#)
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[boggle at \(something\)](#)
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[bolster up](#)
[bolt bucket](#)
[bolt down](#)
[a bolt from the blue](#)
[bolt out](#)
[bolt upright](#)
[bomb](#)
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[bombard \(one\) with \(something\)](#)
[bombed](#)
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[a bone to pick](#)
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[boob](#)
[booby prize](#)
[boogie down](#)
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[book in](#)
[book \(on\) out](#)
[book \(one\) on \(something\)](#)
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[bore testimony to](#)
[bore the arse off \(one\)](#)
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[born in a barn](#)
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[born under a lucky star](#)
[born with a caul on \(one's\) head](#)
[born with a silver spoon in \(one's\) mouth](#)
[born within the sound of Bow bells](#)
[born yesterday](#)
[borrow from \(someone or something\)](#)
[borrow trouble](#)
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[bosom buddy](#)
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[bother \(one's\) \(pretty little\) head about \(something\)](#)
[bother with \(someone or something\)](#)
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[bottle \(something\) away](#)
[bottle up](#)
[bottom bitch](#)
[bottom drawer](#)
[bottom edge](#)
[bottom falls out](#)
[bottom feeder](#)
[the bottom fell out of \(something\)](#)
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[bounce along](#)
[bounce around](#)
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[bounce off \(of\) \(someone or something\)](#)
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[bound hand and foot](#)
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[bound up in \(something\)](#)
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[box clever](#)
[box in](#)
[box office](#)
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[a box on the ear](#)
[box \(one's\) ears](#)
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[box score](#)
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[box the compass](#)
[box up](#)
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[brag about \(someone or something\)](#)
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[brain drain](#)
[brain fart](#)
[brain \(someone\)](#)

[brain surgeon](#)
[brain surgery](#)
[brain trust](#)
[the brains behind \(something\)](#)
[brains out](#)
[brainwash \(someone\) with \(something\)](#)
[brainwave](#)
[branch off](#)
[branch out](#)
[brand new](#)
[brass balls](#)
[brass ceiling](#)
[brass farthing](#)
[brass monkey](#)
[brass monkey weather](#)
[brass monkeys](#)
[brass neck](#)
[brass off](#)
[brass tacks](#)
[brassed off](#)
[brave out](#)
[brave the elements](#)
[brazen \(it\) out](#)
[brazen it out](#)
[breach of decorum](#)
[breach of etiquette](#)
[breach of promise](#)
[bread always falls on the buttered side](#)
[bread and butter](#)
[a bread-and-butter letter](#)
[bread and circuses](#)
[bread and water](#)
[bread is the staff of life](#)
[break](#)
[break a butterfly on a wheel](#)
[break a butterfly on the wheel](#)
[break a lance](#)



[break a leg](#)
[break a record](#)
[break a story](#)
[break a sweat](#)
[break \(a/the\) code](#)
[break \(a/the\) habit](#)
[break \(a/the\) law](#)
[break \(a/the\) spell](#)
[break against \(something\)](#)
[break away](#)
[break back](#)
[break balls](#)
[break bread](#)
[break bread with \(someone\)](#)
[break camp](#)
[break cover](#)
[break down](#)
[break down and cry](#)
[break duck](#)
[break even](#)
[break faith with \(someone or something\)](#)
[break fall](#)
[break fall](#)
[break for \(someone or something\)](#)
[break free](#)
[break ground](#)
[break her](#)
[break her serve](#)
[break his lance](#)
[break in](#)
[break into](#)
[break into a gallop](#)
[break into a smile](#)
[break in\(to\) tears](#)
[break it to](#)
[break it up](#)
[break law](#)

[break loose](#)
[break loose from \(something\)](#)
[break-neck](#)
[break new ground](#)
[break of day](#)
[break off](#)
[break one down](#)
[break \(one\) of \(something\)](#)
[break \(one's\) back](#)
[break \(one's\) balls](#)
[break \(one's\) duck](#)
[break \(one's\) fall](#)
[break \(one's\) fall](#)
[break \(one's\) heart](#)
[break \(one's\) neck](#)
[break \(one's\) silence](#)
[break \(one's\) stride](#)
[break \(one's\) word](#)
[break open](#)
[break our heart](#)
[break our neck](#)
[break our silence](#)
[break our stride](#)
[break our word](#)
[break out](#)
[break out in a cold sweat](#)
[break out in a rash](#)
[break out in\(to\) tears](#)
[break out with \(something\)](#)
[break over \(something\)](#)
[break ranks](#)
[break \(someone\)](#)
[break \(someone's\) serve](#)
[break \(something\) to pieces](#)
[break \(something\) to \(someone\)](#)
[break spell](#)
[break step](#)

break the back of (something)

break the bank

break the buck

break the code

break the cycle

break the deadlock

break the fourth wall

break the habit

break the ice

break the law

break the mold

break the news

break the Sabbath

break the seal

break the silence

break (the/a) record

break (the/a) story

break their back

break their balls

break their duck

break their fall

break their fall

break their heart

break their lance

break their neck

break their serve

break their silence

break their stride

break their word

break them

break them down

break them of

break this to

break through

break to pieces

break up

break up with (someone)



[break wind](#)
[break with \(something or someone\)](#)
[break with tradition](#)
[breakfast of champions](#)
[breaking and entering](#)
[breaking point](#)
[breakneck](#)
[a breakout](#)
[a breath of fresh air](#)
[breathe a sigh of relief](#)
[breathe a word](#)
[breathe down \(one's\) neck](#)
[breathe easily](#)
[breathe easy](#)
[breathe fire](#)
[breathe freely](#)
[breathe in](#)
[breathe into \(something\)](#)
[breathe \(new\) life into \(someone or something\)](#)
[breathe \(one's\) last \(breath\)](#)
[breathe out](#)
[breathe \(up\)on \(someone or something\)](#)
[breathing room](#)
[breathing space](#)
[breathing spell](#)
[bred in the bone](#)
[breed like rabbits](#)
[breeding ground](#)
[breeding will tell](#)
[breeze along](#)
[breeze away](#)
[breeze in\(to\)](#)
[breeze off](#)
[breeze out](#)
[breeze through \(something\)](#)
[brevity is the soul of wit](#)
[brew a plot](#)

[brew up \(something\)](#)
[Brexit](#)
[Brexiter](#)
[bribe \(someone\) into \(doing something\)](#)
[brick-and-mortar](#)
[brick by brick](#)
[brick house](#)
[brick in](#)
[brick in \(one's\) hat](#)
[brick up](#)
[brick wall](#)
[bricks and mortar](#)
[bridge over \(something\)](#)
[bridge the gap](#)
[a bridge too far](#)
[Bridgeway](#)
[bridle at \(someone or something\)](#)
[brief \(someone\) about \(someone or something\)](#)
[bright and breezy](#)
[bright and early](#)
[bright as a button](#)
[bright as a new pin](#)
[bright-eyed and bushy-tailed](#)
[a bright idea](#)
[bright-line](#)
[bright-line rule](#)
[bright shiny object](#)
[bright spark](#)
[bright spot](#)
[bright young thing](#)
[brighten up](#)
[brighten up \(the\) day](#)
[brim over](#)
[brim with \(something\)](#)
[bring a charge against \(someone\)](#)
[bring a dog to heel](#)
[bring a knife to a gunfight](#)

[bring a lump to \(one's\) throat](#)
[bring a verdict in](#)
[bring about \(something\)](#)
[bring all together](#)
[bring along](#)
[bring around](#)
[bring arse to an anchor](#)
[bring ass to an anchor](#)
[bring away](#)
[bring back](#)
[bring back out](#)
[bring back to life](#)
[bring back to reality](#)
[bring before](#)
[bring crashing down](#)
[bring down](#)
[bring down a notch](#)
[bring down a peg](#)
[bring down on](#)
[bring down on head](#)
[bring down the curtain \(on something\)](#)
[bring down the house](#)
[bring down to earth](#)
[bring down to her level](#)
[bring forth](#)
[bring forward](#)
[bring full circle](#)
[bring herself to](#)
[bring home](#)
[bring home the bacon](#)
[bring home to](#)
[bring in](#)
[bring in from the cold](#)
[bring into action](#)
[bring into being](#)
[bring into blossom](#)
[bring into contact with](#)

[bring into disrepute](#)
[bring into effect](#)
[bring into focus](#)
[bring into line](#)
[bring into play](#)
[bring into prominence](#)
[bring into question](#)
[bring into service](#)
[bring into the world](#)
[bring into view](#)
[bring it on](#)
[bring it weak](#)
[bring off](#)
[bring on](#)
[bring one along](#)
[bring one around](#)
[bring one back out](#)
[bring one back to life](#)
[bring \(one\) back to reality](#)
[bring one before](#)
[bring one down](#)
[bring \(one\) down to earth](#)
[bring \(one\) home](#)
[bring one in](#)
[bring \(one\) low](#)
[bring one out](#)
[bring one out in droves](#)
[bring one out of](#)
[bring \(one\) out of \(one's\) shell](#)
[bring \(one\) over](#)
[bring one over from](#)
[bring \(one\) through \(something\)](#)
[bring one to](#)
[bring one to](#)
[bring one to a boil](#)
[bring one to a dead end](#)
[bring one to a halt](#)

bring one to a standstill
bring (one) to account
bring (one) to book
bring (one) to justice
bring one to life
bring one to mind
bring (one) to (one's) feet
bring one to one's knees
bring (one) to (one's) senses
bring one to the bargaining table
bring one to the peace table
bring (one) to the test
bring one to trial
bring one together
bring one under
bring one up
bring (one) up for (something)
bring (one) up on charges
bring (one) up on (something)
bring (one) up sharply
bring (one) up short
bring one up to
bring one up to date
bring (one) up with a start
bring (one's) arse to an anchor
bring (one's) ass to an anchor
bring out
bring out of mothballs
bring out of shell
bring out the best in (one)
bring over
bring over to
bring owls to Athens
bring round
bring sand to the beach
bring (someone) back out
bring (someone) down a notch (or two)

[bring \(someone\) down a peg \(or two\)](#)
[bring \(someone\) in from the cold](#)
[bring \(someone\) into the world](#)
[bring \(someone or oneself\) to \(do something\)](#)
[bring \(someone or something\) back to life](#)
[bring \(someone or something\) before \(someone or something\)](#)
[bring \(someone or something\) into action](#)
[bring \(someone or something\) into contact with \(someone or something\)](#)
[bring \(someone or something\) into line](#)
[bring \(someone or something\) into prominence](#)
[bring \(someone or something\) into question](#)
[bring \(someone or something\) into view](#)
[bring \(someone or something\) out in droves](#)
[bring \(someone or something\) out of \(somewhere or someone\)](#)
[bring \(someone or something\) over from \(somewhere\)](#)
[bring \(someone or something\) to](#)
[bring \(someone or something\) to a boil](#)
[bring \(someone or something\) to a dead end](#)
[bring \(someone or something\) to a halt](#)
[bring \(someone or something\) to a standstill](#)
[bring \(someone or something\) to life](#)
[bring \(someone or something\) to \(someone's or something's\) knees](#)
[bring \(someone or something\) to the bargaining table](#)
[bring \(someone or something\) to the peace table](#)
[bring \(someone or something\) to trial](#)
[bring \(someone or something\) together](#)
[bring \(someone or something\) under \(one's\) control](#)
[bring \(someone or something\) under \(someone or something\)](#)
[bring \(someone or something\) up to date](#)
[bring \(someone\) to heel](#)
[bring \(someone\) to task](#)
[bring \(someone\) to terms](#)
[bring \(something\) crashing down \(around\) \(one\)](#)
[bring \(something\) down on \(one's\) head](#)
[bring \(something\) down on \(oneself\)](#)
[bring \(something\) down to \(one's\) level](#)
[bring \(something\) full circle](#)

[bring \(something\) home to \(someone\)](#)
[bring \(something\) into being](#)
[bring \(something\) into blossom](#)
[bring \(something\) into disrepute](#)
[bring \(something\) into effect](#)
[bring \(something\) into focus](#)
[bring \(something\) into play](#)
[bring \(something\) into service](#)
[bring \(something or someone\) all together](#)
[bring \(something or someone\) over to](#)
[bring \(something\) out of mothballs](#)
[bring \(something\) to a close](#)
[bring \(something\) to a head](#)
[bring \(something\) to a successful conclusion](#)
[bring \(something\) to bear](#)
[bring \(something\) to fruition](#)
[bring \(something\) to \(one's\) aid](#)
[bring \(something\) to \(one's\) attention](#)
[bring \(something\) to rest](#)
[bring \(something\) to the fore](#)
[bring \(something\) to the party](#)
[bring \(something\) to the table](#)
[bring \(something\) with](#)
[bring \(something\) within a/the range](#)
[bring \(something\) within range](#)
[bring their arses to an anchor](#)
[bring their ass to an anchor](#)
[bring themselves to](#)
[bring through](#)
[bring to](#)
[bring to a boil](#)
[bring to a dead end](#)
[bring to a halt](#)
[bring to a standstill](#)
[bring to account](#)
[bring to book](#)
[bring to feet](#)

bring to heel
bring to justice
bring to knees
bring to life
bring to light
bring to mind
bring to pass
bring to senses
bring to task
bring to terms
bring to the bargaining table
bring to the peace table
bring to the test
bring to their aid
bring to their attention
bring to trial
bring together
bring under
bring under control
bring up
bring up for
bring up on
bring up on charges
bring up sharply
bring up short
bring up the rear
bring up to
bring up to date
bring up with a start
bring with
bring within a range
bring within range
bring your arse to an anchor
bring your ass to an anchor
bring yourself to
brink of disaster
bristle at (something)

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[bristle with rage](#)
[broach \(one's\) claret](#)
[broach \(something\) with \(someone\)](#)
[broad across the beam](#)
[broad as a barn door](#)
[broad \(brush\) strokes](#)
[broad church](#)
[broad in the beam](#)
[broad shoulders](#)
[broaden \(one's\) horizons](#)
[broaden out](#)
[Broadway](#)
[broken dreams](#)
[broken-hearted](#)
[broken record](#)
[a broken reed](#)
[broken vessel](#)
[broken wind](#)
[bromance](#)
[Bronx cheer](#)
[brony](#)
[brood about \(someone or something\)](#)
[brood over](#)
[broom closet](#)
[bros before hoes](#)
[BROTUS](#)
[browbeat \(one\) into \(something\)](#)
[brown as a berry](#)
[brown-bag it](#)
[brown bagger](#)
[brown bread](#)
[brown energy](#)
[brown-noser](#)
[brown off](#)
[brown out](#)
[brown power](#)
[brown study](#)

[brown thumb](#)
[browned off](#)
[brownie point](#)
[brownnose](#)
[browse on \(something\)](#)
[browse over](#)
[bruised and battered](#)
[bruit about](#)
[brush against \(someone or something\)](#)
[brush aside](#)
[brush away](#)
[brush by \(someone or something\)](#)
[brush down](#)
[brush off](#)
[brush over](#)
[brush \(something\) under the carpet](#)
[brush \(something\) under the mat](#)
[brush \(something\) under the rug](#)
[brush up](#)
[brush with death](#)
[Brussels](#)
[BTW](#)
[bubble over](#)
[bubble up](#)
[buck fever](#)
[buck for \(something\)](#)
[buck naked](#)
[buck off](#)
[the buck stops here](#)
[buck the system](#)
[buck the trend](#)
[buck up](#)
[bucket down](#)
[bucket list](#)
[bucket of bolts](#)
[buckle down](#)
[buckle in](#)



[buckle under](#)
[buckle up](#)
[Buckley's](#)
[Buckley's and none](#)
[Buckley's chance](#)
[Buckley's hope](#)
[bucks party](#)
[bud out](#)
[bud scale](#)
[a budding genius](#)
[buddy up](#)
[budget \(something\) for \(something\)](#)
[buff down](#)
[buff out](#)
[buff the muffin](#)
[buff up](#)
[bug off](#)
[bug out](#)
[bugger all](#)
[bugger off](#)
[Buggins' turn](#)
[build a better mousetrap](#)
[build a case against \(someone or something\)](#)
[build bridges](#)
[build castles in Spain](#)
[build castles in the air](#)
[build castles in the sky](#)
[build down](#)
[build in](#)
[build into \(something\)](#)
[build \(one's\) hopes on \(someone or something\)](#)
[build on\(to\) \(something\)](#)
[build out of \(something\)](#)
[build out onto \(something\)](#)
[build \(something\) on sand](#)
[build \(something\) out over \(something\)](#)
[build to order](#)

[build up](#)
[build up a head of steam](#)
[build up to \(something\)](#)
[built-in](#)
[built like a brick outhouse](#)
[built like a tank](#)
[bulge out](#)
[bulge with \(something\)](#)
[bulger](#)
[bulk bill](#)
[bulk billing](#)
[bulk up](#)
[a bull in a china shop](#)
[bull session](#)
[bulldoze into \(something\)](#)
[bulldoze \(one's\) way through \(something\)](#)
[bulldoze through \(something\)](#)
[bulletproof](#)
[bully for you](#)
[a bully is always a coward](#)
[bully \(one\) into \(something\)](#)
[bully pulpit](#)
[bum around](#)
[bum around with \(one\)](#)
[bum chum](#)
[bum out](#)
[a bum rap](#)
[bum rush](#)
[bum \(something\) off \(someone\)](#)
[a bum steer](#)
[bumble along](#)
[Bumfuck, Egypt](#)
[bummed \(out\)](#)
[bump along](#)
[bump along the bottom](#)
[bump and grind](#)
[bump heads with](#)

[bump in the road](#)
[bump into \(someone or something\)](#)
[bump off](#)
[bump that](#)
[bump up](#)
[bump \(up\) against \(someone or something\)](#)
[bumper to bumper](#)
[a bumpy ride](#)
[bums in seats](#)
[bums on seats](#)
[bum's rush](#)
[bun fight](#)
[a bunch of baloney](#)
[a bunch of fives](#)
[a bunch of malarkey](#)
[bunch up](#)
[bundle of energy](#)
[bundle of joy](#)
[bundle of laughs](#)
[a bundle of nerves](#)
[bundle off](#)
[bundle \(someone\) into \(something\)](#)
[bundle up](#)
[bung in](#)
[bung up](#)
[bunged up](#)
[bungle up](#)
[bunk down \(for the night\)](#)
[bunk off](#)
[bunk \(something\)](#)
[bunk \(up\) together](#)
[bunk \(up\) with \(someone\)](#)
[bunked](#)
[bunny girl](#)
[bunny hop](#)
[bunny hug](#)
[buoy up](#)

[burden of proof](#)
[burden \(someone\) with \(something\)](#)
[burgeon out](#)
[buried away](#)
[buried her in](#)
[buried the hatchet](#)
[buried treasure](#)
[buried under](#)
[burn](#)
[burn a hole in \(one's\) pocket](#)
[burn at the stake](#)
[burn away](#)
[burn down](#)
[burn for \(someone or something\)](#)
[burn in\(to\) \(something\)](#)
[burn not your house to fright the mouse away](#)
[burn off](#)
[burn \(one\) in effigy](#)
[burn \(one\) out of \(something\)](#)
[burn \(one's\) boats](#)
[burn \(one's\) bridges](#)
[burn \(one's\) bridges in front of \(one\)](#)
[burn \(one's\) fingers](#)
[burn out](#)
[burn rubber](#)
[burn the candle at both ends](#)
[burn the midnight oil](#)
[burn to a cinder](#)
[burn to a crisp](#)
[burn up](#)
[burn up the road](#)
[burn with a low blue flame](#)
[burn with \(something\)](#)
[burned out](#)
[burned up](#)
[burning question](#)
[a burnt child dreads the fire](#)

[burp the worm](#)
[burst a blood vessel](#)
[burst at the seams](#)
[burst forth](#)
[burst in](#)
[burst into flame\(s\)](#)
[burst into sight](#)
[burst into \(someplace\)](#)
[burst into tears](#)
[burst \(one's\) bubble](#)
[burst \(one's/someone's\) cherry](#)
[burst onto the scene](#)
[burst out](#)
[burst out crying](#)
[burst out into \(something\)](#)
[burst out laughing](#)
[burst out of \(somewhere or something\)](#)
[burst out with \(something\)](#)
[burst \(someone's\) bubble](#)
[burst the bubble of \(someone\)](#)
[burst the bubble of \(someone\)](#)
[burst through \(something\)](#)
[burst \(up\)on \(one\)](#)
[burst \(up\)on the scene](#)
[burst with \(an emotion\)](#)
[burst with excitement](#)
[burst with joy](#)
[burst with pride](#)
[bury away](#)
[bury in](#)
[bury \(one's\) head in the sand](#)
[bury the hatchet](#)
[bury the lead](#)
[bury under \(something\)](#)
[bush league](#)
[bush out](#)
[bushel and a peck \(and some in a gourd\)](#)

[busied herself with](#)
[the busiest men have the most leisure](#)
[the business](#)
[business as usual](#)
[business before pleasure](#)
[the business end of \(something\)](#)
[business girl](#)
[business is business](#)
[business woman](#)
[a busman's holiday](#)
[busman's holiday](#)
[bust a bronco](#)
[bust a cap in \(someone's\) ass](#)
[bust a gut](#)
[bust a move](#)
[bust ass cold](#)
[bust ass out of \(some place\)](#)
[bust \(one\)](#)
[bust \(one's\) ass](#)
[bust \(one's\) balls](#)
[bust \(one's\) butt](#)
[bust \(one's\) butt](#)
[bust \(one's\) chops](#)
[bust \(one's\) hump](#)
[bust \(one's/someone's\) cherry](#)
[bust out](#)
[bust out laughing](#)
[bust \(some\) suds](#)
[bust \(someone\) one](#)
[bust \(someone or something\) wide open](#)
[bust up](#)
[busted](#)
[busted flush](#)
[bustle about](#)
[bustle around](#)
[bustle off](#)
[busy as a beaver](#)

[busy as a hibernating bear](#)
[busy beaver](#)
[busy little beaver](#)
[busy with \(something\)](#)
[busy work](#)
[but for \(something\)](#)
[but good](#)
[\(but\) not in the biblical sense](#)
[but seriously, folks](#)
[\(but\) that's another story](#)
[but that's just me](#)
[but then](#)
[but what do I know](#)
[but who's counting](#)
[but you can't hide](#)
[butt-head](#)
[butt heads](#)
[butt in](#)
[butt into \(something\)](#)
[\(one's\) butt is on the line](#)
[butt naked](#)
[the butt of a/the joke](#)
[the butt of the joke](#)
[butt out](#)
[butt ugly](#)
[butt \(up\) against \(someone or something\)](#)
[butter-and-egg man](#)
[butter \(one's\) bread on both sides](#)
[butter up](#)
[butter wouldn't melt \(in \(one's\) mouth\)](#)
[butterfingers](#)
[butterflies in \(one's\) stomach](#)
[butterfly on a wheel](#)
[button-down](#)
[button it](#)
[button nose](#)
[button \(one's\) lip](#)

[button \(something\) down](#)
[button up](#)
[buttoned-down](#)
[buttoned-up](#)
[buttonhole \(someone\)](#)
[buttress up](#)
[buy a pig in a poke](#)
[buy \(a/one's\) wolf ticket](#)
[buy a/the round \(of drinks\)](#)
[buy at](#)
[buy cheap, buy twice](#)
[buy in](#)
[buy into \(something\)](#)
[buy it](#)
[buy low, sell high](#)
[buy off](#)
[buy \(one's\) way in\(to\) \(something\)](#)
[buy \(one's\) way out \(of something\)](#)
[buy \(someone or something\) out](#)
[buy \(something\) back \(from someone\)](#)
[buy \(something\) on credit](#)
[buy \(something\) on time](#)
[buy \(something\) sight unseen](#)
[buy straw hats in winter](#)
[buy the big one](#)
[buy the box](#)
[buy the farm](#)
[buy time](#)
[buy to let](#)
[buy trouble](#)
[buy up](#)
[buy wolf tickets](#)
[buy you a drink](#)
[buzz along](#)
[buzz for \(one\)](#)
[buzz in\(to\)](#)
[buzz off](#)

[buzz with \(something\)](#)
[buzz word](#)
[by a hair](#)
[by a hair's breadth](#)
[by a long chalk](#)
[by a long shot](#)
[by a mile](#)
[by a nose](#)
[by a show of hands](#)
[by a whisker](#)
[by a wide margin](#)
[by accident or design](#)
[by acclamation](#)
[by all accounts](#)
[by all accounts](#)
[by all appearances](#)
[by all means](#)
[by all means of \(something\)](#)
[by all odds](#)
[by and by](#)
[by and large](#)
[by ankle express](#)
[by any chance](#)
[by any means](#)
[by any stretch](#)
[by any stretch of the imagination](#)
[by brute strength](#)
[by chance](#)
[by check](#)
[by choice](#)
[by coincidence](#)
[by cracky](#)
[by day](#)
[by definition](#)
[by degrees](#)
[by design](#)
[by dint of \(something\)](#)

by ear
by fair means or foul
by far
by fits and starts
by force of habit
by George
by godfrey
by guess and by golly
by guess and by gosh
by guess or by golly
by guess or by gosh
by half
by hand
by heart
by hell or high water
by hook or (by) crook
by itself
by leaps and bounds
by main strength and awkwardness
by means of (something)
by mistake
by nature
by no means
by no stretch
by no stretch of the imagination
by numbers
by (one's) lights
by (one's) own hand
by (one)self
by reason of
by return mail
by return post
by rights
by rote
by shank's mare
by stealth
by the back door

by the book
by the by
by the day
by the dozen(s)
by the end of the day
by the grace of God
by the handful
by the hour
by the month
by the name (of)
by the nape of (one's)/its/the neck
by the numbers
by the same token
by the scruff of (one's)/its/the neck
by the seat of (one's) pants
by the short hairs
by the skin of (one's) teeth
by the sweat of (one's) brow
by the thousand
by the thousands
by the time
by the way
by the week
by the year
by their lights
by their own hands
by themselves
by trade
by turns
by virtue of (something)
by water
by way of (something)
by weight
by word of mouth
Bye Felicia
bygone days
bystander apathy

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[bystander effect](#)

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C

c est la vie

C-note

c u next Tuesday

cabin fever

cackling geese

cadge (something) from (someone)

Caesar's wife must be above suspicion

cage (someone or something) in

cage (someone or something) up (in something)

cajole (someone) into (something)

cajole (someone) out of (something)

the cake is a lie

(one's) cake is dough

cake (someone) with (something)

cakes and ale

cakewalk

calculate on (something)

calculate (something) into (something)

calculated risk

calendar year

calf love

call (a group) together

call a halt to (something)

call a meeting

call a spade a spade

call a/the meeting to order

call about (something)

call again

call (all) the shots

call around

call at (some place)

call attention to (someone or something)

call away

[call back](#)
[call bluff](#)
[call by \(a name\)](#)
[call down](#)
[call for \(someone or something\)](#)
[call forth](#)
[call forward](#)
[call girl](#)
[call her into question](#)
[call her names](#)
[call her off](#)
[call her on](#)
[call her on the carpet](#)
[call her out](#)
[call her over](#)
[call her own](#)
[call her shots](#)
[call her to account](#)
[call her to attention](#)
[call her to heel](#)
[call her to mind](#)
[call her up](#)
[call him about](#)
[call hogs](#)
[call in \(one's\) chips](#)
[call in sick](#)
[call in\(to\)](#)
[call it a day](#)
[call it a night](#)
[call it even](#)
[call it quits](#)
[call me around](#)
[call me away](#)
[call me back](#)
[call me down](#)
[call me forth](#)
[call me in](#)

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[call my service](#)
[call no man happy till he dies](#)
[call of nature](#)
[call off](#)
[call off the/\(one's\) dogs](#)
[call on](#)
[call one about](#)
[call \(one\) forward](#)
[call \(one\) names](#)
[call \(one\) on the carpet](#)
[call \(one\) over](#)
[call \(one\) to attention](#)
[call \(one's\) bluff](#)
[call \(one's\) own](#)
[call \(one's\) shots](#)
[call out](#)
[call \(someone or something\) into question](#)
[call \(someone\) to heel](#)
[call \(something\) square](#)
[call the dogs off](#)
[call the meeting to order](#)
[call \(the\) roll](#)
[call the shots](#)
[call the tune](#)
[call to account](#)
[call to mind](#)
[call to order](#)
[call to \(someone\)](#)
[call to the bar](#)
[call together](#)
[call up](#)
[call upon \(someone\)](#)
[call you around](#)
[call you away](#)
[call you back](#)
[call you down](#)
[call you forth](#)

[call you forward](#)
[call you in](#)
[call you into question](#)
[call you names](#)
[call you off](#)
[call you on](#)
[call you on the carpet](#)
[call you out](#)
[call you over](#)
[call you to account](#)
[call you to attention](#)
[call you to heel](#)
[call you to mind](#)
[call you up](#)
[call your bluff](#)
[call your own](#)
[call your shots](#)
[called to straw](#)
[calling card](#)
[the calm after a storm](#)
[calm down](#)
[calm your tits](#)
[a camel is a horse designed by a committee](#)
[camel through the eye of a needle](#)
[a camel's nose \(under the tent\)](#)
[camp follower](#)
[camp it up](#)
[camp out](#)
[campaign against \(someone or something\)](#)
[campaign for \(someone or something\)](#)
[can](#)
[can barely hear \(oneself\) think](#)
[can but](#)
[can count on the fingers of one hand](#)
[can dispense with \(something\)](#)
[can \(do something\) on \(one's\) ear](#)
[\(one\) can hardly believe \(one's\) eyes](#)

can hardly hear (oneself) think
can hear the grass grow
Can I be excused?
(Can I) buy you a drink?
Can I call you?
Can I come in?
Can I get by, please?
Can I have a lift?
Can I have (one) call you?
Can I help you?
Can I join you?
Can I leave a message?
Can I see you again?
Can I see you in my office?
Can I speak to (one)?
Can I take a message?
Can I take your order?
Can I tell (one) who's calling?
Can I use your powder room?
can it
can (just) whistle for (something)
can kiss (something) goodbye
can not say boo to a goose
can not see farther than her nose
can not win for losing
can of worms
(one) can scarcely believe (one's) eyes
can see (from) a mile off
can sell an icebox to an Eskimo
can sell ice to Eskimos
can sell sawdust to a lumber mill
can (someone)
can take (something) to the bank
can talk the hind leg(s) off a donkey
can talk the legs off an iron pot
Can we continue this later?
Can you excuse us, please?

Can you hold?
can you imagine
Can you keep a secret?
canary in a coal mine
cancel each other out
cancel (one's) Christmas
cancel out
cancel out (of)
a candidate for a pair of wings
candle in the wind
candy-coat
cannon fodder
cannot bear the sight of
cannot but
cannot carry a note in a bucket
cannot carry a tune in a bucket
cannot help but
cannot live with them
cannot see farther than her nose
cannot see the wood for the trees
cannot stand the sight of
cannot win for losing
can't argue with that
can't be arsed
can't be bothered
can't bear to think about (something)
(one) can't beat that
(one) can't believe (one's) ears
can't boil an egg
can't call (one's) soul (one's) own
can't carry a tune
can't complain
can't do anything with (someone or something)
can't (do something) for nuts
can't (do something) for toffee
can't (do something) to save (one's) life
can't even

can't fight city hall
can't find (one's) butt with both hands
can't for the life of me
can't get enough (of something)
can't get over (something)
can't hack it
can't hear (oneself) think
can't help (doing something)
can't help it
can't hit the (broad) side of a barn
can't hold a candle
can't hold a candle to (someone or something)
can't hold (one's) drink
can't keep (one's) hands off (someone)
can't live with them, can't live without them
can't make head nor tail of (someone or something)
can't make heads or tails (out) of (someone or something)
can't nail (something) down
can't punch (one's) way out of a paper bag
can't rightly say
can't say as I do
can't say boo to a fly
can't say boo to a goose
can't say for sure
can't say that I do
can't say that I have
can't see a hole in a ladder
can't see beyond the end of (one's) nose
can't see farther than the end of (one's) nose
can't see (one's) hand in front of (one's) face
can't see past the end of (one's) nose
can't see straight
can't see the forest for the trees
can't see the wood for the trees
can't seem to
can't stand (someone or something)
can't stand the pace

[can't stand the sight of](#)
[can't stand the sight of \(someone or something\)](#)
[can't take it with you](#)
[can't take \(one's\) eyes off \(of\) \(someone or something\)](#)
[can't tell \(one's\) arse from \(one's\) elbow](#)
[can't thank you enough](#)
[can't think straight](#)
[can't to save her life](#)
[can't wait](#)
[can't win 'em all](#)
[\(one\) can't win for losing](#)
[cap and gown](#)
[cap it \(all\) off](#)
[cap it all off](#)
[cap off](#)
[capitalize on \(something\)](#)
[capitulate to \(someone or something\)](#)
[Captain Obvious](#)
[captain of industry](#)
[captive audience](#)
[capture lightning in a bottle](#)
[capture \(one's\) imagination](#)
[carb-load](#)
[carb-loading](#)
[carbo-load](#)
[carbo-loading](#)
[carbon copy](#)
[card-carrying](#)
[a card-carrying member \(of something\)](#)
[card in](#)
[card out](#)
[cardboard city](#)
[the cards are stacked against \(someone or something\)](#)
[care a fig](#)
[care a hang](#)
[care a hoot](#)
[care a toss](#)

[care about \(someone or something\)](#)
[care for another \(something\)](#)
[care for \(someone or something\)](#)
[care nothing about \(someone or something\)](#)
[care nothing for \(someone or something\)](#)
[care package](#)
[care to dance](#)
[care to \(do something\)](#)
[care to join](#)
[care tuppence](#)
[care two pence](#)
[care two pins](#)
[carp about \(someone or something\)](#)
[carp at \(one\)](#)
[carpe diem](#)
[carried away](#)
[carries a tune](#)
[carries along with](#)
[carries around](#)
[carries away](#)
[carries back](#)
[carries down](#)
[carries fire in one hand and water in the other](#)
[carries forward](#)
[carries it on](#)
[carries it onto](#)
[carries off](#)
[carries on somehow](#)
[carries out](#)
[carries over](#)
[carries the ball](#)
[carries the can](#)
[carries the day](#)
[carries the torch](#)
[carries through](#)
[carrot and stick](#)
[carrot on a stick](#)

carrot or stick
carrot-top
carry
carry
carry a Chinaman on (one's) back
carry a rope in (one's) pocket
carry a secret to (one's)/the grave
carry a torch for (one)
carry a tune
carry (an amount of) weight
carry around
carry away
carry coals
carry down
carry fire in one hand and water in the other
carry forward
carry off
carry on
carry on somehow
carry on without (someone or something)
carry (one) back
carry (one) (somewhere)
carry (one's) own weight
carry (one's) weight
carry (oneself)
carry out
carry over
carry (someone) off their feet
carry (someone or something) about
carry (someone or something) along with (someone or something)
carry (someone or something) over from (somewhere)
carry (someone or something) over to (someplace)
carry (someone's) water
carry (something) into effect
carry (something) onto (something)
carry (something) with (one)
carry the ball

[carry the can](#)
[carry the day](#)
[carry the mail \(for someone\)](#)
[carry the message to Garcia](#)
[carry the torch](#)
[carry the torch for \(someone\)](#)
[carry the weight of the world on \(one's\) shoulders](#)
[carry through](#)
[carry us about](#)
[carry us along with](#)
[carry us around](#)
[carry us away](#)
[carry us back](#)
[carry us off](#)
[carry us off our feet](#)
[carry us out](#)
[carry us over](#)
[carry us over from](#)
[carry us over to](#)
[carry us through](#)
[carry water](#)
[carry water for \(someone\)](#)
[carry weight](#)
[carry weight](#)
[carry with](#)
[carry your own weight](#)
[carry yourself](#)
[carrying charge](#)
[cart away](#)
[cart off](#)
[carte blanche](#)
[carve out](#)
[carve \(something\) from \(something\)](#)
[carve \(something\) in stone](#)
[carve \(something\) into \(something\)](#)
[carve up](#)
[carved in stone](#)



[case closed](#)
[case in point](#)
[a case of mistaken identity](#)
[a case of \(something\)](#)
[a case of the blind leading the blind](#)
[case of the dropsy](#)
[case of the jitters](#)
[case out](#)
[case the joint](#)
[cash cow](#)
[a cash flow problem](#)
[cash in](#)
[cash in on opportunity](#)
[cash in on \(something\)](#)
[cash in \(one's\) chips](#)
[cash is king](#)
[cash is trash](#)
[cash money](#)
[cash on the barrelhead](#)
[cash on the nail](#)
[cash \(one's\) chips in](#)
[cash only](#)
[cash or credit](#)
[cash out](#)
[cash up](#)
[cash wine](#)
[cast a glance](#)
[cast a pall on \(something\)](#)
[cast a pall over \(something\)](#)
[cast a shadow over \(some place\)](#)
[cast a shadow over \(something\)](#)
[cast a sheep's eye](#)
[cast a spell on \(someone or something\)](#)
[cast about for \(something\)](#)
[cast adrift](#)
[cast an/\(one's\) eye over \(something\)](#)
[cast around for \(someone or something\)](#)

[cast as](#)
[cast aside](#)
[cast aspersions](#)
[cast aspersions on \(someone or something\)](#)
[cast away](#)
[cast back](#)
[cast beyond the moon](#)
[cast doubt on \(someone or something\)](#)
[cast down](#)
[cast in concrete](#)
[cast in \(one's\) teeth](#)
[cast in the same mold](#)
[cast-iron stomach](#)
[cast lots](#)
[cast my eye over](#)
[cast off](#)
[cast on](#)
[cast \(one\) as \(something\)](#)
[cast one aside](#)
[cast \(one's\) bread upon the waters](#)
[cast \(one's\) eyes down](#)
[cast \(one's\) lot in with \(someone or something\)](#)
[cast \(one's\) lot with \(someone or something\)](#)
[cast \(one's\) mind back](#)
[cast \(one's\) net wide](#)
[cast \(one's\) net wider](#)
[cast \(one's\) pearls before swine](#)
[cast \(one's\) vote](#)
[cast out](#)
[cast \(some\) light on \(something\)](#)
[cast \(some\) light upon \(something\)](#)
[cast stones against the wind](#)
[cast the first stone](#)
[cast up](#)
[cast up \(one's\) accounts](#)
[castle in the air](#)
[castles in Spain](#)

[castles in the air](#)
[castles in the sky](#)
[a castoff](#)
[casts about for](#)
[casts back](#)
[casts down](#)
[casts light on](#)
[casts light upon](#)
[casts lots](#)
[casts on](#)
[casts out](#)
[casts up](#)
[casu consulto](#)
[casual dress](#)
[cat-and-dog life](#)
[cat and mouse](#)
[cat-and-mouse game](#)
[a cat can look at a king](#)
[cat got your tongue](#)
[a cat has nine lives](#)
[cat ice](#)
[a cat in gloves catches no mice](#)
[cat in the meal-tub](#)
[cat in the sack](#)
[a cat may look at a king](#)
[a cat nap](#)
[the cat would eat fish, but would not wet her feet](#)
[catapult \(someone or something\) into \(something\)](#)
[catch](#)
[catch a break](#)
[catch a buzz](#)
[catch a cold](#)
[catch a snooze](#)
[catch a tan](#)
[catch a Tartar](#)
[catch a weasel asleep](#)
[catch \(a\)hold of \(someone or something\)](#)



[catch air](#)
[catch as catch can](#)
[catch at a bad time](#)
[catch at \(a\) straw\(s\)](#)
[catch at \(something\)](#)
[catch big air](#)
[catch breath](#)
[catch by surprise](#)
[catch by the short hairs](#)
[catch cold](#)
[catch cold](#)
[catch dead to rights](#)
[catch death](#)
[catch drift](#)
[catch dust](#)
[catch eye](#)
[catch fancy](#)
[catch flat-footed](#)
[catch flies](#)
[catch forty winks](#)
[catch from](#)
[catch headlines](#)
[catch heat](#)
[catch hell](#)
[catch herself](#)
[catch in](#)
[catch in the crunch](#)
[catch it](#)
[catch it in the neck](#)
[catch it up in](#)
[catch lightning in a bottle](#)
[catch off balance](#)
[catch on](#)
[catch \(on\) fire](#)
[catch on with \(one\)](#)
[catch one at](#)
[catch \(one\) at a bad time](#)



[catch \(one\) cold](#)
[catch one cold](#)
[catch \(one\) dead to rights](#)
[catch \(one\) in the act](#)
[catch \(one\) later](#)
[catch \(one\) napping](#)
[catch \(one\) off guard](#)
[catch \(one\) on the hop](#)
[catch \(one\) red-handed](#)
[catch \(one\) with \(one's\) pants down](#)
[catch \(one's\) breath](#)
[catch \(one's\) death \(of cold\)](#)
[catch \(one's\) eye](#)
[catch oneself](#)
[catch onto \(something\)](#)
[catch out](#)
[catch sight of \(someone or something\)](#)
[catch some rays](#)
[catch some shuteye](#)
[catch some Z's](#)
[catch \(someone\) by surprise](#)
[catch \(someone\) flat-footed](#)
[catch \(someone\) off balance](#)
[catch \(someone or something\) in \(something\)](#)
[catch \(someone\) with \(someone or something\)](#)
[catch \(someone's\) drift](#)
[catch \(someone's\) fancy](#)
[catch \(something\) from \(someone\)](#)
[catch the drift](#)
[catch the eye](#)
[catch the eye of \(someone\)](#)
[catch \(the\) headlines](#)
[catch the next wave](#)
[catch the sun](#)
[catch the wave](#)
[a catch to \(something\)](#)
[catch up in \(something\)](#)

[catch up on \(something\)](#)
[catch up to \(something or someone\)](#)
[catch up with \(someone\)](#)
[catch with](#)
[catch with pants down](#)
[catch you at](#)
[catch you at a bad time](#)
[catch you cold](#)
[catch you cold](#)
[catch you dead to rights](#)
[catch you in the act](#)
[catch you later](#)
[catch you later](#)
[catch you napping](#)
[catch you off guard](#)
[catch you on the hop](#)
[catch you out](#)
[catch you red-handed](#)
[catch you up on](#)
[catch your breath](#)
[catch your death](#)
[catch your drift](#)
[catch your eye](#)
[catch your fancy](#)
[catch yourself](#)
[catching 40 winks](#)
[catching a break](#)
[catching a caught](#)
[catching a weasel asleep](#)
[catching at a straw](#)
[catching fire](#)
[catching headlines](#)
[catching heat](#)
[catching hell](#)
[catching her in](#)
[catching it](#)
[catching it in the neck](#)



[catching lightning in a bottle](#)
[catching on](#)
[catching onto](#)
[catching some rays](#)
[catching some shuteye](#)
[catching some Zs](#)
[catching the eye](#)
[catching the next wave](#)
[catching the sun](#)
[catching the wave](#)
[catching up in](#)
[cater to \(someone or something\)](#)
[catfish](#)
[Catholic twins](#)
[catnap](#)
[cat's claw](#)
[cat's cradle](#)
[cat's meow](#)
[cat's pajamas](#)
[cat's-paw](#)
[cat's whiskers](#)
[cattle call](#)
[cattle market](#)
[Caturday](#)
[caucus race](#)
[caught](#)
[caught bending](#)
[caught between the devil and the deep blue sea](#)
[caught in the act](#)
[caught in the crossfire](#)
[caught in the crunch](#)
[caught in the middle](#)
[caught on the hop](#)
[caught short](#)
[caught unawares](#)
[caught up in \(something\)](#)
[caught with \(one's\) hand in the cookie jar](#)



caught with (one's) pants down
cause a stir
cause célèbre
cause for alarm
cause (some) eyebrows to raise
cause some raised eyebrows
cause (some) tongues to wag
caution (one) about (someone or something)
cautious optimism
cautiously optimistic
cave in
caveat lector
caviar to the general
cavil at (one)
CB
cease and desist
cease to be
cede (something) to (someone)
celebrate (one) for (something)
cement (something) on (something)
cement (something) together
center around (someone or something)
center field
the center of attention
center of attraction
center on (someone or something)
central dogma
certain as death and taxes
certain party
certain sure
c'est la vie
chafe at (something)
chafe at the bit
chafing at the bit
a chain is no stronger than its weakest link
a chain is only as strong as its weakest link
chain of command

[chain reaction](#)
[chain smoker](#)
[chain \(someone or something\) to \(something\)](#)
[chain \(something\) down](#)
[chain up](#)
[chalk it up](#)
[chalk off](#)
[chalk out](#)
[chalk \(something or someone\) off](#)
[chalk \(something\) up to experience](#)
[chalk \(something\) up to \(something\)](#)
[chalk up](#)
[challenge \(one\) on \(something\)](#)
[challenge \(someone\) to \(something\)](#)
[challenge the status quo](#)
[champ at the bit](#)
[champagne taste on a beer budget](#)
[chance it](#)
[chance of a lifetime](#)
[chance on \(someone or something\)](#)
[chance \(one's\) arm](#)
[chance upon](#)
[chance upon](#)
[chance upon \(someone or something\)](#)
[chance would be a fine thing](#)
[chances are](#)
[change back](#)
[change for the better](#)
[change hands](#)
[change horses in midstream](#)
[a change in \(one's\) stripes](#)
[change into \(something\)](#)
[a change is as good as a rest](#)
[a change of heart](#)
[a change of pace](#)
[a change of scenery](#)
[a change of tack](#)

change off
change (one's) mind
change (one's) stripes
change (one's) tune
change (one's) ways
change out of (something)
change over
change places
change places with (one)
change sides
change (someone's) mind
change (something) with (someone)
change tack
change the channel
change the subject
change to
change with the times
channel (something) in(to) (something)
channel (something) off
channel surf
channel surfing
chapter and verse
chapter and verse
character assassination
charge
charge at (someone or something)
charge down
charge down on (someone or something)
charge in(to)
charge it to the dust and let the rain settle it
charge off
charge (one) with (something)
charge out
charge (something) against (something)
charge (something) for (something)
charge (something) off as (something)
charge (something) on (something)

[charge \(something\) \(up\) to \(something\)](#)
[charge up](#)
[charged up](#)
[charity begins at home](#)
[charity mugger](#)
[charley horse](#)
[charm \(someone\) with \(something\)](#)
[charm the pants off \(one\)](#)
[charmed existence](#)
[charmed life](#)
[chart out](#)
[chase after](#)
[chase around after \(someone or something\)](#)
[chase away](#)
[chase down](#)
[chase off](#)
[chase \(one's\) tail](#)
[chase rainbows](#)
[chase \(someone or something\) around](#)
[chase \(someone or something\) \(away\) from some place](#)
[chase \(someone or something\) in\(to\) \(some place\)](#)
[chase tail](#)
[chase the dragon](#)
[chase up](#)
[chasing rainbows](#)
[chat about \(someone or something\)](#)
[chat \(someone\) up](#)
[chatbot](#)
[chatter about \(someone or something\)](#)
[chatter away](#)
[chatter from \(something\)](#)
[che sara sara](#)
[cheap and cheerful](#)
[cheap and nasty](#)
[cheap-arse Tuesday](#)
[cheap at half the price](#)
[cheap at twice the price](#)

[cheap Charlie](#)
[cheap shot](#)
[cheaper by the dozen](#)
[cheat at \(something\)](#)
[cheat on \(someone or something\)](#)
[cheat \(one\) out of \(something\)](#)
[cheat sheet](#)
[cheat the worms](#)
[cheaters never prosper](#)
[cheats never prosper](#)
[check back](#)
[check back with \(one\)](#)
[check in](#)
[check in on \(someone or something\)](#)
[check into](#)
[the check is in the mail](#)
[check off](#)
[check on \(someone or something\)](#)
[check \(one's\) bags through \(to\) \(some place\)](#)
[check out](#)
[check out the plumbing](#)
[check over](#)
[check that](#)
[check through](#)
[check up](#)
[check up on \(someone or something\)](#)
[check with \(someone or something\)](#)
[check, please](#)
[checkered career](#)
[checks and balances](#)
[cheek by jowl](#)
[cheeky monkey](#)
[cheer for \(someone or something\)](#)
[cheer on](#)
[cheer \(one\) to the echo](#)
[cheer up](#)
[cheese and kisses](#)

[cheese it](#)
[cheese off](#)
[cheesed off](#)
[chef d'oeuvre](#)
[chemical imbalance](#)
[chemically imbalanced](#)
[cheque is in the mail](#)
[cherry on top](#)
[cherry-pick](#)
[chesterfield rugby](#)
[chew away](#)
[chew \(away\) at \(something\)](#)
[chew it finer](#)
[chew off](#)
[chew on \(something\)](#)
[chew on the scenery](#)
[chew \(one\) out](#)
[chew \(one's\) ass \(out\)](#)
[chew \(one's\) own tobacco](#)
[chew over](#)
[chew the fat](#)
[chew the rag](#)
[chew the scenery](#)
[chew the/\(one's\) cud](#)
[chew up](#)
[chew up the scenery](#)
[chicken and egg situation](#)
[chicken feed](#)
[chicken fillet](#)
[chicken out](#)
[chicken out on \(one\)](#)
[chicken with its head cut off](#)
[chickens come home to roost](#)
[chicks before dicks](#)
[chide \(one\) for \(something\)](#)
[chief cook and bottle washer](#)
[the child is father of the man](#)

[childhood friend](#)
[children and fools tell the truth](#)
[children should be seen and not heard](#)
[child's play](#)
[chill girl](#)
[chill \(one\) to the bone](#)
[chill \(one\) to the marrow](#)
[chill \(one's\) action](#)
[chill out](#)
[a chill pill](#)
[chilled to the bone](#)
[chilly climate](#)
[chime in](#)
[chin music](#)
[chin up](#)
[China syndrome](#)
[Chinaman at her neck](#)
[Chinaman on her back](#)
[Chinaman on her back](#)
[Chinaman's chance](#)
[Chinese compliment](#)
[Chinese overtime](#)
[Chinese puzzle](#)
[Chinese wall](#)
[Chinese whispers](#)
[chink in \(one's\) armor](#)
[chink up \(something\)](#)
[chinless wonder](#)
[chip away](#)
[chip \(away\) at \(something\)](#)
[chip in](#)
[a chip off the old block](#)
[a chip on \(one's\) shoulder](#)
[chip shot](#)
[chip up \(something\)](#)
[chips and dip](#)
[chirk up](#)

[chisel in](#)
[chisel \(one\) out of \(something\)](#)
[chock full of \(something\)](#)
[chocolate box](#)
[choke back](#)
[choke down](#)
[choke off](#)
[choke on \(something\)](#)
[choke up](#)
[choked by emotion](#)
[choked with emotion](#)
[chomp at the bit](#)
[chomping at the bit](#)
[choose among \(people or things\)](#)
[choose between \(two people or things\)](#)
[choose from \(people or things\)](#)
[choose \(one\) as \(something\)](#)
[choose \(one's\) battles \(wisely\)](#)
[choose sides](#)
[choose \(someone or something\) for \(someone or something\)](#)
[choose the lesser of two evils](#)
[choose up](#)
[choose up sides](#)
[chop and change](#)
[chop back](#)
[chop chop](#)
[chop down](#)
[chop logic](#)
[chop off](#)
[chopped liver](#)
[chortle about \(someone or something\)](#)
[chow down](#)
[Christmas comes but once a year](#)
[Christmas disease](#)
[Christmas graduate](#)
[Christmas tree bill](#)
[chrome dome](#)

[chrome horn](#)
[chuck a U-ie](#)
[chuck away](#)
[chuck it down](#)
[chuck it in](#)
[chuck \(one\) under the chin](#)
[chuck out](#)
[chuck overboard](#)
[chuck \(something\) down](#)
[chuck \(something\) in \(to something\)](#)
[chuck \(something\) into \(something\)](#)
[chuck \(something\) out](#)
[chuck \(something\) over \(something\)](#)
[chuck up](#)
[chuckle about \(someone or something\)](#)
[chuckle with \(a particular quality\)](#)
[chug along](#)
[chum up](#)
[chum up to \(one\)](#)
[chum up with \(one\)](#)
[chump change](#)
[a chunk of change](#)
[church ain't out till they quit singing](#)
[church key](#)
[churn out](#)
[churn up](#)
[churro](#)
[cipher](#)
[circle around](#)
[circle the drain](#)
[circle the wagons](#)
[circuit slugger](#)
[circular file](#)
[circular firing squad](#)
[circulate among \(someone or something\)](#)
[circulate through \(something\)](#)
[circumstances alter cases](#)

[cite chapter and verse](#)
[cite \(one\) for \(something\)](#)
[cite \(something\) chapter and verse](#)
[city slicker](#)
[a civil question deserves a civil answer](#)
[civility costs nothing](#)
[claim a/the/\(one's\) life](#)
[claim check](#)
[claim \(something\) for \(oneself or something\)](#)
[claim the moral high ground](#)
[claim to fame](#)
[clam up](#)
[clamber onto \(something\)](#)
[clamber up \(something\)](#)
[clamor against \(something\)](#)
[clamor for \(something\)](#)
[clamp down on \(someone or something\)](#)
[clamp \(something\) on\(to\) \(something\)](#)
[clap back](#)
[clap eyes on \(someone or something\)](#)
[clap \(one\) in\(to\)](#)
[clap out](#)
[clap \(something\) on\(to\) \(something\)](#)
[clap \(something\) together](#)
[clarion call](#)
[clash against \(someone or something\)](#)
[clash of the ash](#)
[clash with \(someone or something\)](#)
[clasp \(something\) to \(something\)](#)
[class clown](#)
[class \(someone or something\) with \(someone or something\)](#)
[class warfare](#)
[classical style](#)
[clatter around](#)
[claw me, claw thee](#)
[claw off](#)
[claw \(one's\) way back from \(something\)](#)

claw (one's) way (somewhere)
claw (one's) way to the top
clay pigeon
clean as a hound's tooth
clean bill of health
clean break
clean code
clean conscience
clean-cut
clean down
clean house
clean off
clean (one's) act up
clean (one's) plate (up)
clean (one's) plow
clean out
clean sheet
clean slate
clean (someone or something) out of (something)
clean (someone's) clock
clean sweep
clean the floor (up) with (one)
clean up
clean up nice(ly)
clean up (one's) act
cleaned out
cleaned out
cleanliness is next to godliness
cleanse the Augean stables
clear as a bell
clear as crystal
clear as mud
clear away
clear-cut
clear of (something)
clear off
clear (one's) lines

[clear \(one's\) name](#)
[clear \(one's\) throat](#)
[clear out](#)
[clear sailing](#)
[clear \(someone or something\) out of \(some place\)](#)
[clear \(something\) for publication](#)
[clear \(something\) from \(something\)](#)
[clear \(something\) with \(someone\)](#)
[clear the air](#)
[clear the atmosphere](#)
[clear the deck\(s\)](#)
[clear the table](#)
[clear the way](#)
[clear the way for](#)
[clear up](#)
[cleave to \(one\)](#)
[clever boots](#)
[clever clogs](#)
[clever dick](#)
[click with \(one\)](#)
[clickbait](#)
[cliffhanger](#)
[climb down](#)
[climb on \(one's\) high horse](#)
[climb on the bandwagon](#)
[climb on\(to\) \(someone or something\)](#)
[climb out](#)
[climb Parnassus](#)
[climb the social ladder](#)
[climb the walls](#)
[climb up](#)
[climbing the walls](#)
[clinch the deal](#)
[cling on by \(one's\) fingernails](#)
[cling on by \(one's\) fingertips](#)
[cling to \(someone or something\)](#)
[cling together](#)

[clinging vine](#)
[clip on](#)
[clip \(one's\) wings](#)
[clip on\(to\) \(someone or something\)](#)
[clip over the ear](#)
[clip \(something\) from \(something\)](#)
[clip \(something\) out of \(something\)](#)
[cloak-and-dagger](#)
[cloak \(someone or something\) in secrecy](#)
[clock cleaned](#)
[clock in](#)
[\(the\) clock is ticking](#)
[clock out](#)
[clock \(someone or something\) at \(a certain speed\)](#)
[clock up](#)
[clock-watcher](#)
[clog \(something\) with \(something\)](#)
[clog up](#)
[clogs to clogs in three generations](#)
[close a/the deal](#)
[close a/the sale](#)
[close as a clam](#)
[close as the bark to the tree](#)
[close as two coats of paint](#)
[close at hand](#)
[close but no cigar](#)
[close by](#)
[close call](#)
[a close chewer and a tight spitter](#)
[close down](#)
[close enough for government work](#)
[close enough to use the same toothpick](#)
[close in](#)
[close \(in\) around \(someone or something\)](#)
[close in for the kill](#)
[close in on \(one\)](#)
[close of play](#)

[close off](#)
[close on](#)
[close \(one\) out of \(something\)](#)
[close \(one's\) eyes and think of England](#)
[close \(one's\) eyes and think of England](#)
[close \(one's\) eyes to \(something\)](#)
[close only counts in horseshoes \(and hand grenades\)](#)
[close out](#)
[close ranks](#)
[close shave](#)
[close the barn door after the horse has bolted](#)
[close the books on \(someone or something\)](#)
[close the deal](#)
[close the door on \(something\)](#)
[close the sale](#)
[close the stable door after the horse has bolted](#)
[close to home](#)
[close to \(one's\) heart](#)
[close to \(someone or something\)](#)
[close to the bone](#)
[close to the wind](#)
[close up](#)
[close up shop](#)
[close with \(someone or something\)](#)
[closed-door](#)
[a closed mouth gathers no feet](#)
[closes down](#)
[closes in](#)
[closes in for the kill](#)
[closes off](#)
[closes out](#)
[closes up](#)
[closet \(someone/oneself\) with \(someone\)](#)
[closing her out of](#)
[closing in on](#)
[closing on](#)
[closing time](#)

[cloth ears](#)
[clothe \(someone/oneself\) in \(something\)](#)
[clothes don't make the man](#)
[clothes make the man](#)
[the cloud](#)
[cloud-cuckoo land](#)
[cloud nine](#)
[cloud of suspicion](#)
[cloud on the horizon](#)
[cloud over](#)
[cloud the issue](#)
[cloud up](#)
[clout list](#)
[clown around](#)
[clue-by-four](#)
[clue \(one\) in](#)
[clue stick](#)
[clued in](#)
[clung to](#)
[clung together](#)
[clunk down](#)
[cluster around \(someone or something\)](#)
[cluster together](#)
[clutch at a straw](#)
[clutch at \(someone or something\)](#)
[clutch at straws](#)
[clutch \(one's\)/the pearls](#)
[clutch \(someone or something\) to \(something\)](#)
[clutter up](#)
[co-opt \(someone\) into \(something\)](#)
[coach \(someone\) for \(something\)](#)
[coalesce into \(something\)](#)
[coast along](#)
[the coast is clear](#)
[coast to coast](#)
[coat and tie](#)
[coat \(someone or something\) with \(something\)](#)



[coax \(someone or something\) in\(to\) \(something\)](#)
[coax \(someone or something\) out of \(something\)](#)
[coax \(someone or something\) to \(do something\)](#)
[cobble \(something\) up](#)
[cock a snook](#)
[cock-and-bull story](#)
[cock block](#)
[cock in the henhouse](#)
[cock of the roost](#)
[cock of the walk](#)
[cockles of \(one's\) heart](#)
[cocky as the king of spades](#)
[code of silence](#)
[codfish aristocracy](#)
[coerce \(one\) into \(something\)](#)
[coexist with \(someone or something\)](#)
[coffee and](#)
[coffee shop](#)
[coffee table book](#)
[coffee-table book](#)
[cog in the machine](#)
[a cog in the machine](#)
[cog in the wheel](#)
[a cog in the wheel](#)
[cogitate on \(something\)](#)
[cohabit with \(someone or something\)](#)
[coil around \(someone or something\)](#)
[coil up](#)
[coil up into \(something\)](#)
[coin a phrase](#)
[coin it \(in\)](#)
[coin money](#)
[coincide with \(something\)](#)
[cold as a well digger's ass](#)
[cold check](#)
[cold comfort](#)
[a cold day in Hell](#)

[a cold day in July](#)
[cold enough for you](#)
[cold enough to freeze the balls off a brass monkey](#)
[cold feet](#)
[cold fish](#)
[cold hands, warm heart](#)
[cold one](#)
[cold reading](#)
[cold shoulder](#)
[cold snap](#)
[cold turkey](#)
[cold, hard cash](#)
[collaborate with \(someone or something\)](#)
[collapse into \(something\)](#)
[collapse under the weight of \(someone or something\)](#)
[collar-and-tie men](#)
[collar \(someone\)](#)
[collate \(something\) with \(something\)](#)
[collect around \(someone or something\)](#)
[collect dust](#)
[collect for \(someone or something\)](#)
[collect on \(something\)](#)
[collect \(one's\) thoughts](#)
[collect \(one's\) wits](#)
[collect \(something\) from \(someone\)](#)
[collect up](#)
[collector's item](#)
[collector's piece](#)
[collide with \(someone or something\)](#)
[collude with \(someone or something\)](#)
[Colonel Blimp](#)
[color in](#)
[color inside the lines](#)
[color outside the lines](#)
[comb \(something\) for \(someone or something\)](#)
[comb \(something\) out of \(something\)](#)
[comb through \(something\)](#)

combine (something) against (someone or something)
combine (something) with (something)
come a cropper
come a gutser
come a long way
come aboard
come about
come across
come across as (someone or something)
come across like (someone or something)
come again
come again?
come along
come along for the ride
come and get it
come and go
come apart
come apart at the seams
come around
come (a)round
come as no surprise
come at a price
come at (someone or something)
come away
come away empty-handed
come away with (one)
come back
come back and see us
come back anytime
come back from the dead
come back to bite (one)
come back to haunt (one)
come back when you can stay longer
come before (someone or something)
come between (two or more people)
come by
come by (something) honestly

come cap in hand
come clean
come close
come close to blows
come down
come down in buckets
come down in the world
come down on (someone or something)
come down on the side of (someone or something)
come down the pike
come down to
come down to earth
come down to us
come down with (something)
come face to face with (someone or something)
come for (someone or something)
come forth
come forward
come from a good place
come from behind
come from far and wide
come from nowhere
come from (someone or something)
come full circle
come hell or high water
come her way
come-hither look
come home
come home by Weeping Cross
come home from (some place or something)
come home to roost
come home to (someone or something)
come in
come in and make yourself at home
come in and sit a spell
come in for (something)
come in from the cold



[come in handy](#)
[come in out of the rain](#)
[come \(in\) over the transom](#)
[come in useful](#)
[come into](#)
[come into being](#)
[come into bloom](#)
[come into conflict](#)
[come in\(to\) contact](#)
[come into effect](#)
[come into existence](#)
[come into fashion](#)
[come in\(to\) heat](#)
[come in\(to\) line](#)
[come into \(one's\) head](#)
[come into \(one's\) own](#)
[come into play](#)
[come into prominence](#)
[come into question](#)
[come into season](#)
[come into service](#)
[come into sight](#)
[come into \(some\) money](#)
[come into the world](#)
[come Monday](#)
[come naturally](#)
[come of](#)
[come of age](#)
[come off](#)
[come off it](#)
[come off second best](#)
[come on](#)
[come on as \(something\)](#)
[come on in](#)
[come on in](#)
[come on in, the water's fine](#)
[come on like gangbusters](#)

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come on over
come on the scene
come on to (one)
come on (too) strong
come on top of (something)
come one, come all
come (one's) way
come online
come out
come out (a certain way) on (something)
come out against (someone or something)
come out ahead
come out at
come out badly
come out fighting
come out for (someone or something)
come out in (something)
come out in the open with (something)
come out in the wash
come out in(to) the open
come out of a/the clear blue sky
come out of left field
come out of one's shell
come out of (one's) shell
come out of the closet
come out of the woodwork
come out on top
come out smelling like a rose
come out smelling of roses
come out swinging
come out the little end of the horn
come out to be
come out well
come out with (something)
come over
come over the transom
come rain or shine



[come right in](#)
[come round](#)
[come short](#)
[come short of \(something\)](#)
[come the acid](#)
[come the raw prawn](#)
[come their way](#)
[come thick and fast](#)
[come through](#)
[come through \(something\) with flying colors](#)
[come to](#)
[come to a bad end](#)
[come to a boil](#)
[come to a close](#)
[come to a dead end](#)
[come to a full stop](#)
[come to a halt](#)
[come to a head](#)
[come to a parting of the ways](#)
[come to a pretty pass](#)
[come to a standstill](#)
[come to a sticky end](#)
[come to a stop](#)
[come to a/the conclusion](#)
[come to aid](#)
[come to an end](#)
[come to an impasse](#)
[come to an untimely end](#)
[come to attention](#)
[come to blows](#)
[come to fruition](#)
[come to grief](#)
[come to grips with \(someone or something\)](#)
[come to harm](#)
[come to heel](#)
[come to herself](#)
[come to Jesus](#)

come-to-Jesus meeting
come-to-Jesus moment
come to life
come to light
come to mention it
come to mind
come to much
come to naught
come to no good
come to nothing
come to nought
come to (one's) assistance
come to (one's) attention
come to (one's) feet
come to (one's) senses
come to papa
come to pass
come to rest
come to (someone's) aid
come to (someone's) rescue
come to terms
come to terms with (someone or something)
come to that
come to the conclusion
come to the fore
come to the job with (something)
come to the point
come to the same thing
come to the table
come to their assistance
come to their attention
come to their feet
come to their rescue
come to their senses
come to them
come to think of it
come to this

come together
come true
come under fire
come under (someone or something)
come under the hammer
come unglued
come unhinged
come unstuck
come up
come up a storm
come up against a brick wall
come up against (something)
come up for air
come up for (something)
come up from behind
come up heads
come up in the world
come up roses
come up smelling like a rose
come up smelling of roses
come up through the ranks
come up to
come up to (one's) expectations
come up to standards
come up trumps
come up with (something)
come upon
come way
come what may
come with (one)
come with the territory
come within a whisker of (something)
come within an ace of (something)
come within an inch of (something)
come within (something)
the comeback
a comedown

[comedy of errors](#)
[comfort girl](#)
[comfort woman](#)
[comfort zone](#)
[comfortable as an old shoe](#)
[comfortable circumstances](#)
[comfortable in \(one's\) own skin](#)
[comfortably off](#)
[coming events cast their shadows before](#)
[coming-of-age](#)
[coming out of \(one's\) ears](#)
[coming through](#)
[coming up a cloud](#)
[command performance](#)
[commence with \(someone or something\)](#)
[commend \(one\) to \(someone or something\)](#)
[commend \(someone\) for \(something\)](#)
[comment about \(someone or something\)](#)
[comment back](#)
[commiserate with \(one\)](#)
[commit \(oneself\) on \(something\)](#)
[commit \(oneself or something\) for](#)
[commit \(someone or something\) to \(something\)](#)
[commit \(something\) to memory](#)
[a committee is a group of men who keep minutes and waste hours](#)
[commode-hugging drunk](#)
[common as an old shoe](#)
[common as muck](#)
[common cause](#)
[the common cold](#)
[common decency](#)
[common ground](#)
[common knowledge](#)
[common law](#)
[common name](#)
[common or garden](#)
[common or garden variety](#)

[common salt](#)
[common thread](#)
[the common weal](#)
[commune with \(something\)](#)
[communicate \(something\) to \(someone\)](#)
[communicate with \(one\)](#)
[commute between \(places\)](#)
[commute from \(some place\)](#)
[commute \(something\) into \(something\)](#)
[company man](#)
[company manners](#)
[company town](#)
[compare apples and oranges](#)
[compare notes](#)
[compare notes on \(someone or something\)](#)
[compare \(someone or something\) to \(someone or something\)](#)
[compare \(someone or something\) with \(someone or something\)](#)
[compartmentalize \(something\) into \(something\)](#)
[compel \(someone\) to \(do something\)](#)
[compensate for \(something\)](#)
[compete against \(someone or something\)](#)
[compete for \(someone or something\)](#)
[compete in \(something\)](#)
[compete with \(someone or something\)](#)
[compile \(something\) from \(something\)](#)
[complain about \(someone or something\)](#)
[complain of \(something\)](#)
[complain to \(someone or something\)](#)
[complete game](#)
[compliment \(someone\) on \(something\)](#)
[comply with \(something\)](#)
[comport \(oneself\) with \(something\)](#)
[composed of \(something\)](#)
[compound \(something\) with \(something else\)](#)
[compress \(something\) into \(something\)](#)
[comprised of \(something\)](#)
[compromise on \(something\)](#)

compromise (with) (one's) principles
compute (something) at (some amount)
con artist
con man
con (someone) into (something)
con (someone) out of (something)
conceal (someone or something) from (someone or something)
concede to (someone or something)
conceited as a barber's cat
conceive of (someone or something)
conceive of (someone or something) as (someone or something)
concentrate at (some place)
concentrate on (someone or something)
concern (oneself) about (something)
concern (someone) in (something)
concern (someone) with (someone or something)
concerned about (someone or something)
concrete jungle
concur on (someone or something)
condemn (someone or something) as (something)
condemn (someone or something) for (something)
condemn (someone) to (something)
condense (something) (in)to (something)
condescend to
condescend to (do something)
condition (someone or something) to (something)
conduct (someone or something) away
conduct (someone or something) into (some place)
conduct (someone or something) out of (some place)
confederate with (someone or something)
confer (up)on (someone or something)
confess to (someone or something)
confession is good for the soul
confide in (one)
confidence artist
confidence-building measure
confidence man

confine (someone or something) to (someone or something)
confine (someone or something) within (something)
confirm (someone) in (something)
confiscate (something) from (someone)
conflict with (something)
conform to (something)
conform with (something)
confront (someone) with (something)
confuse about (something)
confuse (someone or something) with (someone or something)
confuse the issue
confusion worse confounded
congratulate (someone) (up)on (something)
conjecture on (something)
conjure up
conk off
conk out
connect the dots
connect up
connect (up) to (someone or something)
connect (up) with (someone or something)
conned her into
conned her out of
connive at (something)
consarn it
conscience does make cowards of us all
(one's) conscience is clean
(one's) conscience is clear
conscience money
conscientious objector
conscript into (something)
consecrate (someone or something) to God
consent to (something)
consider (someone) for (something)
consign (something) to (someone or something)
consist of (something)
console (someone) on (something)

[console \(someone or oneself\) with \(something\)](#)
[consort with \(one\)](#)
[conspicuous by \(one's\) absence](#)
[conspicuous consumption](#)
[conspiracy of silence](#)
[conspire against \(something or someone\)](#)
[conspire with \(one\)](#)
[constant dropping wears away a stone](#)
[constitution of an ox](#)
[constrain \(someone\) from \(doing something\)](#)
[construct \(something\) from \(something\)](#)
[construe \(something\) as \(something\)](#)
[consume mass quantities](#)
[consumed by desire](#)
[contaminate \(someone or something\) with \(something\)](#)
[contend against \(someone or something\)](#)
[contend with \(someone or something\)](#)
[content \(oneself\) with \(someone or something\)](#)
[a contented mind is a perpetual feast](#)
[continue by \(doing something\)](#)
[continue with \(something\)](#)
[contract out](#)
[contract with \(someone or something\)](#)
[contradiction in terms](#)
[contrary to all reason](#)
[contrary to popular belief](#)
[contrary to popular opinion](#)
[contrary to \(something\)](#)
[contrast \(someone or something\) with \(someone or something\)](#)
[contribute to \(something\)](#)
[control freak](#)
[control over \(someone or something\)](#)
[control the purse strings](#)
[controlled substance](#)
[convalesce from \(something\)](#)
[converge in upon \(someone or something\)](#)
[converge \(up\)on \(someone or something\)](#)

conversation piece
converse with (someone or something)
convert from (something)
convict of (something)
convince of (something)
convulse with (something)
cook (one's) goose
cook out
cook (something) to perfection
cook the accounts
cook the books
cook up
cooked
cooked to a turn
cooked up
cookie cutter
cooking with gas
cool as a cucumber
cool customer
cool down
cool head
cool it
cool off
cool (one's) heels
cool (one's) jets
cool out
cool reception
cool, calm, and collected
cooled out
cooler heads will prevail
cooling-off period
coon eye(s)
a coon's age
coop up
cooperate with (someone or something)
coordinate with (someone or something)
cop a feel



[cop a packet](#)
[cop a plea](#)
[cop a squat](#)
[cop an attitude](#)
[cop it sweet](#)
[cop on](#)
[cop onto \(something\)](#)
[cop out](#)
[cop \(something\) from \(someone or something\)](#)
[cope with \(someone or something\)](#)
[coping skill](#)
[copious free time](#)
[copper-bottomed](#)
[coprophagous grin](#)
[copulate with \(one\)](#)
[copy down](#)
[copy out \(by hand\)](#)
[copy \(something\) out of \(something\)](#)
[ordon bleu](#)
[ordon off](#)
[cork high and bottle deep](#)
[cork up](#)
[corner the market](#)
[corner the market on \(something\)](#)
[corporate ladder](#)
[corporate welfare bum](#)
[corporation pop](#)
[correlate with \(something\)](#)
[correspond to \(something\)](#)
[correspond with \(someone or something\)](#)
[Cosby sweater](#)
[cost a bomb](#)
[cost a pretty penny](#)
[cost an arm and a leg](#)
[cost \(one\) dear](#)
[cost out](#)
[cost \(someone\) dearly](#)

[cost the earth](#)
[cost the earth](#)
[cottage industry](#)
[cotton on](#)
[cotton \(on\)to \(someone or something\)](#)
[cotton-picking](#)
[cotton up to \(one\)](#)
[couch potato](#)
[couch \(something\) in \(something\)](#)
[cougar](#)
[cough \(one's\) head off](#)
[cough out](#)
[cough up](#)
[could be better](#)
[could be worse](#)
[could care less](#)
[could \(do something\) in \(one's\) sleep](#)
[could \(do something\) standing on \(one's\) head](#)
[could \(do something\) with one arm tied behind \(one's\) back](#)
[could \(do something\) with \(one's\) eyes closed](#)
[could do with \(something\)](#)
[could fight a circle-saw \(and it a runnin'\)](#)
[could have fooled me](#)
[could hear a pin drop](#)
[could hear the grass grow](#)
[could I be excused](#)
[could I call you](#)
[could I come in](#)
[could I get by please](#)
[could I have a lift](#)
[could I have call you](#)
[could I help you](#)
[could I join you](#)
[could I leave a message](#)
[could I see you again](#)
[could I see you in my office](#)
[could I speak to](#)



could I take a message
could I take your order
could I tell her who's calling
could I use your powder room
could knock me down with a feather
could knock me over with a feather
could not be bothered
could not win for losing
(someone) could sell an icebox to an Eskimo
(someone) could sell ice to Eskimos
(someone) could sell sawdust to a lumber mill
could standing on head
could talk under water
could we continue this later
could with eyes closed
could with one arm tied behind back
could you excuse us please
could you hold
could you keep a secret
coulda, woulda, shoulda
couldn't act (one's) way out of a paper bag
couldn't ask for more
couldn't be better
couldn't be happier
couldn't be helped
couldn't believe (one's) eyes
couldn't care less
couldn't care two pence
couldn't carry a note in a bucket
couldn't carry a tune in a bucket
couldn't catch a cold
couldn't find (one's) way out of a paper bag
couldn't get elected dogcatcher
couldn't give a tuppence
couldn't give two pence
couldn't happen to a nicer (person)
couldn't have asked for more



couldn't have happened to a nicer person
couldn't help it
couldn't hit a bull in the ass with a bass fiddle
couldn't lie straight in bed
couldn't matter a tuppence
couldn't matter two pence
couldn't organize a piss-up in a brewery
couldn't pour water out of a boot
couldn't punch her way out of a paper bag
couldn't punch (one's) way out of a paper bag
couldn't say boo to a fly
couldn't win for losing
could've fooled me
council pop
councils of war never fight
counsel (someone) about (something)
counsel (someone) against (something)
count against (one)
count down
count for (something)
count from (something)
count heads
count off
count (one's) blessings
count out
count sheep
count (someone or something) among (something)
count (someone or something) as (something)
count (someone or something) in
count the cost
count to ten
count up
count up to (some number)
count (up)on (someone or something)
count with (one)
count your chickens before they hatch
count your chickens before they're hatched



[counter with \(something\)](#)
[country bumpkin](#)
[country cousin](#)
[a country mile](#)
[coup de grâce](#)
[a couple of \(people or things\)](#)
[couple \(something\) \(on\)to \(something\)](#)
[couple \(something\) together](#)
[couple up](#)
[couple with](#)
[courage of \(one's\) convictions](#)
[course of action](#)
[course of nature](#)
[the course of true love never did run smooth](#)
[course through \(something\)](#)
[covenant of salt](#)
[cover a lot of ground](#)
[cover a multitude of sins](#)
[cover all bases](#)
[cover all the bases](#)
[cover for \(someone or something\)](#)
[cover girl](#)
[cover \(one's\) ass](#)
[cover \(one's\) back](#)
[cover \(one's\) bases](#)
[cover \(one's\) feet](#)
[cover \(one's\) tracks \(up\)](#)
[cover \(someone or something\) against \(something\)](#)
[cover \(someone or something\) in \(something\)](#)
[cover the field](#)
[cover \(the\) ground](#)
[cover the territory](#)
[cover the waterfront](#)
[cover up](#)
[cover your ass with paper](#)
[cow chip](#)
[cow college](#)

[cow juice](#)
[cow paste](#)
[cow \(someone\) into \(something\)](#)
[cowards die many times before their death\(s\)](#)
[cowboy up](#)
[cower \(away\) from \(someone or something\)](#)
[cower down](#)
[cowgirl position](#)
[the cowl does not make the monk](#)
[cozy up](#)
[crab mentality](#)
[crack a book](#)
[crack a bottle](#)
[crack a bottle open](#)
[crack a crib](#)
[crack a fat](#)
[crack a joke](#)
[crack a smile](#)
[crack down](#)
[crack of doom](#)
[crack on](#)
[crack open](#)
[crack some suds](#)
[crack the door \(open\)](#)
[crack the whip](#)
[crack through \(something\)](#)
[crack under the strain](#)
[crack up](#)
[cracked up to be](#)
[cradle-robber](#)
[cradle-snatcher](#)
[cradle-to-grave](#)
[crafty devil](#)
[cram for \(something\)](#)
[cram into \(something\)](#)
[cram with \(someone or something\)](#)
[cramp \(one's\) style](#)



[crank in/into \(something\)](#)
[crank out](#)
[crank up](#)
[crap around](#)
[crap \(one's\) pants](#)
[crap out](#)
[the crap out of](#)
[crap up \(something\)](#)
[crap where you eat](#)
[crash and burn](#)
[crash around](#)
[a crash course](#)
[crash dive](#)
[crash down](#)
[crash into \(someone or something\)](#)
[crash out](#)
[crash pad](#)
[crash the gate](#)
[crash the party](#)
[crash through \(something\)](#)
[crash to the floor](#)
[crash together](#)
[crash with \(someone\)](#)
[crater face](#)
[crave to \(do something\)](#)
[crawl across \(something\)](#)
[crawl \(all\) over each other](#)
[crawl back to \(one\)](#)
[crawl into \(one's\) shell](#)
[crawl in\(to\) \(some place or thing\)](#)
[crawl out](#)
[crawl over \(something\)](#)
[crawling with \(something\)](#)
[cray](#)
[cray cray](#)
[crazy about \(someone or something\)](#)
[crazy as a betsy bug](#)

[crazy as a loon](#)
[crazy in the head](#)
[crazy like a fox](#)
[a creaking door hangs longest](#)
[cream in \(one's\) jeans](#)
[the cream of the crop](#)
[cream \(one's\) jeans](#)
[crease up](#)
[create a scene](#)
[create a stink](#)
[create an uproar](#)
[creature comforts](#)
[creature feature](#)
[creature of habit](#)
[credibility gap](#)
[credit for \(something\)](#)
[credit \(someone or something\) with \(something\)](#)
[credit to \(someone or something\)](#)
[credit where credit is due](#)
[creep across \(something\)](#)
[creep along \(something\)](#)
[creep away](#)
[creep by](#)
[creep in](#)
[creep into](#)
[creep out](#)
[creep over \(someone or something\)](#)
[creep under \(something\)](#)
[creep up](#)
[crème de la crème](#)
[crib note](#)
[crib sheet](#)
[crib \(something\) from \(someone\)](#)
[a crick in \(one's\) back](#)
[a crick in \(one's\) neck](#)
[cries barley](#)
[cries for the moon](#)

[cries foul](#)
[cries in beer](#)
[cries on her shoulder](#)
[cries over spilt milk](#)
[cries stinking fish](#)
[crime doesn't pay](#)
[cringe away from \(someone or something\)](#)
[cringe before \(someone or something\)](#)
[crinkle up](#)
[criss-cross applesauce](#)
[criticize \(one\) for \(something\)](#)
[a crock](#)
[crock up](#)
[crocodile tears](#)
[crooked as a barrel of fish hooks](#)
[crop out](#)
[crop up](#)
[cross a/that bridge before \(one\) comes to it](#)
[cross as a bear](#)
[cross as a bear with a sore head](#)
[cross as two sticks](#)
[cross from \(some place\) to \(some place\)](#)
[cross my heart \(and hope to die\)](#)
[cross off](#)
[cross \(one's\) bows](#)
[cross \(one's\) fingers](#)
[cross \(one's\) mind](#)
[cross \(one's\) palm](#)
[cross \(one's\) path](#)
[cross out](#)
[cross over](#)
[cross over into \(some place\)](#)
[cross paths with \(one\)](#)
[cross purpose](#)
[cross \(somebody has\) to carry](#)
[cross that bridge later](#)
[cross the aisle](#)

[cross the floor](#)
[cross the Great Divide](#)
[cross to bear](#)
[cross your fingers](#)
[crow over \(something\)](#)
[a crow to pluck](#)
[crowd pleaser](#)
[crowd-puller](#)
[crown jewel](#)
[crown jewels](#)
[crown of thorns](#)
[crowning achievement](#)
[crow's feet](#)
[crunch \(the\) numbers](#)
[crunch time](#)
[crush it](#)
[crushing blow](#)
[the crux of the matter](#)
[cry-baby](#)
[cry barley](#)
[a cry for help](#)
[cry for the moon](#)
[cry foul](#)
[cry havoc](#)
[cry in \(one's\) beer](#)
[cry on \(one's\) shoulder](#)
[cry on \(someone's\) shoulder](#)
[cry over spilt milk](#)
[cry \(someone\) a river](#)
[cry stinking fish](#)
[cry the blues](#)
[cry uncle](#)
[crying towel](#)
[crystal ball](#)
[crystal clear](#)
[crystal dick](#)
[cuckoo in the nest](#)



[cudgel \(one's\) brains](#)
[cuff Jonas](#)
[cull the herd](#)
[culpable homicide](#)
[cultural desert](#)
[culture hero](#)
[culture shock](#)
[culture vulture](#)
[cum grano salis](#)
[cup of joe](#)
[cupboard is bare](#)
[cuppa](#)
[cuppa joe](#)
[cupping](#)
[curate's egg](#)
[curb appeal](#)
[curb-crawler](#)
[curdle \(one's\) blood](#)
[curl \(one's\) hair](#)
[curl \(one's\) lip](#)
[curse a blue streak](#)
[curse \(someone or something\) under \(one's\) breath](#)
[curse \(someone\) under \(one's\) breath](#)
[curse the day \(one\) was born](#)
[curses, like chickens, come home to roost](#)
[curtain lectures](#)
[curtain raiser](#)
[cushy job](#)
[Custer's last stand](#)
[cut a dash](#)
[cut a dido](#)
[cut a path](#)
[a cut above](#)
[a cut above average](#)
[a cut above the rest](#)
[cut adrift](#)
[cut and thrust](#)



[cut bait](#)
[a cut below](#)
[cut each other's throats](#)
[cut from the same cloth](#)
[cut from whole cloth](#)
[cut ice with \(someone\)](#)
[cut it close](#)
[cut of \(one's\) jib](#)
[cut off from the \(outside\) world](#)
[cut-off point](#)
[cut off with a cent](#)
[cut off with a shilling](#)
[cut one](#)
[cut one another's throats](#)
[cut one loose](#)
[cut \(one's\) comb](#)
[cut \(one's\) eyeteeth](#)
[cut \(one's\) stick](#)
[cut \(one's\) teeth](#)
[cut \(one's\) wisdom teeth](#)
[cut out of whole cloth](#)
[cut \(someone\) loose](#)
[cut \(someone\) to pieces](#)
[cut \(someone's\) throat](#)
[cut the funny stuff](#)
[cut the Gordian knot](#)
[cut the ice](#)
[cut the mustard](#)
[cut the umbilical cord](#)
[cut ties with \(someone\)](#)
[cut to the bone](#)
[cut to the pith \(of something\)](#)
[cut your comb](#)
[cut your eyeteeth](#)
[cutie pie](#)
[cutthroat prices](#)
[cutting remark](#)



[cylinder head](#)

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D

[dab](#)

[dab on them folks](#)

[daisy chain](#)

[damage control](#)

[damaged goods](#)

[Dame Partington and her mop](#)

[damn by association](#)

[damn Daniel](#)

[damn right](#)

[damn the torpedoes](#)

[damn Yankee](#)

[damned if \(one\) does and damned if \(one\) doesn't](#)

[damp squib](#)

[dance attendance \(up\)on \(someone\)](#)

[dance on the razor's edge](#)

[dance the antic hay](#)

[dance to \(one's\) tune](#)

[dangly bits](#)

[a Daniel come to judgement](#)

[DAPL](#)

[daring do](#)

[dark cloud on the horizon](#)

[dark days](#)

[dark horse](#)

[darken a church door](#)

[darning needle](#)

[dart around](#)

[dash off \(somewhere\)](#)

[date rape](#)

[date with destiny](#)

[dat's da brakes](#)

[dawn of a new day](#)

[day and age](#)

[the day hell freezes over](#)
[day in, day out, every day without fail](#)
[a day late and a dollar short](#)
[day of doom](#)
[day or night](#)
[day out](#)
[days gone by](#)
[days of yore](#)
[de-friend](#)
[dead air](#)
[dead asleep](#)
[dead beat](#)
[dead duck](#)
[dead end](#)
[dead horse](#)
[dead last](#)
[dead letter](#)
[dead man](#)
[dead man walking](#)
[dead men's shoes](#)
[dead 'n' buried](#)
[dead of night](#)
[dead on target](#)
[dead on the vine](#)
[dead ringer](#)
[dead-stick landing](#)
[dead tired](#)
[dead-tree edition](#)
[dead-tree format](#)
[dead-tree press](#)
[dead weight](#)
[deadbeat dad](#)
[deaf as an adder](#)
[deafening silence](#)
[deal \(one\) in](#)
[dealbreaker](#)
[Dear John letter](#)



[death blow](#)
[death by spell check](#)
[death spiral](#)
[death toll](#)
[death trap](#)
[death warmed over](#)
[death warmed up](#)
[death warmed up](#)
[deathbed conversion](#)
[debris field](#)
[debt to nature](#)
[decimal dozen](#)
[deep dive](#)
[deep down](#)
[deep down inside](#)
[\(deep\) in the weeds](#)
[\(deep\) into the weeds](#)
[deep sleep](#)
[deep thinker](#)
[deep water](#)
[deep, dark secret](#)
[deer-in-headlights](#)
[deer in the headlights](#)
[deer in the headlights](#)
[Deflategate](#)
[defriend](#)
[defuse \(something\)](#)
[Delhi belly](#)
[deliver the message to Garcia](#)
[dem are da brakes](#)
[deny \(one\)self](#)
[depart from this world](#)
[depart this life](#)
[department of the bleeding obvious](#)
[the depths of](#)
[dereliction of duty](#)
[derring-do](#)

[deserving cause](#)
[designated driver](#)
[desk jockey](#)
[desperate measures](#)
[desperate times call for desperate measures](#)
[desperate times require desperate measures](#)
[detached from reality](#)
[detached from the \(outside\) world](#)
[detective work](#)
[deus ex machina](#)
[devil in disguise](#)
[the devil is in the detail\(s\)](#)
[the devil looks after his own](#)
[the devil's own luck](#)
[dial back](#)
[dial down](#)
[diamond in the rough](#)
[dick all](#)
[dick measuring contest](#)
[Dick Tracy](#)
[Dick Turpin](#)
[dicky bird](#)
[dictated but not read](#)
[didn't bat an eyelash](#)
[didn't bat an eyelid](#)
[didn't care two pence](#)
[didn't do a stroke](#)
[didn't feel myself](#)
[didn't get a wink of sleep](#)
[didn't give a tuppence](#)
[didn't give two pence](#)
[didn't have all day](#)
[didn't have much between the ears](#)
[didn't have two nickels to rub together](#)
[didn't have two pennies to rub together](#)
[didn't know her from a bar of soap](#)
[didn't matter a tuppence](#)



[didn't matter two pence](#)
[didn't open her mouth](#)
[didn't say boo](#)
[didn't sleep a wink](#)
[didn't take it lightly](#)
[die for want of lobster sauce](#)
[die in harness](#)
[die like Roland](#)
[die on the vine](#)
[die with \(one's\) boots on](#)
[different ball of wax](#)
[a different kettle of fish](#)
[dig in \(one's\) heels](#)
[dig it](#)
[dig \(one's\) own grave](#)
[dig \(oneself\) an early grave](#)
[dig \(someone\)](#)
[dig \(someone\) an early grave](#)
[dig \(someone or oneself\) out of a hole](#)
[dig \(something\)](#)
[dig this](#)
[dim bulb](#)
[dimber damber upright man](#)
[dime a dozen](#)
[dime's worth of difference](#)
[diminishing returns](#)
[dine out on \(something\)](#)
[dine with Duke Humphrey](#)
[dip into the blue](#)
[dip \(one's\) toe in the water](#)
[dip \(one's\) toe into \(something\)](#)
[dip out](#)
[diplomatic flu](#)
[direct message](#)
[dirt file](#)
[dirt nap](#)
[dirty cop](#)

[dirty joke](#)
[dirty linen](#)
[dirty money](#)
[dirty old man](#)
[dirty trick](#)
[dirty weekend](#)
[dirty word](#)
[disaster area](#)
[dishpan hands](#)
[the dismal science](#)
[dispense with \(the\) formalities](#)
[distance \(oneself\) from \(someone or something\)](#)
[distant corner of the world](#)
[ditch \(some place\)](#)
[ditch \(someone\)](#)
[ditch \(something\)](#)
[dive in](#)
[divvy up](#)
[DM](#)
[DM me](#)
[do a 180 degree turn](#)
[do a bad turn](#)
[do a bunk](#)
[do a disappearing act](#)
[do a disappearing act](#)
[do a good turn](#)
[do a runner](#)
[do a vanishing act](#)
[do any good](#)
[Do bears crap in the woods?](#)
[Do bears poop in the woods?](#)
[do down town](#)
[do it tough](#)
[do it up brown](#)
[do it with mirrors](#)
[do me a lemon!](#)
[do no good](#)

do not spoil the ship for a ha'porth of tar
do one!
do (one's) bidding
do (one's) block
do (one's) business
do (one's) damnedest
do (one's) darndest
do (one's) darnedest
do (one's) duty
do (one's) homework
do (one's) utmost
do (oneself) in
do or die
do right by (someone)
do (someone) a bad turn
do (someone) a good turn
do (someone) down
do (someone) in
do (someone) out of (something)
do (something) blindfolded
(do something) or get off the pot
do (something) standing on (one's) head
do (something) to death
do tell
do the deed
do the hard yard
do the hard yards
do the math
do the maths
do the right thing
do the spadework
do the trick
do themselves in
Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.
do us down
do us in
do us out of something



do utmost
do well by doing good
do well for (oneself)
do with mirrors
do you kiss your mother with that mouth
do you know Dr. Wright of Norwich
(do) you read me?
Doctors make the worst patients.
dodge a bullet
dodgy deal
Does a bear crap in the woods?
Does a bear poop in the woods?
Does a bear shit in the woods?
does (exactly) what it says on the tin
(one) does not wash (one's) dirty linen in public
does the Pope shit in the woods
doesn't hold a candle
dog and pony show
dog-ear
dog in the hunt
dog in the manger
dog it
dog my cats
dogfood
doggy bag
a dog's age
the dogs bark, but the caravan goes on
dog's chance
dog's dinner
dog's years
domino effect
domino theory
Don Juan
done a disappearing act
done a vanishing act
done and done
done deal



done down the drain
done (something) to death
done (something) to death
done to a turn
donkey's ears
don't bite the hand that feeds (you)
Don't call us, we'll call you.
don't call us, we'll call you
don't care a hang
don't care two pence
don't care two pins
Don't change horses at midstream.
Don't change horses in the middle of the river.
Don't change horses in the middle of the stream.
don't count your chickens before they're hatched
don't crap where you eat
Don't cross that bridge till you come to it.
don't cry over spilled milk
don't cut off your nose to spite your face
don't drop the soap!
don't feel myself
don't get me started
don't give a hang
don't give a rat's arse
don't give a shite
don't give a tuppence
don't give me that line
don't give me that story
don't give two pence
don't give two pins
don't give up the ship
don't give up your day job
don't go there
don't hand me that line
don't hand me that story
don't have a penny to my name
don't have all day

don't have her heart on it
don't have much between the ears
don't have two nickels to rub together
don't have two pennies to rub together
don't judge a book by its cover
don't kill the messenger
don't knock yourself out
don't know her from a bar of soap
don't let perfect be the enemy of good
don't let the bedbugs bite
don't let the door hit you on the way out
don't let the door hit your ass on the way out
Don't let the fox guard the henhouse.
don't look a gift horse in the mouth
don't look at me
don't matter a tuppence
don't matter two pence
don't mind (someone)
don't monkey around with me
don't open her mouth
don't patronize me
don't play (around) with me
don't put all your eggs in one basket
don't put stock in
don't reveal her colors
don't reveal her stripes
don't see the point
don't see the point in
don't shit where you eat
don't shoot the messenger
Don't swap horses at midstream.
Don't swap horses in the middle of the river.
Don't swap horses in the middle of the stream.
don't take stock in
don't teach your grandmother to suck eggs
don't that beat all!
don't utter a word

[\(someone's\) door is always open](#)
[doormat](#)
[dope out \(something\)](#)
[dope sheet](#)
[doped to the gills](#)
[do's and don'ts](#)
[dose are da breaks](#)
[a dose of \(one's\) own medicine](#)
[a dose of \(one's\) own medicine](#)
[doss about](#)
[doss around](#)
[dot \(one's\) I's and cross \(one's\) t's](#)
[double bill](#)
[double bind](#)
[double booked](#)
[double cross](#)
[double crosser](#)
[double down](#)
[double edged sword](#)
[double-edged sword](#)
[double entendre](#)
[double in brass](#)
[double or nothing](#)
[double standard](#)
[a double taker](#)
[double tap](#)
[double-tongued](#)
[double whammy](#)
[doublespeak](#)
[doubting Thomas](#)
[douche](#)
[douchebag](#)
[douchebaggery](#)
[down and out](#)
[down-and-outer](#)
[a down-and-outer](#)
[down-at-heel](#)

[down-at-heels](#)
[down-at-the-heel](#)
[down-at-the-heels](#)
[down cold](#)
[down cold](#)
[down for the count](#)
[down in the doldrums](#)
[down in the mouth](#)
[down on](#)
[down on \(one's\) uppers](#)
[down \(one's\) alley](#)
[down pat](#)
[down the pan](#)
[down the road, not across the street](#)
[down the track](#)
[down the tube\(s\)](#)
[down to a fine art](#)
[down to bedrock](#)
[down to brass tacks](#)
[down to do](#)
[down to fuck](#)
[down to her](#)
[down to something](#)
[down to the short strokes](#)
[down to the short strokes](#)
[down under](#)
[down with](#)
[down with his apple-cart](#)
[down your alley](#)
[Downing Street](#)
[doxxing](#)
[a drag](#)
[drag king](#)
[drag \(one's\) ass](#)
[drag \(one's\) name through the mud](#)
[drag \(one's\) tail](#)
[drag queen](#)

[drag \(someone\) into \(something\)](#)
[drag \(someone\) kicking and screaming](#)
[dragged into something kicking and screaming](#)
[dragon lady](#)
[drain the main vein](#)
[drama queen](#)
[drastic times call for drastic measures](#)
[drastic times require drastic measures](#)
[draw a bead on \(someone or something\)](#)
[draw a line](#)
[draw an inference](#)
[draw in \(one's\) horns](#)
[draw in the reins](#)
[draw lots](#)
[draw near to](#)
[draw \(one's\) last breath](#)
[draw \(one\)self up](#)
[draw stumps](#)
[draw the curtain on \(something\)](#)
[draw the curtain over \(something\)](#)
[drawing card](#)
[dream come true](#)
[dream house](#)
[dream ticket](#)
[drenched to the skin](#)
[dress to kill](#)
[dribs and drabs](#)
[drill \(someone\) \(with questions\)](#)
[drink from a fire hose](#)
[drink with the flies](#)
[drinking age](#)
[drive \(one's\) pigs to market](#)
[drive \(oneself\) to an early grave](#)
[drive \(someone\) buggy](#)
[drive \(someone\) crazy](#)
[drive \(someone\) mad](#)
[drive \(someone\) potty](#)

[drive \(someone\) to an early grave](#)
[drive \(someone\) wild](#)
[drive the porcelain bus](#)
[drool bucket](#)
[drop a bollock](#)
[drop a brick](#)
[drop a dime](#)
[drop anchor](#)
[drop by \(sometime\)](#)
[drop in the bucket](#)
[drop in the ocean](#)
[drop like flies](#)
[drop off the radar](#)
[drop \(one\) a line](#)
[drop \(one's\) guard](#)
[drop \(something\) in \(someone's\) lap](#)
[drop the F-bomb](#)
[drop the gloves](#)
[drop the L-bomb](#)
[drop the mic](#)
[drop the writ](#)
[drop trou](#)
[dropout factory](#)
[drown in self-pity](#)
[a drowning man will clutch at a straw](#)
[drug deal](#)
[drug of choice](#)
[drug on the market](#)
[drugstore cowboy](#)
[drum \(something\) into \(someone's\) head](#)
[Drumpf](#)
[drunk as a fiddler](#)
[drunk as a lord](#)
[drunk as a skunk](#)
[drunk with the flies](#)
[dry behind the ears](#)
[dry \(one's\) eyes](#)

[dry powder](#)
[dry run](#)
[DTE](#)
[duck face](#)
[duck test](#)
[dud](#)
[dug her own grave](#)
[dug in heels](#)
[dumb bunny](#)
[a dumb priest never got a parish](#)
[dumb shit](#)
[dumb \(something\) down](#)
[dummy run](#)
[dummy run](#)
[dummy spit](#)
[dumpster fire](#)
[\(the\) Dunkirk spirit](#)
[during the course of](#)
[dust mouse](#)
[dust off the batter](#)
[dusty miller](#)
[Dutch act](#)
[the Dutch have taken Holland](#)
[Dutch reckoning](#)
[Dutch treat](#)
[a dwarf standing on the shoulders of giants](#)
[dye in the wool](#)
[dying for](#)
[dying for want of lobster sauce](#)
[dying like Roland](#)
[dying wish](#)
[dynamite charge](#)

E

[e pluribus unum](#)
[each man for himself](#)
[each other](#)
[each way](#)
[eager beaver](#)
[ear to the ground](#)
[ear tunnel](#)
[an earful](#)
[an early bath](#)
[early bird](#)
[early days](#)
[early grave](#)
 [earmuff it](#)
 [earmuffs!](#)
[earn a crust](#)
[earn a living](#)
[earn an honest buck](#)
[earn \(one's\) crust](#)
[earn \(one's\) wings](#)
[\(one's\) ears are burning](#)
[earth mother](#)
[earthly desires](#)
[ease into \(something\)](#)
[ease someone into \(something\)](#)
[ease up \(on someone or something\)](#)
[easier said than done](#)
[easier than falling off a log](#)
[easier than rolling off a log](#)
[east German judge](#)
[easy as 1-2-3](#)
[easy as ABC](#)
[easy as falling off a log](#)
[easy as falling off of a log](#)

[easy as one-two-three](#)
[easy as pie](#)
[easy as rolling off a log](#)
[easy mark](#)
[easy on the eye](#)
[easy sledding](#)
[eat \(away\) at \(someone's\) conscience](#)
[eat for two](#)
[eat high off the hog](#)
[eat high on the hog](#)
[eat into \(something\)](#)
[eat it](#)
[eat \(one's\) gun](#)
[eat \(one's\) own dog food](#)
[eat \(one's\) salt](#)
[eat \(one's\) shirt](#)
[eat \(one's\) Wheaties](#)
[eat \(one's\) words](#)
[eat \(one's\) young](#)
[eat pussy](#)
[eat \(someone's\) ass out](#)
[eat \(someone's\) dust](#)
[eat \(something or someone\) for breakfast](#)
[eat, drink, and be merry](#)
[edge in](#)
[edge out](#)
[an educated guess](#)
[eff my life](#)
[effed](#)
[egg in \(your\) beer](#)
[egg on \(one's\) face](#)
[eggs is eggs](#)
[ego trip](#)
[eight-hundred-lb. gorilla](#)
[eight ways from Sunday](#)
[eight ways to Sunday](#)
[the eighth wonder of the world](#)



[elbow \(one's\) way](#)
[elbow \(one's\) way to the top](#)
[element of surprise](#)
[elephant ear](#)
[elephant ears](#)
[\(the\) elephant in the room](#)
[an elephant never forgets](#)
[Elvis has left the building](#)
[Elysian Fields](#)
[an embarrassment of riches](#)
[éminence grise](#)
[emoji](#)
[emotional cripple](#)
[the emperor's new clothes](#)
[employ a steam engine to crack a nut](#)
[empty nest](#)
[empty promise](#)
[an empty sack cannot stand upright](#)
[empty suit](#)
[empty the tank](#)
[empty threat](#)
[an end in itself](#)
[end in view](#)
[end of](#)
[the end of \(one's\) rope](#)
[the end of \(one's\) tether](#)
[end of play](#)
[the end of the line](#)
[the end of the road](#)
[end of the world](#)
[the end of the world as we know it](#)
[end run](#)
[end \(something\) on a high note](#)
[end to end](#)
[end up in the knacker's yard](#)
[endgame](#)
[enemy combatant](#)



[the enemy of my enemy is my friend](#)
[enfant terrible](#)
[engine room](#)
[an Englishman's home is his castle](#)
[enlarge \(up\)on \(something\)](#)
[enough \(something\) to choke Caligula's horse](#)
[enough to choke a horse](#)
[enough to make the angels weep](#)
[epic fail](#)
[equal to the occasion](#)
[equal to the task](#)
[escape fire](#)
[escape the bear and fall to the lion](#)
[esprit de l'escalier](#)
[esthetically challenged](#)
[etched in stone](#)
[eternal sleep](#)
[ethically challenged](#)
[ethnic music](#)
[eureka moment](#)
[Evel Knievel](#)
[even break](#)
[even Homer \(sometimes\) nods](#)
[even keel](#)
[even money](#)
[even the score](#)
[ever and again](#)
[ever so](#)
[every dark cloud has a silver lining](#)
[every eel hopes to become a whale](#)
[every picture tells a story](#)
[every silver lining has a cloud](#)
[every single one](#)
[every Tom, Dick, and Harry](#)
[every which where](#)
[everybody and his cousin](#)
[everybody and his dog](#)



everybody and his mother
everybody and his mum
everybody and his uncle
everybody and their brother
everybody and their dog
everybody and their mother
everybody and their mum
everyone and his cousin
everyone and his dog
everyone and his mother
everyone and his mum
everyone and his uncle
everyone and their brother
everyone and their dog
everyone and their mother
everyone and their mum
everyone and their mum
everything and the kitchen sink
everything tastes of porridge
evil eye
the evil one
evil twin
excess baggage
exchange flesh
execution style
exercise for the reader
exist on borrowed time
exit stage left
exotic cheroot
expect the unexpected
experience is the mother of wisdom
explore all avenues
explore every avenue
expose (one)self
extra pair of hands
extract the urine (out of someone or something)
an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth



[eye of the beholder](#)
[eye of the wind](#)
[eye opener](#)
[eye sex](#)
[eye \(someone\) up](#)
[eye up](#)
[eye up \(something\)](#)
[the eyes are the windows of the soul](#)

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F

[f-bomb](#)

[F my life](#)

[F4F](#)

[face \(that\) would stop a clock](#)

[face value](#)

[\(the\) fact is](#)

[fact of life](#)

[facts on the ground](#)

[fade fast](#)

[faff about](#)

[faff around](#)

[fag hag](#)

[fail](#)

[fail at life](#)

[fail of success](#)

[fail the red face test](#)

[fail the smell test](#)

[fail to see](#)

[failure to thrive](#)

[a fair crack at something](#)

[fair shake](#)

[fair-weather fan](#)

[fair-weather friend](#)

[fairy godmother](#)

[fait accompli](#)

[fake check](#)

[fake cheque](#)

[fake news](#)

[fall about the place \(laughing\)](#)

[fall \(a\)foul](#)

[fall asleep at the switch](#)

[fall asleep at the wheel](#)

[fall at the final hurdle](#)

[fall at the first hurdle](#)
[fall at the last hurdle](#)
[fall between the cracks](#)
[fall guy](#)
[fall into \(one's\) lap](#)
[fall off a truck](#)
[fall off the back of a lorry](#)
[fall off the back of a truck](#)
[fall off the radar](#)
[fall off the turnip truck](#)
[fall over backward](#)
[fall \(squarely\) on \(someone's\) shoulders](#)
[fall through the cracks](#)
[fall to bits](#)
[fall to \(one's\) knees](#)
[fall under \(someone's\) spell](#)
[fall under the spell of \(someone\)](#)
[fall victim](#)
[fallen angel](#)
[fallen idol](#)
[fallen woman](#)
[falling-down drunk](#)
[a falling out](#)
[false alarm](#)
[false as Cressida](#)
[false dawn](#)
[false economy](#)
[false friend](#)
[false modesty](#)
[false note](#)
[false pride](#)
[false start](#)
[false step](#)
[fam](#)
[family jewels](#)
[family man](#)
[fan dance](#)

[fanboy](#)
[fangirl](#)
[fanny about](#)
[Fanny Adams](#)
[fanny around](#)
[a far cry from](#)
[far post](#)
[the far side](#)
[fare thee well](#)
[a fare-thee-well](#)
[farmer's tan](#)
[fart in a windstorm](#)
[fashion plate](#)
[fashion victim](#)
[fashionably late](#)
[fast as lightning](#)
[fast asleep](#)
[fast buck](#)
[fast talk](#)
[fast talker](#)
[fast track](#)
[faster than greased lightning](#)
[faster than you can say Jack Robinson](#)
[fat cat](#)
[fat farm](#)
[a fat lot](#)
[fat lot of good](#)
[fat of the land](#)
[Fata Morgana](#)
[fatal attraction](#)
[fate worse than death](#)
[fathead](#)
[fathom the depths of \(something\)](#)
[fatten the kitty](#)
[Faustian bargain](#)
[faux pas](#)
[faux queen](#)

[favorite daughter](#)
[favorite son](#)
[favourite daughter](#)
[favourite son](#)
[FB](#)
[FBF](#)
[fear no colors](#)
[fear of missing out](#)
[a feast for the eyes](#)
[feast \(one's\) eyes](#)
[feather in \(one's\) cap](#)
[feather in \(one's\) cap](#)
[featherless biped](#)
[feck it](#)
[federal case](#)
[feed a cold, starve a fever](#)
[feed \(someone\) to the wolves](#)
[feed the beast](#)
[feed the dragon](#)
[feed the fishes](#)
[feeding frenzy](#)
[feel all the feels](#)
[feel as if a cat has kittened in \(one's\) mouth](#)
[feel for](#)
[feel honor-bound to do something](#)
[feel it in \(one's\) bones](#)
[feel light-headed](#)
[feel like a million bucks](#)
[feel like a million dollars](#)
[feel like a new man/woman](#)
[feel \(like\) \(one\)self](#)
[feel like two cents](#)
[feel no pain](#)
[feel out of humour](#)
[feel out of sorts](#)
[feel small](#)
[feel sorry for \(someone\)](#)

[feel the crunch](#)
[feel the draught](#)
[the feels](#)
[feet first](#)
[femme fatale](#)
[fence with \(someone\)](#)
[fend and prove](#)
[fend away](#)
[fender bender](#)
[festina lente](#)
[fetch and carry \(for someone\)](#)
[a few bricks short of a \(full\) load](#)
[a few bricks shy of a load](#)
[a few fries short of a Happy Meal](#)
[a few kangaroos loose in the top paddock](#)
[a few sandwiches short of a picnic](#)
[fib \(one's\) way out of \(something\)](#)
[fiddle about \(with something\)](#)
[fiddle \(someone\) out of \(something\)](#)
[fidget about](#)
[fidget spinner](#)
[fifteen minutes of fame](#)
[fifth column](#)
[fifth columnist](#)
[fifth wheel](#)
[fifty-fifty chance](#)
[fig leaf](#)
[fight a losing battle](#)
[fight fires](#)
[fight in armour](#)
[fight like Kilkenny cats](#)
[fight tooth and nail](#)
[fighting chance](#)
[fighting words](#)
[figment of \(one's\)/the imagination](#)
[figure of fun](#)
[figure of speech](#)

[\(one\) figures \(that\)](#)
[file 13](#)
[file off the serial number\(s\)](#)
[fill in the blank](#)
[fill in the details](#)
[fill \(one's\) hand](#)
[film at 11](#)
[filter down](#)
[filter up](#)
[final cut](#)
[final hurrah](#)
[final nail in the coffin](#)
[\(one's\) final resting place](#)
[the Final Solution](#)
[find it in \(oneself\) \(to do something\)](#)
[find \(one's\) bearings](#)
[find \(one's\) calling](#)
[find \(one's\) feet](#)
[find \(one's\) \(own\) level](#)
[find \(one's\) voice](#)
[find \(oneself\)](#)
[find \(something\) out the hard way](#)
[find \(something\) wanting](#)
[find the net](#)
[find true north](#)
[find way out of a paper back](#)
[a fine how-d'ye-do](#)
[a fine howdy-do](#)
[a fine Italian hand](#)
[fine kettle of fish](#)
[fine line](#)
[a fine line](#)
[fine print](#)
[a fine state of affairs](#)
[\(one's\) finest hour](#)
[the finger](#)
[finger in every pie](#)

[finger in the pie](#)
[fingers crossed](#)
[finish \(something\) on a high note](#)
[fire-breather](#)
[fire-breathing](#)
[fire bug](#)
[fire drill](#)
[fire hose](#)
[fire in the belly](#)
[fire on all cylinders](#)
[fire \(one's\) pistol in the air](#)
[firing line](#)
[firm hand on the tiller](#)
[first](#)
[first and last](#)
[first cousin](#)
[first for first](#)
[first impression](#)
[first loser](#)
[first love](#)
[first port of call](#)
[first-rate](#)
[first up](#)
[first world problem](#)
[fish-eating grin](#)
[fish eye](#)
[fish flesh red herring](#)
[fish out of water](#)
[fish to fry](#)
[a fishbowl](#)
[fishing expedition](#)
[fishy](#)
[fishy about the gills](#)
[fist bump](#)
[five will get you ten](#)
[the fix is in](#)
[fix \(someone\)](#)

[fixed for life](#)
[flake out](#)
[flannelled fool](#)
[flap \(one's\) chops](#)
[flap \(one's\) gums](#)
[flap \(one's\) jaws](#)
[flash in the pan](#)
[flashback Friday](#)
[flat as a strap](#)
[flat chat](#)
[flat-earther](#)
[flat footed](#)
[flat out like a lizard drinking](#)
[flat strap](#)
[flatter \(oneself\)](#)
[flavor of the week](#)
[a flea in \(one's\) ear](#)
[flea in the ear](#)
[flea market](#)
[flew under her radar](#)
[flick the bean](#)
[flight of fancy](#)
[flight of fantasy](#)
[flight of imagination](#)
[fling \(one's\) bonnet over the windmill](#)
[fling \(one's\) cap over the windmill](#)
[fling \(one's\) hat over the windmill](#)
[flip](#)
[flip-flop](#)
[flip \(one's\) wig](#)
[float \(one's\) boat](#)
[flog the dolphin](#)
[flog the log](#)
[floppy baby syndrome](#)
[floppy infant syndrome](#)
[flourish like a green bay tree](#)
[flourish of trumpets](#)



[flower](#)
[flower of the flock](#)
[a flutter in the dovecote](#)
[flutter the dovecote](#)
[fly beneath \(the/someone's\) radar](#)
[fly by the seat of \(one's\) pants](#)
[fly in the face of](#)
[fly in the ointment](#)
[fly in the teeth of](#)
[fly low](#)
[fly on the wall](#)
[fly \(one's\) freak flag](#)
[fly out of the traps](#)
[fly under \(the/someone's\) radar](#)
[Flying Dutchman](#)
[flying fish](#)
[flying visit](#)
[FML](#)
[F.O.B.](#)
[fold \(up\) \(one's\) tent](#)
[folk devil](#)
[follow back](#)
[follow in \(one's\) footsteps](#)
[follow in the footsteps of](#)
[follow \(one's\) nose](#)
[follow \(someone or something\) in stride](#)
[follow the example of](#)
[follow the golden mean](#)
[follow the sea](#)
[FOMO](#)
[food baby](#)
[food chain](#)
[food coma](#)
[food for worms](#)
[a fool and his money are soon parted](#)
[a fool may give a wise man counsel](#)
[fools build houses and wise men live in them](#)



fool's errand
Football's a game of two halves.
for a start
for a wonder
for all
for all intensive purposes
for all (one) is worth
for all that
for Chrissake
A for effort
for England
for fuck's sake
for fun
for good and all
for heaven's sake
for hire
for mercy's sake
for once
for (one's) life
for (one's) money
for (one's) (own) sake
for (one's) pains
for pity's sake
for show
for the ages
for the love of God
for the love of Mike
for the love of Pete
for the love of (something)
for the nonce
for the sake of (someone)
for two pins
for XYZ reasons
forbidden fruit is the sweetest
force (one's) hand
force (something) down (someone's) throat
force the issue

[force to be reckoned with](#)
[foregone conclusion](#)
[Foresight is better than hindsight.](#)
[forever and a day](#)
[forge away at \(something\)](#)
[fork out the dough](#)
[fork over the dough](#)
[fork the fingers](#)
[forked tongue](#)
[forlorn hope](#)
[fortune favors the bold](#)
[fortune is smiling \(up\)on \(someone\)](#)
[fortune smiles \(up\)on someone](#)
[forty minutes of hell](#)
[forty ways from Sunday](#)
[forty ways to Sunday](#)
[forty winks](#)
[fought a losing battle](#)
[fought like Kilkenny cats](#)
[fought tooth and nail](#)
[foul ball](#)
[fountain of youth](#)
[four-eyes](#)
[Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse](#)
[the Four Hundred](#)
[four-leaf clover](#)
[four-letter word](#)
[four-on-the-floor](#)
[four score and seven years ago](#)
[four sheets to the wind](#)
[the Fourth Estate](#)
[fourth wall](#)
[fourth wall joke](#)
[fox guarding the henhouse](#)
[fox in the henhouse](#)
[fox's sleep](#)
[fracking](#)

[fraid not](#)
[fraid so](#)
[frame of mind](#)
[Frankenstein's monster](#)
[freak flag](#)
[freak of nature](#)
[free agent](#)
[free as a bird](#)
[a free bit of advice](#)
[free fall](#)
[free-for-all](#)
[free rein](#)
[free ride](#)
[free space](#)
[free spirit](#)
[free, white, and twenty-one](#)
[freedom of speech](#)
[freeze \(someone's\) blood](#)
[French kiss](#)
[French kissing](#)
[French letter](#)
[French letter](#)
[French tickler](#)
[fresh blood](#)
[fresh-faced](#)
[fresh legs](#)
[fresh meat](#)
[fresh off the boat](#)
[Freudian slip](#)
[fried the fat out of](#)
[friend](#)
[friend in need](#)
[a friend in need is a friend indeed](#)
[friend of Bill W.](#)
[friend with benefits](#)
[friend zone](#)
[Friendsgiving](#)



[friendship with benefits](#)
[frig it](#)
[frighten the life out of someone](#)
[frighten the \(living\) daylights out of \(someone\)](#)
[frighten the shit out of \(someone\)](#)
[frightened of \(one's\) \(own\) shadow](#)
[fringe benefit](#)
[a frog choker](#)
[a frog in \(one's\) throat](#)
[frog in \(one's\) throat](#)
[a frog strangler](#)
[from a mile away](#)
[from A to izzard](#)
[from A to Z](#)
[from afar](#)
[from can see to can't see](#)
[from central casting](#)
[from cover to cover](#)
[from Dan to Beersheba](#)
[from first to last](#)
[\(from\) hand to mouth](#)
[from here to Sunday](#)
[from my cold, dead hands](#)
[from the Department of the Bleeding Obvious](#)
[from the East German judge](#)
[from the get-go](#)
[from zero to hero](#)
[front foot](#)
[front load](#)
[front wall](#)
[the frosting on the cake](#)
[froth at the mouth](#)
[frown upon](#)
[froze her blood](#)
[fruit of \(one's\) loins](#)
[fruit of the poisonous tree](#)
[fruit of the union](#)

[fruit salad](#)
[fry the fat out of](#)
[fuck all](#)
[fuck knows](#)
[fuck me](#)
[fuck my life](#)
[fuck \(one's\) brains out](#)
[fuck the dog](#)
[fucked by the fickle finger of fate](#)
[fucked over](#)
[fucking hell](#)
[fuddy-duddy](#)
[fudge packer](#)
[fudge the issue](#)
[fuel the fire\(s\)](#)
[fuel the flame\(s\)](#)
[full circle](#)
[full-court press](#)
[full English](#)
[full-fledged](#)
[full marks](#)
[full of bull](#)
[full of life](#)
[full of piss and vinegar](#)
[full plate](#)
[full-tilt boogie](#)
[full to the brim](#)
[full to the gills](#)
[full whack](#)
[funnies](#)
[funny farm](#)
[funny feeling](#)
[funny in the head](#)
[funny man](#)
[funny-peculiar or funny ha-ha](#)
[funny stuff](#)
[fussy as a hen with one chick](#)

[FWB](#)

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G

[gag for](#)

[gag for it](#)

[gag order](#)

[gain entrance](#)

[gain ground](#)

[gain ground against \(something\)](#)

[gain ground on \(someone or something\)](#)

[gain the upper hand](#)

[gala affair](#)

[gall and wormwood](#)

[gallery gods](#)

[game face](#)

[The game is not worth the candle.](#)

[a game of hide and seek](#)

[a game of musical chairs](#)

[game plan](#)

[game, set, match](#)

[gandy dancer](#)

[gapers' block](#)

[garden variety](#)

[Garrison finish](#)

[Gary Glitter](#)

[gas guzzler](#)

[gasbag](#)

[gaslighting](#)

[gatecrasher](#)

[gather \(one's\) wits](#)

[gathering clouds](#)

[gaze open-mouthed](#)

[gee whiz](#)

[gen \(someone\) up on \(something\)](#)

[gen up on \(something\)](#)

[gender bender](#)



[gender bending](#)
[generation gap](#)
[genetic modification](#)
[geneva courage](#)
[genie back in the bottle](#)
[gentle giant](#)
[a gentleman and a scholar](#)
[a gentleman and a scholar](#)
[gentleman of the four outs](#)
[gentleman's agreement](#)
[gentleman's pact](#)
[German goiter](#)
[German virgin](#)
[German wheel](#)
[gerrup de yaard](#)
[get](#)
[get a bead on \(someone or something\)](#)
[get a big head](#)
[get a break](#)
[get a crush on \(someone\)](#)
[get a dirty look \(from someone\)](#)
[get a fix \(of something\)](#)
[get a \(good/solid/sound/etc.\) grasp of/on \(something\)](#)
[get a hand on \(something\)](#)
[get a hand \(with something\)](#)
[get a leg up](#)
[get a leg up on \(someone\)](#)
[get a load off \(one's\) feet](#)
[get \(a lot of\) grief \(from someone\)](#)
[get a lot of mileage](#)
[get \(a lot of\) stick \(from someone\)](#)
[get a lump in \(one's\) throat](#)
[get \(a\) mixed message\(s\)](#)
[get \(a\) mixed signal\(s\)](#)
[get a price on \(one's\) head](#)
[get a ribbing \(from someone\)](#)
[get a room](#)

[get a say \(in something\)](#)
[get a sneck posset](#)
[get a voice \(in something\)](#)
[get a wiggle on](#)
[get a wink of sleep](#)
[get a wriggle on](#)
[get a yen for \(something\)](#)
[get \(all\) set](#)
[get along famously \(with someone\)](#)
[get anywhere](#)
[get around](#)
[get ashes hauled](#)
[get ass](#)
[get back](#)
[get back on the horse \(that bucked you\)](#)
[get back to \(someone\)](#)
[get back to \(someone\) on \(something\)](#)
[get back up](#)
[get behind me](#)
[get bell rung](#)
[get bent](#)
[get burned \(by someone\)](#)
[get butt](#)
[get by](#)
[get by balls](#)
[get by the short hairs](#)
[get canned](#)
[get changed](#)
[get claws into](#)
[get claws out](#)
[get clock cleaned](#)
[get clued in \(to something\)](#)
[get credit for \(something\)](#)
[get dander up](#)
[get down](#)
[get down](#)
[get down cold](#)



[get down pat](#)
[get down to work](#)
[get dues](#)
[get Dutch up](#)
[get ears lowered](#)
[get end away](#)
[get even with](#)
[get finger out](#)
[get finger out](#)
[get fingers burned](#)
[get fingers burned](#)
[get fix](#)
[get foot in the door](#)
[get freak on](#)
[the get-go](#)
[get goose bumps](#)
[get goose flesh](#)
[get goose pimples](#)
[get gray hair from \(someone or something\)](#)
[get grief](#)
[get hackles up](#)
[get hand on something](#)
[get hands dirty](#)
[get hands on](#)
[get hands on](#)
[get head around](#)
[get head together](#)
[get hers](#)
[get herself in gear](#)
[get herself out of something](#)
[get herself out of something](#)
[get herself out of somewhere](#)
[get high](#)
[get him by the balls](#)
[get him down](#)
[get him off the hook](#)
[get him out of a fix](#)



[get him out of something](#)
[get him out of something](#)
[get him out of somewhere](#)
[get hit for six](#)
[get hit on](#)
[get hitched](#)
[get hold of the right end of the stick](#)
[get hold of the wrong end of the stick](#)
[get hopes up](#)
[get hot under the collar](#)
[get house in order](#)
[get in on](#)
[get in \(one's\) hair](#)
[get in over \(one's\) head](#)
[get in \(someone's\) face](#)
[get in \(someone's\) good books](#)
[get in the last word](#)
[get in touch \(with someone\)](#)
[get in with \(someone\)](#)
[get inside \(someone's\) pants](#)
[get in\(to\) a rut](#)
[get in\(to\) a snit](#)
[get in\(to\) a stew](#)
[get in\(to\) deep water](#)
[get in\(to\) hot water](#)
[get in\(to\) line](#)
[get into \(one's\) stride](#)
[get in\(to\) \(someone's\) pants](#)
[get into the wrong hands](#)
[get into trouble](#)
[get involved \(in or with someone or something\)](#)
[get Irish up](#)
[get it](#)
[get it down](#)
[get it down cold](#)
[get it down pat](#)
[get it in the neck](#)

[get it over with](#)
[get it over with](#)
[get it through head](#)
[get it up](#)
[get it wrong](#)
[get jollies](#)
[get juices flowing](#)
[get just deserts](#)
[get kicked to the curb](#)
[get knickers in a knot](#)
[get knickers in a twist](#)
[get knocked out cold](#)
[get lost in translation](#)
[get lowdown](#)
[get lumps in our throats](#)
[get marching orders](#)
[get marching orders](#)
[get miffed](#)
[get mileage](#)
[get mine](#)
[get mixed message](#)
[get mixed signal](#)
[get monkey up](#)
[get more than \(one\) bargained for](#)
[get myself in gear](#)
[get myself out of something](#)
[get myself out of something](#)
[get myself out of somewhere](#)
[get nutted](#)
[get off-kilter](#)
[get off light](#)
[get off lightly](#)
[get off on \(something\)](#)
[get off \(one's\) back](#)
[get off \(one's\) case](#)
[get off \(one's\) high horse](#)
[get off scot-free](#)



[get off scot-free](#)
[get off the pot](#)
[get off to a false start](#)
[get off track](#)
[get off with \(someone\)](#)
[get on like a house afire](#)
[get on like a house on fire](#)
[get on \(one's\) hobby-horse](#)
[get on \(one's\) wick](#)
[get on \(someone's\) bad side](#)
[get on \(someone's\) good side](#)
[get on the bad side of \(someone\)](#)
[get on the end of \(something\)](#)
[get on the good side of \(someone\)](#)
[get on the horn](#)
[get on the wrong side of \(someone\)](#)
[get on with it](#)
[get on with \(something\)](#)
[get one down](#)
[get \(one\) off the hook](#)
[get \(one's\)](#)
[get \(one's\) ashes hauled](#)
[get \(one's\) ass \(somewhere\)](#)
[get one's back up](#)
[get \(one's\) bell rung](#)
[get \(one's\) butt \(somewhere\)](#)
[get \(one's\) claws into](#)
[get \(one's\) claws out](#)
[get \(one's\) clock cleaned](#)
[get \(one's\) dander up](#)
[get \(one's\) dues](#)
[get \(one's\) Dutch up](#)
[get \(one's\) ears lowered](#)
[get \(one's\) end away](#)
[get \(one's\) finger out](#)
[get \(one's\) finger out](#)
[get \(one's\) fingers burned](#)



[get \(one's\) fingers burned](#)
[get \(one's\) fix \(of something\)](#)
[get \(one's\) foot in the door](#)
[get \(one's\) freak on](#)
[get one's hackles up](#)
[get \(one's\) hands dirty](#)
[get \(one's\) hands on \(someone\)](#)
[get \(one's\) hands on \(something\)](#)
[get \(one's\) head around \(something\)](#)
[get \(one's\) head together](#)
[get \(one's\) hopes up](#)
[get one's Irish up](#)
[get \(one's\) jollies](#)
[get \(one's\) juices flowing](#)
[get \(one's\) just deserts](#)
[get \(one's\) knickers in a knot](#)
[get \(one's\) knickers in a twist](#)
[get \(one's\) marching orders](#)
[get \(one's\) marching orders](#)
[get \(one's\) monkey up](#)
[get \(one's\) own back](#)
[get \(one's\) \(own\) house in order](#)
[get \(one's\) \(own\) way](#)
[get \(one's\) panties in a bunch](#)
[get \(one's\) panties in a knot](#)
[get \(one's\) panties in a twist](#)
[get \(one's\) priorities straight](#)
[get \(one's\) shirt out](#)
[get \(one's\) shit together](#)
[get \(one's\) shorts in a knot](#)
[get \(one's\) signals crossed](#)
[get \(one's\) skates on](#)
[get \(one's\) thinking cap on](#)
[get \(one's\) tits in a wringer](#)
[get \(one's\) walking papers](#)
[get \(one's\) wires crossed](#)
[get \(oneself\) in gear](#)

[get \(oneself\) out of \(something\)](#)
[get \(oneself\) out of \(something\)](#)
[get \(oneself\) out of \(somewhere\)](#)
[get onto](#)
[get ours](#)
[get out from under \(someone or something\)](#)
[get out of](#)
[get out of a fix](#)
[get out of a fix](#)
[get out of Dodge](#)
[get out of doing \(something\)](#)
[get out of here](#)
[get out of jail free card](#)
[get out of kilter](#)
[get out of the road](#)
[get out while the getting is good](#)
[get out!](#)
[get outside \(of\) \(something\)](#)
[get outta here](#)
[get over it](#)
[get over \(something\)](#)
[get over with](#)
[get own back](#)
[get own house in order](#)
[get panties in a bunch](#)
[get panties in a knot](#)
[get panties in a twist](#)
[get physical](#)
[get pissed off](#)
[get played like a fiddle](#)
[get plugged into \(something\)](#)
[get PO'd](#)
[get priorities straight](#)

[get pulse racing](#)
[get pulses racing](#)
[get ready](#)
[get-rich-quick](#)
[get rid of \(someone or something\)](#)
[get right](#)
[get right with \(someone\)](#)
[get ripped to shreds](#)
[get round](#)
[get round \(someone\)](#)
[get round \(something\)](#)
[get round to \(doing something\)](#)
[get set](#)
[get shirt out](#)
[get shit together](#)
[get shorts in a knot](#)
[get sick](#)
[get signals crossed](#)
[get skates on](#)
[get some](#)
[get some action](#)
[get some air](#)
[get \(some kind of\) mileage out of \(something\)](#)
[get some rays](#)
[get some tail](#)
[get \(someone\) by the balls](#)
[get \(someone\) down](#)
[get \(someone\) out of a fix](#)
[get \(someone\) out of \(something\)](#)
[get \(someone\) out of \(something\)](#)
[get someone out of something](#)
[get someone out of something](#)
[get someone out of somewhere](#)
[get \(someone\) out of \(somewhere\)](#)
[get \(someone's\) back](#)
[get \(someone's\) back up](#)
[get someone's bell rung](#)

[get \(someone's\) hackles up](#)
[get \(someone's\) Irish up](#)
[get \(someone's\) pulse racing](#)
[get \(something\) down](#)
[get something down cold](#)
[get something down pat](#)
[get \(something\) out of \(someone\)](#)
[get \(something\) out of \(something\)](#)
[get \(something\) over with](#)
[get \(something\) right](#)
[get \(something\) through \(someone's\) head](#)
[get \(something\) under \(one's\) belt](#)
[get \(something\) wrong](#)
[get stick](#)
[get stuck in](#)
[get stuck into \(something\)](#)
[get taken in \(by someone or something\)](#)
[get taken to task \(by someone\)](#)
[get taken to the cleaners \(by someone\)](#)
[get the air](#)
[get the bum's rush](#)
[get the business](#)
[get the can](#)
[get the crap kicked out of \(someone\)](#)
[get the elbow](#)
[get the fright of \(one's\) life](#)
[get the gist](#)
[get the go-ahead](#)
[get the green light](#)
[get \(the hell\) out of Dodge](#)
[get the knack of](#)
[get the lowdown \(on someone or something\)](#)
[get the memo](#)
[get the royal treatment](#)
[get the runaround](#)
[get the shakes](#)
[get the stick](#)

[get the third degree](#)
[get the time](#)
[get the upper hand](#)
[get the vapors](#)
[get the weather gage of \(someone or something\)](#)
[get \(the\) what for](#)
[get the whetstone](#)
[get the wrong idea \(about someone or something\)](#)
[get thee behind me](#)
[get theirs](#)
[get there](#)
[get thinking cap on](#)
[get this show on the road](#)
[get through head](#)
[get tied up](#)
[get tits in a wringer](#)
[get to grips with \(someone or something\)](#)
[get to the heart of \(something\)](#)
[get torqued off](#)
[get turfed](#)
[get turfed out](#)
[get under belt](#)
[get under way](#)
[get-up-and-go](#)
[get up on the wrong side of \(the\) bed](#)
[get up \(one's\) nerve \(to do something\)](#)
[get up steam](#)
[get up the yard](#)
[get up with the chickens](#)
[get us by the balls](#)
[get us down](#)
[get us off the hook](#)
[get us out of a fix](#)
[get us out of something](#)
[get us out of something](#)
[get us out of somewhere](#)
[get used](#)



[get used to \(someone or something\)](#)
[get vibrations](#)
[get walking papers](#)
[get way](#)
[get weather gage of](#)
[get what for](#)
[get what's coming \(to one\)](#)
[get whetstone](#)
[get wires crossed](#)
[get wise \(to someone or something\)](#)
[get wise to \(someone or something\)](#)
[get with it](#)
[get with the times](#)
[get wrong](#)
[get yours](#)
[get yourself in gear](#)
[get yourself out of something](#)
[get yourself out of something](#)
[get yourself out of somewhere](#)
[ghetto bird](#)
[ghost](#)
[ghost of a chance](#)
[ghost town](#)
[the ghost walks](#)
[ghost writer](#)
[ghostly presence](#)
[GI can](#)
[the gig is up](#)
[gild the pill](#)
[gilded cage](#)
[gimme \(a\) five!](#)
[ginger group](#)
[ginger knob](#)
[ginger minge](#)
[ginger minger](#)
[girl crush](#)
[girl Friday](#)

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[girlboss](#)
[give 110%](#)
[give a bad time](#)
[give a basket](#)
[give a big head](#)
[give a bit of curry](#)
[give a black eye to \(someone or something\)](#)
[give a bloody nose](#)
[give a bloody nose](#)
[give a dingle](#)
[give a dog a bad name and hang him](#)
[give a fit](#)
[give a go](#)
[give a hand](#)
[give a hang](#)
[give a hard time](#)
[give a lot of stick](#)
[give a man enough rope and he will hang himself](#)
[give a minute](#)
[give a nudge](#)
[give a piece of mind](#)
[give a rat's arse](#)
[give a rat's arse](#)
[give a ribbing](#)
[give a run for money](#)
[give a second](#)
[give a second chance](#)
[give a shite](#)
[give a shite](#)
[give a sneck posset](#)
[give a sneck posset](#)
[give a taste of own medicine](#)
[give a tuppence](#)
[give airs](#)
[give all](#)
[give all](#)
[give an arm and a leg \(for something\)](#)

[give an out](#)
[give and take](#)
[give another chance](#)
[give any thought to](#)
[give anything \(for something\)](#)
[give away](#)
[give away the shop](#)
[give away the store](#)
[give battle](#)
[give chapter and verse](#)
[give color to \(something\)](#)
[give credit](#)
[give credit to \(someone\)](#)
[give curry](#)
[give dues](#)
[give ear to \(someone or something\)](#)
[give enough rope](#)
[give face](#)
[give fits](#)
[give grief](#)
[give Hail Columbia](#)
[give head](#)
[give head for the washing](#)
[give heart failure](#)
[give heed to \(something\)](#)
[give hell to](#)
[give her the bells and let her fly](#)
[give herself airs](#)
[give him enough rope and he'll hang himself](#)
[give hostage to fortune](#)
[give in](#)
[give in to \(someone\)](#)
[give it a whirl](#)
[give it large](#)
[give it some stick](#)
[give it the royal treatment](#)
[give it to \(someone\)](#)

give leg bail
give lowdown
give me (a) five!
Give me liberty, or give me death!
give myself away
give no quarter
give odds
give offense to
give one a bad time
give one a big head
give (one) a bloody nose
give (one) a bloody nose
give one a fit
give (one) a hand
give (one) a hard time
give one a minute
give one a ribbing
give (one) a run for (one's) money
give one a second
give one a second chance
give (one) a taste of (one's) own medicine
give one another chance
give (one) enough rope
give one fits
give (one) grief
give (one) Hail Columbia
give one heart failure
give one hundred and ten percent
give (one) Jesse
give (one) (one's) dues
give (one) (one's) head
give (one) (one's) walking papers
give (one) running shoes
give one stick
give (one) the bag
give (one) the creeps
give (one) the heave-ho

give one the horn
give one the lowdown
give (one) the old heave-ho
give (one) the pink slip
give (one) the sack
give one the word
give one the works
give (one) what for
give (one) what's coming (to one)
give (one's) all
give one's all
give one's head a shake
give (one's) head for the washing
give (one's) right arm
give (one's) tuppence (worth)
give (one's) two cents
give (one's) two cents' worth
give (one's) two pennies (worth)
give (one's) two penn'orth
give (one's) twopence (worth)
give (oneself) airs
give (oneself) away
give pap with a hatchet
give place to
give rein to (someone or something)
give running shoes
give some stick
give some thought to
give somebody the stink eye
give someone a bad time
give (someone) a big head
give (someone) (a bit of) curry
give (someone) a dingle
give (someone) a fit
give (someone) (a lot of) stick
give (someone) a minute
give (someone) a nudge

give (someone) a piece of (one's) mind
give (someone) a ribbing
give (someone) a second
give (someone) a second chance
give (someone) an out
give (someone) another chance
give (someone) credit
give (someone) face
give (someone) fits
give (someone) heart failure
give (someone) no quarter
give (someone) (one's) word
give (someone) the air
give (someone) the back of (one's) hand
give (someone) the bird
give (someone) the brush-off
give (someone) the bum's rush
give (someone) the business
give (someone) the can
give (someone) the chair
give (someone) the elbow
give (someone) the fig
give (someone) the fright of (someone's) life
give (someone) the go-ahead
give (someone) the green light
give (someone) the horn
give (someone) the length of (one's) tongue
give (someone) the lowdown (on something)
give (someone) the royal treatment
give someone (the) rundown
give (someone) the shake
give (someone) the shakes
give (someone) the stink eye
give (someone) the third degree
give (someone) (the) what for
give (someone) the word
give (someone) the works

[give someone their word](#)
[give someone what is coming](#)
[give \(something\) a go](#)
[give something a minute](#)
[give something a second](#)
[give \(something\) \(one's\) all](#)
[give something some stick](#)
[give \(something\) thought](#)
[give \(something\) weight](#)
[give stick](#)
[give thanks for small blessings](#)
[give thanks for small mercies](#)
[give the air](#)
[give the back of hand](#)
[give the bag](#)
[give the bird](#)
[give the brush-off](#)
[give the bum's rush](#)
[give the business](#)
[give the can](#)
[give the chair](#)
[give the creeps](#)
[give the elbow](#)
[give the fig](#)
[give the fright of life](#)
[give the go-ahead](#)
[give the green light](#)
[give the heave-ho](#)
[give the horn](#)
[give the length of tongue](#)
[give the lowdown](#)
[give the mitten](#)
[give the nod to](#)
[give the old heave-ho](#)
[give the pink slip](#)
[give the royal treatment](#)
[give the sack](#)



[give the shake](#)
[give the shakes](#)
[give the stink eye](#)
[give the third degree](#)
[give the wall](#)
[give the what for](#)
[give the word](#)
[give the works](#)
[give themselves airs](#)
[give themselves away](#)
[give thought](#)
[give thought to \(something\)](#)
[give tongue](#)
[give tongue to](#)
[give tuppence](#)
[give tuppence](#)
[give two cents](#)
[give two cents' worth](#)
[give two pence](#)
[give two pennies](#)
[give two penn'orth](#)
[give two pins](#)
[give twopence](#)
[give up the cause](#)
[give walking papers](#)
[give weight](#)
[give what for](#)
[give what is coming](#)
[give word](#)
[give your head a shake](#)
[glad tidings](#)
[glamor puss](#)
[glamour girl](#)
[glass ceiling](#)
[glass-half-empty](#)
[glass-half-full](#)
[the glass is half empty](#)

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the glass is half full
the glass of fashion and the mold of form
gleam in (one's) eye
glimmer of hope
glint in (one's) eye(s)
glory hole
glove money
glut on the market
glutton for punishment
gnaw (at) (someone's) vitals
go 2-40
go a-begging
go abroad and you'll hear news of home
go against (someone or something)
go against the flow
go against the stream
go all out
go along for the ride
go along to get along
go amok
go amuck
go and (do something)
go apeshit
go (a)round in circles
go around Robin Hood's barn
go at each other tooth and nail
go at it
go at it hammer and tongs
go at one another tooth and nail
go at (someone)
go at (something)
go back to
go back to square one
go batshit
go batshit crazy
go begging
go belly up

[go between the bark and the tree](#)
[go between the moon and the milkman](#)
[go blue](#)
[go bonkers](#)
[go by the wayside](#)
[go co-op](#)
[go dotty](#)
[go down](#)
[go down \(a/the\) road](#)
[go down on \(someone\)](#)
[go down the drain](#)
[go down the pan](#)
[go down the pan](#)
[go down the rabbit hole](#)
[go down the toilet](#)
[go downtown](#)
[go for a horizontal jog](#)
[go for a song](#)
[go for a spin \(to some place\)](#)
[go for it](#)
[go for \(someone\)](#)
[go for \(the\) gold](#)
[go for the throat](#)
[go from zero to hero](#)
[go full circle](#)
[go full circle](#)
[go full-tilt boogie](#)
[go Galt](#)
[go gathering orange blossoms](#)
[go-getter](#)
[go halvesies](#)
[go halves](#)
[go hammer and tongs](#)
[go hang yourself](#)
[go hard or go home](#)
[go hard with \(someone\)](#)
[go her one better](#)

[go her own way](#)
[go her way](#)
[go in for \(something\)](#)
[go in search of the golden fleece](#)
[go in with good cards](#)
[go in with \(someone\)](#)
[go into \(one's\) shell](#)
[go light on \(someone\)](#)
[go light on \(something\)](#)
[go like lightning](#)
[go like the wind](#)
[go mad](#)
[go missing](#)
[go moggy](#)
[go nuclear](#)
[go off at score](#)
[go off in a huff](#)
[go off-kilter](#)
[go off \(one's\) dot](#)
[go off \(one's\) rocker](#)
[go off the handle](#)
[go off the rails](#)
[go off the reservation](#)
[go on a rampage](#)
[go on and on](#)
[go on relief](#)
[go on relief](#)
[go on the dole](#)
[go on the game](#)
[go on the offensive](#)
[go on the rampage](#)
[go on the rocks](#)
[go on the sick list](#)
[go on tick](#)
[go on welfare](#)
[go one-on-one with \(someone\)](#)
[go \(one's\) \(own\) way](#)

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go online
go out for (something)
go out like a light
go out of kilter
go out of (one's) mind
go out on a high note
go out on the tiles
go out with a bang
go (out) with (someone)
go out with the boys
go out with the girls
go over the hills and far away
go play in (the) traffic
go potty
go pound salt
go pound sand
go red
go right
go (right) through (one) like a dose of salts
go round in circles
go scot-free
go soak your head
go soft
go soft on (someone)
go (someone's) way
go stir-crazy
go strong
(go) suck a egg
(go) suck a lemon
(Go) tell it/that to Sweeney!
(go) tell it/that to the marines!
go the way of (something)
go the way of the dinosaur(s)
go their own way
go their way
go them one better
go through a lean patch

go through a phase
go through a rough patch
go through (something) with a fine-tooth comb
go through-stitch
go tits up
go to any length(s)
go to Canossa
go to (great) pains to (do something)
go to heaven in a wheelbarrow
go to hell in a handcart
go to it
go to Jericho
go to (one's) glory
go to (one's) grave
go to rack and ruin
go to the mattresses
go to the world
go to wrack and ruin
go to!
go two-forty
go under the hammer
go up in the world
go upstairs
go viral
go weak at the knees
go weak in the knees
go wide
go with
go without saying
go you one better
go your own way
go your way
goals
God
God almighty!
(God) bless you
God bless your pointy little head



[God fend](#)
[God-given right](#)
[God helps those who help themselves](#)
[God is in the detail\(s\)](#)
[God knows](#)
[God sends meat and the devil sends cooks](#)
[God willing and the creek don't rise](#)
[God works in mysterious ways](#)
[God's gift to man](#)
[God's gift to mankind](#)
[God's gift to women](#)
[God's green earth](#)
[God's honest truth](#)
[God's honest truth](#)
[going away](#)
[a going concern](#)
[the going thing](#)
[gold digger](#)
[gold mine](#)
[gold-plate](#)
[gold-plated](#)
[gold standard](#)
[golden age](#)
[golden boy](#)
[golden duck](#)
[golden goose](#)
[golden handshake](#)
[a golden hello](#)
[a golden key can open any door](#)
[golden oldie](#)
[golden parachute](#)
[golden rule](#)
[golden shower](#)
[golden ticket](#)
[golden touch](#)
[golden years](#)
[a goldfish bowl](#)



[golf widow](#)
[gone moggy](#)
[goner](#)
[gong \(one\)](#)
[a gong show](#)
[a good](#)
[good antennae](#)
[good as \(one's\) word](#)
[a good beginning makes a good ending](#)
[good books](#)
[good-by cruel world](#)
[good day](#)
[a good deal](#)
[good deal](#)
[good deed unpunished](#)
[a good drunk](#)
[good egg](#)
[good enough for jazz](#)
[good enough to eat](#)
[good evening](#)
[good for nothing](#)
[good God!](#)
[good going](#)
[good graces](#)
[good gracious](#)
[good-hearted](#)
[a good husband makes a good wife](#)
[a good Jack makes a good Jill](#)
[good job](#)
[the good life](#)
[the good Lord willing and if the creek don't rise](#)
[a good many](#)
[good morning](#)
[good nature](#)
[good-natured](#)
[good omen](#)
[good Samaritan](#)

a good scout
a good sort
a good spell
good things come in small packages
good things come to those who wait
good time
good-time Charlie
a good time was had by all
a good turn
a good value
a good voice to beg bacon
good wine needs no bush
a good word for everybody
good works
goodbye, cruel world
goodness gracious
goodness gracious me
goodness knows
goodness me
goodnight Irene
goody-goody
goody two-shoes
goon squad
Gordian knot
the gorge rises at it
gosh
gosh almighty
gosh almighty!
grab (a)hold of (someone)
grab and go
grab bag
grab some rays
grab the bull by its horns
grab the bull by the horns
grace period
grain of truth
grammar Nazi

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[grand poobah](#)
[grand scheme](#)
[grand slam](#)
[grand total](#)
[grand tour](#)
[the granddaddy of them all](#)
[grandstand play](#)
[granny bashing](#)
[granny dumping](#)
[grant \(someone\) no quarter](#)
[granted no quarter](#)
[grasp at a straw](#)
[grasp in the dark](#)
[grass widow](#)
[grass widower](#)
[grasstops](#)
[grateful for small blessings](#)
[gravitationally challenged](#)
[gray amber](#)
[a gray area](#)
[the gray dollar](#)
[gray pound](#)
[gray power](#)
[grease monkey](#)
[grease \(one's\) hand](#)
[grease payment](#)
[grease the wheels](#)
[greasy spoon](#)
[great cry and little wool](#)
[great deal](#)
[a great many](#)
[great minds run in the same channel](#)
[great oaks from little acorns grow](#)
[great pith and moment](#)
[the great unwashed](#)
[great white hope](#)
[great with child](#)

[greater than the sum of its parts](#)
[the Greek calends](#)
[green about the gills](#)
[green around the gills](#)
[green as a gooseberry](#)
[green as a gooseberry](#)
[green fingers](#)
[green folding stuff/money](#)
[green indigo](#)
[green state](#)
[green thumb](#)
[greenhorn](#)
[greige](#)
[grey amber](#)
[grey area](#)
[grey dollar](#)
[the grey pound](#)
[grey power](#)
[grill \(someone\) \(about something\)](#)
[grin like a Cheshire cat](#)
[grind \(someone's\) gears](#)
[grinder](#)
[grip on \(oneself\)](#)
[grip on \(something\)](#)
[grist for \(one's\) mill](#)
[grist to \(one's\) mill](#)
[grobe in the dark](#)
[gross-out](#)
[a ground ball with eyes](#)
[ground bass](#)
[ground beetle](#)
[ground-breaking](#)
[ground laurel](#)
[ground rule](#)
[ground rules](#)
[ground sloth](#)
[ground squirrel](#)

[grow a pair](#)
[grow cold](#)
[growing youth has a wolf in his belly](#)
[Grub Street](#)
[grumble in the gizzard](#)
[guardhouse lawyer](#)
[guardian angel](#)
[guess again](#)
[guiding light](#)
[guiding spirit](#)
[guilt complex](#)
[guilt trip](#)
[a guilty conscience needs no accuser](#)
[guilty pleasure](#)
[guinea pig](#)
[gully washer](#)
[gun it](#)
[gun-shy](#)
[gunner's daughter](#)
[gussied up](#)
[gut-bucket](#)
[gut check](#)
[gut factor](#)
[gut feeling](#)
[gut instinct](#)
[gut reaction](#)
[gut-wrenching](#)
[gutless wonder](#)
[gym bunny](#)

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H

[H-E-double-hockey-sticks](#)

[H-E-double-L](#)

[H-E-double-toothpicks](#)

[a ha moment](#)

[hail down](#)

[a hair in the butter](#)

[hair out of place](#)

[hair shirt](#)

[hair-splitting](#)

[hair-splittingly](#)

[hair's breadth](#)

[half a heart](#)

[half a loaf is better than no bread](#)

[half a loaf is better than no loaf](#)

[half a mind](#)

[half again as many](#)

[half again as much](#)

[the half is better than the whole](#)

[half-naked](#)

[the half of it](#)

[half-pint](#)

[half seas over](#)

[half term](#)

[half the man](#)

[half-wit](#)

[halfway decent](#)

[halfway house](#)

[Hallmark moment](#)

[HAM](#)

[hammer and sickle](#)

[hammer and tongs](#)

[hammer-headed](#)

[hammer \(something\) into \(one's/someone's\) head](#)

[hammer \(something\) into \(one's/someone's\) thick skull](#)
[hand in \(something\)](#)
[hand-me-down](#)
[hand on the torch](#)
[hand \(one\) \(one's\) head](#)
[hand \(something\) to \(someone\) on a plate](#)
[hand to hand](#)
[hand to mouth](#)
[hand-to-mouth](#)
[hand with \(something\)](#)
[handbags at dawn](#)
[handbags at ten paces](#)
[handful](#)
[handle on](#)
[handle to \(one's\) name](#)
[\(someone's\) hands are full](#)
[handsome is that handsome does](#)
[handwaving](#)
[\(one's\) \(hand\)writing is like chicken scratch](#)
[hang a U-ie](#)
[hang about](#)
[hang an arse](#)
[hang by the eyelids](#)
[hang on \(one's\) sleeve](#)
[hang on \(someone's\) every word](#)
[hang on \(someone's\) words](#)
[hang one on](#)
[hang paper](#)
[hang the moon](#)
[hang the moon and the stars](#)
[hang up](#)
[hang up \(one's\) boots](#)
[hang up \(one's\) fiddle](#)
[hang \(up\) \(one's\) hat](#)
[hang up \(one's\) hatchet](#)
[hang up \(one's\) spurs](#)
[hangar queen](#)

[hangdog expression](#)
[hangdog look](#)
[hanged if I know](#)
[hanger-on](#)
[hanging offense](#)
[hangry](#)
[happen along](#)
[happen by](#)
[happily ever after](#)
[happy accident](#)
[happy as a clam at high tide](#)
[happy as a lark](#)
[happy as a pig in shit](#)
[the happy day](#)
[happy days](#)
[happy hunting ground](#)
[happy medium](#)
[happy warrior](#)
[hard and fast](#)
[hard as a motherfucker](#)
[hard by](#)
[hard cases make bad laws](#)
[hard done-by](#)
[a hard egg to crack](#)
[hard hat](#)
[hard knocks](#)
[hard liquor](#)
[hard luck](#)
[hard-luck story](#)
[a hard nut \(to crack\)](#)
[hard-on](#)
[hard on the eyes](#)
[hard pass](#)
[a hard pill to swallow](#)
[hard power](#)
[a hard row to hoe](#)
[hard time](#)

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[a hard time](#)
[hard yards](#)
[the harder they fall](#)
[hardheaded](#)
[hardly dry behind the ears](#)
[hardly ever](#)
[harp away at \(someone or something\)](#)
[harp on one string](#)
[harp on the same string](#)
[harrowing experience](#)
[has-been](#)
[hash slinger](#)
[hashtag](#)
[hasn't slept a wink](#)
[hat trick](#)
[hatchet job](#)
[hatchet man](#)
[haters gonna hate](#)
[haul \(one's\) ashes](#)
[haul \(someone\) over the coals](#)
[haunted house](#)
[have a bad time](#)
[have a bellyful \(of something\)](#)
[have a big head](#)
[have a big mouth](#)
[have a big pair](#)
[have a bite](#)
[have a brick in \(one's\) hat](#)
[have a charmed existence](#)
[have a charmed life](#)
[have a Chinaman at \(one's\) neck](#)
[have a Chinaman on \(one's\) back](#)
[have a clean conscience](#)
[have a corner on the market](#)
[have a couple](#)
[have a crush on \(someone\)](#)
[have a dog in the hunt](#)

have a fable for (something)
have a falling out
have a few
have a few kangaroos loose in the top paddock
have a few screws loose
have a fix on (something)
have a fling (with someone)
have a forked tongue
have a gas
have a go (at someone)
have a go (at something)
have a golden touch
have a good day
have a good name (somewhere or in something)
have a good one
have a (good/solid/sound/etc.) grasp of/on (something)
have a handle on (something)
have a handle on (something)
have a hankering for (something)
have a hard head
have a heart of glass
have a heavy heart
have a hope in hell
have a hope in hell
have a jag on
have a knack
have a laugh
have a lean patch
have a lick of the tar brush
have a light heart
have a long memory
have a look-see
have a loose screw
have a loud mouth
have a lump in (one's) throat
have (a) method in (one's) madness
have (a) method to (one's) madness

have a mind like a sieve
have a moonflaw in the brain
have a mountain to climb
have a mouth of a sailor
have a nodding acquaintance (with someone or something)
have a package on
have a pair
have a part in (something)
have a part in (something)
have a penny to her name
have a price on (one's) head
have a right to
have a right to do
have a role in (something)
have a rough patch
have a rough trot
have a say (in something)
have a score to settle
have a screw loose
have a short temper
have a silver tongue
have (a) skeleton(s) in (one's)/the closet
have (a) skeleton(s) in (one's)/the cupboard
have a sneaking suspicion
have a snoot full
have a solid grasp of
have a spot of bother
have a spring in (one's) step
have a thick head
have a thick skull
have a thin skin
have a thing
have a thing for (someone)
have a thing for (something)
have a time of it
have a touch of the tar brush
have a trick up (one's) sleeve

[have a voice \(in something\)](#)
[have a whack \(at something\)](#)
[have a whale of a \(good\) time](#)
[have a worm in \(one's\) tongue](#)
[have a yen for \(something\)](#)
[have a/the right to \(do something\)](#)
[have a/the right to \(something\)](#)
[have a/the wolf by the ear\(s\)](#)
[have act together](#)
[have all day](#)
[have an eye on](#)
[have an out](#)
[have an ox on the tongue](#)
[have any joy](#)
[have any qualms](#)
[have at heart](#)
[have back](#)
[have bats in the belfry](#)
[have better things to do](#)
[have blood on head](#)
[have butterfingers](#)
[have by the short hairs](#)
[have by the tail](#)
[have coming and going](#)
[have contact with \(one\)](#)
[have done with \(someone or something\)](#)
[have down cold](#)
[have down pat](#)
[have drop on](#)
[have druthers](#)
[have ears lowered](#)
[have enough on \(one's\) plate](#)
[have enough sense to pound salt](#)
[have enough sense to pound sand](#)
[have eyes bigger than \(one's\) belly](#)
[have eyes bigger than \(one's\) stomach](#)
[have feet on the ground](#)

[have fill](#)
[have foot on neck](#)
[have forked tongue](#)
[have going](#)
[have going for](#)
[have golden touch](#)
[have good antennae](#)
[have got a big mouth](#)
[have \(got\) a knack for \(something\)](#)
[have got a loud mouth](#)
[\(have\) got a thing going \(with someone\)](#)
[have \(got\) an/\(one's\) eye on \(something\)](#)
[\(have\) got it going on](#)
[have got nothing to do](#)
[have \(got\) \(someone\) pegged as \(something\)](#)
[have \(got\) \(someone's\) back](#)
[\(have\) got something going \(with someone\)](#)
[have got something to do](#)
[have got to \(do something\)](#)
[have gotten lost in translation](#)
[have had its/\(one's\) day](#)
[have had \(one's\) chips](#)
[have had \(one's\) chips](#)
[have had the biscuit](#)
[have had the radish](#)
[have hand out](#)
[have handle on](#)
[have hands on](#)
[have \(hand\)writing like chicken scratch](#)
[have head in the sand](#)
[have head read](#)
[have heart in](#)
[have heart on sleeve](#)
[have in hands](#)
[have it down cold](#)
[have it down pat](#)
[have it easy](#)

[have it going on](#)
[have it in for \(someone\)](#)
[have it large](#)
[have it off pat](#)
[have it off \(with someone\)](#)
[have it out for \(someone\)](#)
[have it out \(with someone\)](#)
[have its/\(one's\) day](#)
[have joy](#)
[have jump on](#)
[have laughing in the aisles](#)
[have lead in \(one's\) pants](#)
[have letters after \(one's\) name](#)
[have lumps in our throats](#)
[have many strings to \(one's\) bow](#)
[have method in her madness](#)
[have method to her madness](#)
[have more chins than a Chinese phone book](#)
[have more than one string to \(one's\) bow](#)
[have nine lives](#)
[have no joy](#)
[have no qualms](#)
[have no stomach for \(something\)](#)
[have no strings attached](#)
[have no time for \(someone or something\)](#)
[have nothing on her](#)
[have nothing to do](#)
[have number on it](#)
[have on](#)
[have on](#)
[have on a tight leash](#)
[have on conscience](#)
[have one for the worms](#)
[have one over \(the\) eight](#)
[have \(one's\) act together](#)
[have \(one's\) druthers](#)
[have \(one's\) ears lowered](#)

[have one's eye on](#)
[have \(one's\) feet on the ground](#)
[have \(one's\) fill \(of something\)](#)
[have \(one's\) foot on \(someone's\) neck](#)
[have \(one's\) hand out](#)
[have \(one's\) hands on \(something\)](#)
[have \(one's\) head in the sand](#)
[have \(one's\) head read](#)
[have \(one's\) heart in \(something\)](#)
[have \(one's\) heart on \(one's\) sleeve](#)
[have \(one's\) name taken](#)
[have \(one's\) \(own\) way](#)
[have \(one's\) say](#)
[have \(one's\) thinking cap on](#)
[have other fish to fry](#)
[have our backs](#)
[have our blood on her head](#)
[have our day](#)
[have our names taken](#)
[have pegged as](#)
[have quite a pair](#)
[have rocks in \(one's\) head](#)
[have sat tall in her saddle](#)
[have scales fall from \(one's\) eyes](#)
[have scores to settle](#)
[have seen \(one's\) day](#)
[have sex](#)
[have \(sexual\) relations \(with someone\)](#)
[have skeleton in /the closet](#)
[have skeleton in /the cupboard](#)
[have skin in the game](#)
[have snow on the mountain](#)
[have snow on the roof](#)
[have some loose screws](#)
[have some screws loose](#)
[have \(some/any\) qualms about \(something or someone\)](#)
[have \(someone\) by the short hairs](#)

have (someone) coming and going
have (someone) going
have (someone) laughing in the aisles
have (someone) on a tight leash
have (someone or something) by the tail
have (someone) turned around (one's) (little) finger
have (someone) turned round (one's) (little) finger
have (someone) twisted around (one's) (little) finger
have (someone) twisted round (one's) (little) finger
have (someone) under (one's) spell
have (someone) under (one's) thumb
have (someone) under (one's) wing
have (someone) wound around (one's) (little) finger
have (someone) wound round (one's) (little) finger
have (someone) wrapped around (one's) (little) finger
have (someone) wrapped round (one's) (little) finger
have (someone's) blood on (one's) head
have (someone's) number on it
have (something) at heart
have (something) down cold
have something down pat
have (something) going for (one)
have (something) in (one's) hands
have (something) off pat
have (something) on
have (something) on (one's) conscience
have (something) on (someone)
have (something) to do
have something to eat
have (something) under (one's) belt
have (something) up the wazoo
have (something) up the yin-yang
have sporting blood
have strings attached
have the ball at (one's) feet
have the better of (someone or something)
have the biscuit

have the blues
have the constitution of an ox
have the courage of (one's) convictions
have the drop on (someone or something)
have the feel of (something)
have the floor
have (the) golden touch
have the goods on (someone)
have the guts (to do something)
have the heart (to do something)
have the horn
have the jump on
have the mouth of a sailor
have the patience of Job
have the radish
have the right to
have the right to do
have the say
have the shakes
have the sun in (one's) eyes
have the wind up
have the wolf by its ear
have the world by the tail
have the world on a string
have thinking cap on
have to do
have to do with the price of cheese
have to do with the price of eggs
have to do with the price of fish
have to do with the price of meat
have to do with the price of tea in China
have toys in the attic
have truck with
have turned around finger
have turned round finger
have twisted around finger
have twisted round finger

have two strikes against (one)
have two strings to (one's) bow
have under belt
have under her spell
have under her thumb
have under her wing
have up
have up the wazoo
have up the yin-yang
have us by the short hairs
have us coming and going
have us going
have us laughing in the aisles
have us on a tight leash
have us pegged as
have way
have windmills in (one's) head
have work done
have wound around finger
have wound round finger
have wrapped around finger
have wrapped round finger
have writing like chicken scratch
have/get (something) down pat
haven't been getting a wink of sleep
haven't been sleeping a wink
hawks and doves
he ain't particular
he can barely hear himself think
he can dispense with (something)
he can hardly believe his eyes
he can hardly hear himself think
he can scarcely believe his eyes
he can sell sawdust to a lumber mill
he could sell an icebox to an Eskimo
he could sell ice to Eskimos
he couldn't win for losing

he does not wash his dirty linen in public
he doesn't know when to quit
he-double hockey stick
he-double L
h.e. double toothpicks
he figures
he had better be going
he had better get moving
he had better get on his horse
he had better keep quiet about it
he had better keep still about it
he looks a little peaked
he looks like a million
he-man
he puts his pants on one leg at a time
he puts his trousers on one leg at a time
he saved the day
he stoops to conquer
he takes it
he that lieth with dogs riseth with fleas
he that would eat the fruit must climb the tree
he who smelt it dealt it
he will rue the day
he would do well to
head for a fall
head for the hills
head hunter
head in the clouds
a head of steam
a head-scratcher
head south
head-spinningly
head start
head the ball
head to head
headbutter
headcase

[the headlines](#)
[heads up](#)
[headstrong](#)
[heap coals of fire on \(one's\) head](#)
[hear \(something\) on the jungle telegraph](#)
[hear the grass grow](#)
[hearing things](#)
[heart of glass](#)
[heart of glass](#)
[heart of gold](#)
[\(one's\) heart of hearts](#)
[heart of oak](#)
[heart of stone](#)
[the heart of the matter](#)
[heart-to-heart](#)
[the heart wants what it wants](#)
[heartbeat away from being \(something\)](#)
[heartbreaking](#)
[\(one's\) heart's desire](#)
[heat wave](#)
[heave a sigh of relief](#)
[heave ho](#)
[heave into sight](#)
[heave into view](#)
[heaven helps those who help themselves](#)
[heaven knows](#)
[heavy date](#)
[heavy-footed](#)
[heavy-hearted](#)
[heavy hitter](#)
[heavy lifting](#)
[a heavy purse makes a light heart](#)
[heavy with child](#)
[heck of a](#)
[heck of a lot of](#)
[he'd better be going](#)
[he'd better get moving](#)

[he'd better get on his horse](#)
[he'd better keep quiet about it](#)
[he'd better keep still about it](#)
[a hedge between keeps friendship green](#)
[the heebie-jeebies](#)
[helicopter parent](#)
[Hell and half of Georgia](#)
[Hell hath no fury like a \(certain type of person\) scorned](#)
[hell in a handcart](#)
[hell mend \(one\)](#)
[hell of a](#)
[hell of a lot of](#)
[hell of a mess](#)
[hell of a time](#)
[hell or high water](#)
[the hell out of](#)
[he'll rue the day](#)
[hell week](#)
[the hell with \(someone or something\)](#)
[hell's half acre](#)
[Hell's Kitchen](#)
[help \(oneself\) \(to something\)](#)
[help \(someone\) out of a fix](#)
[helping hand](#)
[helpmate](#)
[heman](#)
[hen night](#)
[hen party](#)
[henpeck \(someone\)](#)
[henpecked](#)
[hens' teeth](#)
[hen's tooth](#)
[herd cats](#)
[herd cats](#)
[here to stay](#)
[here we go](#)
[here you are](#)



[here's how](#)
[hero \(sandwich\)](#)
[he's all in](#)
[he's on](#)
[hic jacet](#)
[hic Rhodus, hic salta](#)
[hidden agenda](#)
[hide and seek](#)
[hide \(n\)or hair](#)
[hide \(one's\) head](#)
[hide or hair](#)
[hide the sausage](#)
[hiding to nothing](#)
[high cotton](#)
[high flier](#)
[high-handed](#)
[high horse](#)
[high muckamuck](#)
[high muckety-muck](#)
[high noon](#)
[high note](#)
[high profile](#)
[the high road](#)
[high roller](#)
[high seas](#)
[high-water mark](#)
[high-wire act](#)
[highbrow](#)
[highbrowed](#)
[higher than a kite](#)
[higher than a kite](#)
[higher than Gilderoy's kite](#)
[a hill of beans](#)
[hill to die on](#)
[hind tit](#)
[hindsight is \(always\) 20/20](#)
[hired gun](#)

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[hired muscle](#)
[hit a brick wall](#)
[hit a sour note](#)
[hit above \(one's\) weight](#)
[hit-and-run](#)
[hit below \(one's\) weight](#)
[hit it big](#)
[hit it up \(with someone\)](#)
[hit list](#)
[hit man](#)
[hit me \(right\) in the feels](#)
[hit me up](#)
[hit on all cylinders](#)
[hit on all six](#)
[hit \(one\) when \(one\) is down](#)
[hit parade](#)
[hit pay dirt](#)
[hit \(someone\) for six](#)
[hit \(something\) out of the \(ball\)park](#)
[hit the big time](#)
[hit the gas](#)
[hit the pavement](#)
[hit the rock](#)
[hit the rocks](#)
[hit the sauce](#)
[hit the sawdust trail](#)
[hit the silk](#)
[hit the white](#)
[hit two birds with one stone](#)
[hmu](#)
[hoagie](#)
[hobby-horse](#)
[hog \(something\)](#)
[hoist \(a/the\) white flag](#)
[hoist by \(one's\) own petard](#)
[hoist the blue peter](#)
[hold a candle](#)

[hold a grudge](#)
[hold a wolf by the ears](#)
[hold \(all\) the cards](#)
[hold an eel by the tail](#)
[hold fast](#)
[hold firm](#)
[hold on to your hat](#)
[hold \(one's\) nerve](#)
[hold \(one's\) water](#)
[hold \(someone\) in good stead](#)
[hold \(someone\) in high esteem](#)
[hold \(someone\) in high regard](#)
[hold still for \(something\)](#)
[hold that thought](#)
[hold that thought](#)
[hold the reins](#)
[hold the ring](#)
[hold \(up\) \(one's\) end of the bargain](#)
[hold up \(one's\) end \(of the bargain\)](#)
[hold with the hare and run with the hounds](#)
[holding pattern](#)
[holding pattern](#)
[hole card](#)
[hole in the wall](#)
[Hollywood moment](#)
[holy crap](#)
[holy crap on a cracker](#)
[holy crickets](#)
[holy fuck](#)
[\(Holy\) Mother of God](#)
[holy shit](#)
[a holy terror](#)
[home and dry](#)
[home and dry](#)
[home and hosed](#)
[home and hosed](#)
[home away from home](#)



[home game](#)
[home is where you hang your hat](#)
[home of ill fame](#)
[home poor](#)
[home sweet home](#)
[home team](#)
[home truth](#)
[home, James \(, and don't spare the horses\)](#)
[homeless dumping](#)
[homer](#)
[Homer nods](#)
[Homer nod](#)
[an honest buck](#)
[honest injun](#)
[an honest mistake](#)
[honest to Pete](#)
[the honest truth](#)
[honey catches more flies than vinegar](#)
[honey-do list](#)
[honey-mouthed](#)
[honey trap](#)
[honeymoon period](#)
[honeymoon phase](#)
[honeymoon stage](#)
[honor bound](#)
[honorable mention](#)
[honours are even](#)
[hooky](#)
[hoover up something](#)
[hop joint](#)
[hop, skip, and a jump](#)
[hope chest](#)
[a hope in hell](#)
[hope in hell](#)
[horizontal dance](#)
[horizontal dancing](#)
[horizontal jogging](#)



[horizontal mambo](#)
[horizontal refreshments](#)
[horizontally challenged](#)
[hormone therapy](#)
[hornet's nest](#)
[horror show](#)
[horse and rabbit stew](#)
[horse of a different color](#)
[horse of another color](#)
[horse opera](#)
[horse pill](#)
[horse pucky](#)
[horse-trade](#)
[horse trading](#)
[a horseback opinion](#)
[horse's ass](#)
[hospital pass](#)
[hoss opera](#)
[hostage to fortune](#)
[hot button](#)
[hot check](#)
[hot desk](#)
[hot desking](#)
[a hot hand](#)
[hot lunch](#)
[a hot mess](#)
[a hot number](#)
[hot potato](#)
[hot rod](#)
[hot spot](#)
[hot stuff](#)
[hot tip](#)
[hot up](#)
[hothead](#)
[hotline](#)
[hound someone](#)
[hounded by](#)

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[house cooling party](#)
[a house divided against itself cannot stand](#)
[a house is not a home](#)
[house nigger](#)
[house of cards](#)
[house of ill fame](#)
[house poor](#)
[household name](#)
[household word](#)
[housewarming \(party\)](#)
[how are you](#)
[how can you sleep at night](#)
[how-d'ye-do](#)
[how in blazes](#)
[how in blue blazes](#)
[how in creation](#)
[how in Sam Hell](#)
[how in tarnation](#)
[how in thunderation](#)
[how the cookie crumbles](#)
[how the mop flops](#)
[how the wind blows](#)
[how the wind lies](#)
[howdy-do](#)
[however much](#)
[however much](#)
[a howling success](#)
[how's life \(treating you\)?](#)
[how's tricks?](#)
[how's tricks?](#)
[huckleberry above a persimmon](#)
[a huckleberry above her persimmon](#)
[huckleberry above \(one's\) persimmon](#)
[a huckleberry over her persimmon](#)
[a huckleberry to a persimmon](#)
[hue and cry](#)
[Hulda is making her bed](#)

[humanly possible](#)
[humblebrag](#)
[Humpty Dumptyism](#)
[a hundred and ten percent](#)
[hung by the eyelids](#)
[hung hat](#)
[hung on her sleeve](#)
[hung the moon](#)
[hung the moon and the stars](#)
[hung up](#)
[hung up boots](#)
[hung up fiddle](#)
[hung up hatchet](#)
[hung up her spurs](#)
[hunger is a good sauce](#)
[hunger is the best spice](#)
[hunk of ass](#)
[hunk of tail](#)
[hunt where the ducks are](#)
[hurler on the ditch](#)
[hurrah's nest](#)
[hurt for](#)
[hush fell over](#)
[hustle \(one's\) bustle](#)
[hydraulic ram](#)
[hygge](#)
[hyggeligt](#)

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I

I beg your pardon

I can tell you

(I) can't rightly say

(I) can't say as I do(, can't say as I don't)

(I) can't say for sure

(I) can't say that I do

(I) can't say that I have

(I) can't thank you enough

(I) can't wait

I do

I don't fancy yours (much)

I know that feel

I know you are but what am I

I never did

I see what you did there

"I see," said the blind man

I should cocoa!

I shudder to think

I suppose (so)

I take it

I told you so!

I wish

I wouldn't touch (something or someone) with a barge pole

ice cube

ice maiden

ice queen

ice the puck

I'd better be going

I'd better get moving

I'd better get on my horse

I'd better keep quiet about it

I'd better keep still about it

I'd say

the idiot box
idiot gloves
idiot light
idiot mittens
idle hands are the devil's playthings
idle hands are the devil's tools
idle hands are the devil's workshop
if all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail
if anything
if he had his druthers
if I'm honest
if it's all the same
if needs be
if nothing else
if (one's) life depended on it
if only
if opportunity knocks
if pigs had wings
if pigs had wings, they would/could fly
if the going gets rough
if the going gets tough
(if the) truth be known
(if the) truth be told
if (the) word gets out
if there's grass on the field, play ball
if there's grass on the pitch, play ball
if you can't do the time, don't do the crime
if you lie with dogs, you will get fleas
If you play with fire, you get burnt
IG
I'll be
I'll be damned if I (do something)
I'll be hanged
I'll be hanged if I (do something)
(I'll be) hanged if I know!
(I'll) be seeing you
ill health

I'll rue the day
(I'm) (a)fraid not
(I'm) (a)fraid so
I'm all in
I'm beat
I'm hanged if I know!
I'm not in Kansas anymore
I'm shot
imagine that
in a bad light
in a bad spot
in a blink of an eye
in a brace of shakes
in a breeze
in a canter
in a class by (one)self
in a class of (one's)/its own
in a fashion
in a flap
in a flutter
in a holding pattern
in a hole
in a league of (one's)/its own
in a measure
in a pig's arse
in a pig's ear
in a pig's whisper
in a rage
in a round figure
in a round number
in a scrape
in a sense
in a sorry state
in a sorry state
in a sound sleep
in a spot of bother
in a state

[in a sticky situation](#)
[in a tiff](#)
[in a tight corner](#)
[in a tight spot](#)
[in a tough spot](#)
[in a walk](#)
[in a/the flash of an/the eye](#)
[in Abraham's bosom](#)
[in \(all\) conscience](#)
[in all honesty](#)
[in all \(one's\) \(born\) days](#)
[in all seriousness](#)
[in all truthfulness](#)
[in and out](#)
[in any way, shape, or form](#)
[in arms](#)
[in as much as](#)
[in at the deep end](#)
[in bad books](#)
[in bad form](#)
[in bad odor](#)
[in bed](#)
[in bed with \(one's\) boots on](#)
[in behalf](#)
[in behalf](#)
[in between](#)
[in-between](#)
[in between times](#)
[in bits and pieces](#)
[in black books](#)
[in blazes](#)
[in blue blazes?](#)
[in bud](#)
[in cement](#)
[in chancery](#)
[in circumstance](#)
[in commission](#)

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[in concrete](#)
[in conscience](#)
[in contention](#)
[in control](#)
[in creation?](#)
[in default of \(something\)](#)
[in despite of](#)
[in Dickie's meadow](#)
[in donkeys](#)
[in dotage](#)
[in doubt](#)
[in dreams](#)
[in duplicate](#)
[in effigy](#)
[in error](#)
[in escrow](#)
[in excess of](#)
[in favor](#)
[in favor \(with someone\)](#)
[in fee](#)
[in fine fettle](#)
[in flames](#)
[in for](#)
[in for a bumpy ride](#)
[in for a rough ride](#)
[in for a shock](#)
[in for a surprise](#)
[in for a treat](#)
[in for it](#)
[in for it](#)
[in front](#)
[in front of \(one's\) nose](#)
[in front of \(one's\) very eyes](#)
[in full](#)
[in full feather](#)
[in full gear](#)
[in good odor](#)

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[in good part](#)
[in good season](#)
[in half](#)
[in hay day](#)
[in \(high\) hopes that](#)
[in hospital](#)
[in Indian file](#)
[in it for](#)
[in its infancy](#)
[in its place](#)
[in itself](#)
[in key](#)
[in large measure](#)
[in layman's terms](#)
[in leaf](#)
[in leaps and bounds](#)
[in low water](#)
[in merry pin](#)
[in miniature](#)
[in mothballs](#)
[in my bad books](#)
[in my behalf](#)
[in my behalf](#)
[in my black books](#)
[in my view](#)
[in my wheelhouse](#)
[in no case](#)
[in no circumstances](#)
[in no time flat](#)
[in no way](#)
[in no way, shape, or form](#)
[in nothing flat](#)
[in one blow](#)
[in one hell of a hurry](#)
[in one's altitudes](#)
[in \(one's\) dotage](#)
[in \(one's\) dreams](#)



[in \(one's\) favor](#)
[in \(one's\) heyday](#)
[in one's place](#)
[in \(one's/someone's\) tracks](#)
[in order that](#)
[in ordinary](#)
[in petto](#)
[in plain English](#)
[in plain view](#)
[in point](#)
[in point of](#)
[in process of time](#)
[in prospect](#)
[in quite a sticky situation](#)
[in range](#)
[in real life](#)
[in real time](#)
[in residence](#)
[in respect to](#)
[in round figures](#)
[in round numbers](#)
[in sackcloth and ashes](#)
[in Sam Hell](#)
[in seed](#)
[in shape](#)
[in simple English](#)
[\(in\) so far as](#)
[in so much as](#)
[in soaped-pig fashion](#)
[in some measure](#)
[in some sense](#)
[in somebody's tracks](#)
[in \(someone's\) bad books](#)
[in \(someone's\) behalf](#)
[in \(someone's\) behalf](#)
[in \(someone's\) black books](#)
[in someone's hay day](#)

[in \(someone's or something's\) place](#)
[in \(someone's\) view](#)
[in \(someone's\) wheelhouse](#)
[in specie](#)
[in spitting distance \(of someone or something\)](#)
[in state](#)
[in stays](#)
[in stride](#)
[in striking distance \(of someone or something\)](#)
[in substance](#)
[in tall cotton](#)
[in tarnation?](#)
[in the aggregate](#)
[in the altitudes](#)
[in the background](#)
[in the biblical sense](#)
[in \(the\) blazes?](#)
[in the blink of an eye](#)
[in the box seat](#)
[in \(the\) bud](#)
[in the cactus](#)
[in the can](#)
[in the cards](#)
[in the circumstances](#)
[in the clouds](#)
[in the course of](#)
[in the days of Queen Dick](#)
[in the depths of \(something\)](#)
[in the dock](#)
[in the driving seat](#)
[in the event that](#)
[in the eye of \(something\)](#)
[in the final analysis](#)
[in the flash of an eye](#)
[in the game](#)
[in the here and now](#)
[in the hope of](#)

in the hope that
in the hospital
in the interest of justice
in the Land of Nod
in the last analysis
in the lead
in the next breath
in the nip
in the pocket of (someone)
in the post
in the reign of Queen Dick
in the right place at the right moment
in the right spot at the right time
in the round
in (the) Sam Hill?
in the same mold
in the short strikes
in the sticks
in the thick of things
in the trouser department
in the twinkle of an eye
in the twinkling of an eye
in the unlikely event (that) (something) happens
in the view of (someone)
in the weeds
in the wild
in the wilds of (some place)
in the wink of an eye
in the wink of an eye
in these circumstances
in thrall
in thunderation?
in tight corners
in tight spots
in too deep
in toto
in tough spots

[in tracks](#)
[in trust](#)
[\(in\) up to \(one's\) elbows](#)
[\(in\) up to \(one's\) eye\(ball\)s](#)
[in view](#)
[in view](#)
[in vino veritas](#)
[in vino veritas](#)
[in virtue of \(something\)](#)
[in waiting](#)
[in wheelhouse](#)
[in with](#)
[in with a chance](#)
[in with a chance](#)
[in working order](#)
[in your face](#)
[in your face!](#)
[inasmuch as](#)
[inch-perfect](#)
[inclusive of](#)
[incumbent \(up\)on \(someone\)](#)
[independent as a hog on ice](#)
[independent of](#)
[Indian file](#)
[an Indian giver](#)
[the Indian sign](#)
[Indian summer](#)
[ink-slinger](#)
[inkhorn term](#)
[the inmates are running the asylum](#)
[the inmates have taken over the asylum](#)
[inner circle](#)
[inner core](#)
[inner strength](#)
[inopportune moment](#)
[inside and out](#)
[inside baseball](#)

[an inside job](#)
[inside of](#)
[inside out](#)
[inside the box](#)
[insofar as](#)
[insofar as](#)
[insomuch as](#)
[Instagram](#)
[install\(ed\) base](#)
[install\(ed\) user base](#)
[Internets](#)
[intestinal fortitude](#)
[into commission](#)
[into high gear](#)
[in\(to\) shape](#)
[into the background](#)
[into the blue](#)
[into the weeds](#)
[introduce the shoemaker to the tailor](#)
[Irish hint](#)
[IRL](#)
[iron curtain](#)
[an iron fist in a velvet glove](#)
[an iron hand in a velvet glove](#)
[iron man](#)
[iron out the wrinkles \(of/in something\)](#)
[iron the wrinkles out \(of/in something\)](#)
[\(is\) anything going on?](#)
[is it](#)
[is it just me](#)
[Is the glass half empty or half full?](#)
[is the pope Catholic](#)
[isn't all it is cracked up to be](#)
[isn't any hard feelings](#)
[isn't anything to write home about](#)
[isn't feeling yourself](#)
[isn't much cop](#)

isn't playing with a full deck
isn't rocket science
isn't short of a penny
isn't something to write home about
isn't the done thing
isn't up to scratch
isn't up to snuff
isn't what it is cracked up to be
isn't worth a brass farthing
isn't worth a plug nickel
isn't worth writing home about
it ain't over till/until it's over
it ain't over till/until the fat lady sings
it all boils down to
(it) beats me
it can dispense with (something)
it can't be helped
(it) couldn't be helped
it does exactly what it says on the tin
it does no harm (for someone) to do (something)
it figures
it is a matter of (doing something)
it is easy to find a stick to beat a dog
It is never too late
It is the last straw that breaks the camel's back
it is what it is
it pays to advertise
it takes one bad apple to spoil the (whole) barrel
it takes one bad apple to spoil the (whole) bunch
it takes one bad apple to spoil the (whole) bushel
it tied up in knots
it was not rocket science
it wouldn't do (someone) any harm (to do something)
an itchy trigger finger
it'll be a cold day in hell
it's a long shot
(it's) about time

it's all fun and games until someone loses an eye
it's all good
it's all (the) one to me
it's all the same to me
it's an ill wind that blows no good
it's an ill wind that blows nobody any good
it's better to ask forgiveness than permission
it's her call
(it's) just as well (that) (something happened)
it's just the same to her
(it's) little wonder
it's money for jam
it's money for old rope
it's more trouble than it's worth
it's near to impossible
it's no crime to (do something)
it's no point crying over spilt milk
(it's) not half bad
it's not over til the fat lady sings
it's not the meat, it's the motion
it's not what you know but who you know
(it's) nothing personal
it's nothing special
it's on
it's six and two threes
its six in one a half a dozen in the other
(it's) small wonder
it's swings and roundabouts
it's the pits
it's the thought that counts
it's tipping down
(it's/there's) no use crying over spilt milk
itsy-bitsy
an ivory tower
izit

J

[jack all](#)

[jack it in](#)

[Jack Ketch](#)

[jack of all trades](#)

[jack of all trades, master of none](#)

[jack off](#)

[jack o'lantern](#)

[jack \(something\) in](#)

[Jack Tar](#)

[Jack the Lad](#)

[jailbait](#)

[jailbreak](#)

[jailbroken](#)

[jam sandwich](#)

[jam \(something\) down \(someone's\) throat](#)

[Jane Roe](#)

[jarring experience](#)

[a jaundiced eye](#)

[jaw away](#)

[jawn](#)

[je ne sais quoi](#)

[Jekyll and Hyde](#)

[jerk off](#)

[jerk \(one's\) chain](#)

[Jersey justice](#)

[Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!](#)

[the jet set](#)

[jet-set](#)

[jet-setter](#)

[jet-setting](#)

[\(one's\) jig is up](#)

[the jig is up](#)

[jig \(it\)](#)

[a Jill of all trades is a master of none](#)
[Jill of all trades\(, master of none\)](#)
[jimony cricket](#)
[job lot](#)
[Job's comforter](#)
[Joe Average](#)
[joe job](#)
[Joe Sixpack](#)
[jog on](#)
[jog the/\(someone's\) mind](#)
[John Thomas](#)
[johnny](#)
[Johnny-come-lately](#)
[Johnny One-Note](#)
[join the majority](#)
[joking aside](#)
[jolly \(someone\) along](#)
[jolly \(someone\) into \(doing\) \(something\)](#)
[jolly \(someone\) up](#)
[jot and tittle](#)
[a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step](#)
[a joy to behold](#)
[Judas kiss](#)
[judgment call](#)
[jug-eared](#)
[jug ears](#)
[a juggling act](#)
[jump at the chance \(to do something\)](#)
[jump at the opportunity \(to do something\)](#)
[jump in \(one's\) skin](#)
[jump in the deep end](#)
[jump rope](#)
[jump the shark](#)
[jumped-up](#)
[jungle telegraph](#)
[junk in the trunk](#)
[junkyard dog](#)

just a pretty face
just a stone's throw
just another pretty face
just another pretty face
(just) as I expected
just as well
(just) between you and me
just deserts
(someone) (just) doesn't know when to quit
just the same
just (you) wait (and see)!
(just/right) up (one's) street
justice delayed is justice denied

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K

[ka me, ka thee](#)

[kangaroo court](#)

[keep a cool head](#)

[keep a sharp lookout \(for something or someone\)](#)

[keep a weather eye open](#)

[keep abreast of something](#)

[keep an eye open](#)

[keep an eye peeled \(for something or someone\)](#)

[keep astride of \(something\)](#)

[keep busy](#)

[keep cards close to chest](#)

[keep cards close to vest](#)

[keep clear of](#)

[keep close to chest](#)

[keep cool](#)

[keep dangling](#)

[keep end of the bargain](#)

[keep eye peeled](#)

[keep from](#)

[keep hair on](#)

[keep hands off](#)

[keep head below the parapet](#)

[keep him in the dark](#)

[keep him in the loop](#)

[keep him in the picture](#)

[keep him on a short leash](#)

[keep him on ice](#)

[keep him under her thumb](#)

[keep his side of the bargain](#)

[keep in step with the times](#)

[keep in touch](#)

[keep in with \(someone\)](#)

[keep it between the ditches](#)

keep it on the down low
keep it on the hush
keep it on the hush-hush
keep mum
keep my cool
keep (one) busy
keep (one) dangling
keep one jump ahead
keep (one) on (one's) toes
keep (one's) cards close to (one's) chest
keep (one's) cards close to (one's) vest
keep (one's) eye(s) peeled (for something or someone)
keep (one's) hair on
keep (one's) hands off (something or someone)
keep (one's) head below the parapet
keep (one's) lips sealed
keep (one's) paws off (something or someone)
keep (one's) slate clean
keep (one's) socks on
keep open house
keep out of sight
keep out of trouble
keep schtum
keep (someone) in the dark (about something)
keep (someone) in the loop
keep (someone) in the picture
keep (someone) on a short leash
keep (someone) on ice
keep (someone) under (one's) thumb
keep (something) close to (one's) chest
keep something from (someone)
keep (something) on the down low
keep (something) on the hush
keep (something) on the hush-hush
keep (something) straight (in one's mind/head)
keep step
keep the lid on (something)

keep under cover
keep (up) (one's) end of the bargain
keep (up) (one's) side of the bargain
keep up with the times
keep us dangling
keep us on our toes
keep weather eye open
keep your breath to cool your porridge
keep your cards close to your chest
keep your cards close to your vest
keep your cool
keep your eye peeled
keep your friends close and your enemies closer
keep your hair on
keep your hands off
keep your head below the parapet
keep your lips sealed
keep your paws off
keep your rosaries off my ovaries
keep your slate clean
keep your socks on
kept man
kept woman
a kerb crawler
a kernel of truth
kewpie doll
the keys to the kingdom
a kick at the can
a kick at the cat
kick bollocks scramble
a kick in the balls
kick in the butt
a kick in the face
a kick in the head
kick in the pants
kick in the shins
kick in the teeth

[kick it](#)
[kick \(one\) when \(one\) is down](#)
[kick \(someone or something\) to the curb](#)
[kick \(something\) into touch](#)
[kick-start](#)
[kick the can down the road](#)
[kick the crap out of \(someone\)](#)
[kick the tires](#)
[kick the wheels](#)
[kick tires](#)
[kick up the arse](#)
[kick up the backside](#)
[kick with the other foot](#)
[kicked to the curb](#)
[kicking and screaming](#)
[kid gloves](#)
[kiddie table](#)
[kidding aside](#)
[kidding aside](#)
[kids will be kids](#)
[kill me](#)
[kill \(one\)self](#)
[kill the clock](#)
[kill the messenger](#)
[kill two birds with one stone](#)
[kind of](#)
[a kind of \(something\)](#)
[kind regards](#)
[a kind word for everybody](#)
[kindest regards](#)
[a kindred soul](#)
[a kindred spirit](#)
[king of \(the\) beasts](#)
[king of the hill](#)
[king of the jungle](#)
[kingdom come](#)
[the King's English](#)



[king's ransom](#)
[kiss and cry](#)
[kiss and cry area](#)
[kiss and cry corner](#)
[kiss my arse!](#)
[kiss my ass!](#)
[the kiss of life](#)
[kiss \(one's\) feet](#)
[kiss the gunner's daughter](#)
[kiss the rod](#)
[kissing cousin](#)
[kitchen cabinet](#)
[the knacker's yard](#)
[a knee-slapper](#)
[knick-knack](#)
[knife-edge](#)
[a knife in the back](#)
[knight in shining armor](#)
[knit \(one's\) eyebrows](#)
[knobstick wedding](#)
[knock Anthony](#)
[knock galley-west](#)
[knock \(one's\) head against a \(brick\) wall](#)
[knock \(one's\) head against a/the wall](#)
[knock-shop](#)
[knock \(someone\) down a notch \(or two\)](#)
[knock \(someone\) down a peg \(or two\)](#)
[knock \(someone\) down with a feather](#)
[knock \(someone\) out of the box](#)
[knock \(someone\) over with a feather](#)
[knock the spots out of](#)
[knock the tar out of \(someone\)](#)
[knocked down a notch](#)
[knocked down a peg](#)
[knocked out cold](#)
[knocked out of the box](#)
[knockin on heavens door](#)

[knocking on heaven's door](#)
[knocking shop](#)
[know a hawk from a handsaw](#)
[know-all](#)
[know chalk from cheese](#)
[know every trick in the book](#)
[know for a fact](#)
[know from a bar of soap](#)
[know full well](#)
[know-it-all](#)
[know-it-all](#)
[know-nothing](#)
[know \(one's\) beans](#)
[know \(one's\) own mind](#)
[know \(someone\)](#)
[know \(someone\) in the biblical sense](#)
[know \(something\) inside and out](#)
[know the time of day](#)
[know what's o'clock](#)
[know what's what](#)
[know which way the wind blows](#)
[knuckle sandwich](#)
[Kodak moment](#)
[kween](#)

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L

[the L-bomb](#)

[a la](#)

[a la carte](#)

[a la mode](#)

[a la mort](#)

[lab rat](#)

[labor of love](#)

[labor under the delusion of/that](#)

[labor under the illusion of/that](#)

[the laborer is worthy of his hire](#)

[laced mutton](#)

[ladies and gentlemen](#)

[lady garden](#)

[lady killer](#)

[Lady Luck](#)

[lady of easy virtue](#)

[lady of pleasure](#)

[lady of the evening](#)

[the lady of the house](#)

[lady of the night](#)

[lager lout](#)

[lagom](#)

[laid a wager](#)

[laid at rest](#)

[laid heads together](#)

[laid her life on the line](#)

[laid herself out](#)

[laid it on thick](#)

[laid it on with a trowel](#)

[laid siege to](#)

[laid store](#)

[laid store](#)

[laid the pipe](#)

[laid to rest](#)
[laid wait for](#)
[lame duck](#)
[lame joke](#)
[Lamourette's kiss](#)
[The Land of Opportunity](#)
[land of plenty](#)
[land-poor](#)
[landing strip](#)
[landmark decision](#)
[lap dog](#)
[lap of the gods](#)
[lard-arise](#)
[large as life](#)
[a lash of scorpions](#)
[last analysis](#)
[the/\(one's\) last breath](#)
[last burst of fire](#)
[last chance \(for/at/to do something\)](#)
[last-ditch attempt](#)
[last-ditch effort](#)
[last hurrah](#)
[last licks](#)
[last-minute](#)
[the last of the lot](#)
[the last person](#)
[Last Supper](#)
[last thing](#)
[the last thing \(one\) needs](#)
[the last thing \(one\) wants](#)
[last trump](#)
[the last word in \(something\)](#)
[latchkey child](#)
[latchkey child](#)
[latchkey kid](#)
[latchkey kid](#)
[late model](#)

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[laugh a minute](#)
[laugh all the way to the bank](#)
[laugh in \(one's\) sleeve](#)
[laugh on the other side of \(one's\) face](#)
[laugh on the other side of \(one's\) mouth](#)
[laugh up \(one's\) sleeve](#)
[laugh up \(one's\) sleeve](#)
[laughing in the aisles](#)
[laughing stock](#)
[launder money](#)
[laundry list](#)
[the law is an ass](#)
[law unto](#)
[lawful orders](#)
[lay a wager](#)
[lay ahead of](#)
[lay before](#)
[lay down and die](#)
[lay down the marker](#)
[lay it on thick](#)
[lay it on with a trowel](#)
[lay low](#)
[lay man's terms](#)
[lay odds](#)
[the lay of the land](#)
[lay \(one's\) life on the line](#)
[lay \(oneself\) out](#)
[lay \(our/your/their\) heads together](#)
[lay siege to](#)
[lay \(something\) at \(one's\) feet](#)
[lay \(something\) at rest](#)
[lay \(something\) at the feet of \(someone\)](#)
[lay store by \(something or someone\)](#)
[lay store in \(something or someone\)](#)
[lay the groundwork \(for something\)](#)
[lay the pipe](#)
[lay wait for](#)

[laze about](#)
[laze around](#)
[lazy-bones](#)
[lazy man's load](#)
[LB](#)
[lead a cat and dog life](#)
[lead a charmed existence](#)
[lead a charmed life](#)
[lead balloon](#)
[lead nowhere](#)
[lead \(one\) around by the nose](#)
[lead \(one\) to the altar](#)
[lead the line](#)
[lead time](#)
[the leader of the free world](#)
[leading edge](#)
[leading light](#)
[a lean patch](#)
[leap at the chance \(to do something\)](#)
[leap in the dark](#)
[leap to \(someone's\) mind](#)
[leaps and bounds](#)
[learn \(something\) down pat](#)
[the least \(one\) can do](#)
[the least \(someone\) could do](#)
[leather-lunged](#)
[leave a great deal to be desired](#)
[leave a lot to be desired](#)
[leave a sour taste in \(one's\) mouth](#)
[leave home](#)
[leave it be](#)
[leave little to the imagination](#)
[leave lots to be desired](#)
[leave much to be desired](#)
[leave nothing to the imagination](#)
[leave \(someone\) holding the baby](#)
[leave \(someone\) in the dark \(about something\)](#)

[leave \(something\) on a high note](#)
[leave \(something\) out of account](#)
[leaves of three, let it be](#)
[led a cat and dog life](#)
[led around by the nose](#)
[led her to the altar](#)
[led nowhere](#)
[led the line](#)
[leech](#)
[left field](#)
[left holding the baby](#)
[left in a lurch](#)
[left in the cold](#)
[left in the dark](#)
[left to her own devices](#)
[left to her own resources](#)
[left wing](#)
[leg it](#)
[leg man](#)
[leg up](#)
[legal beagle](#)
[legal duty](#)
[legal eagle](#)
[legally binding](#)
[a legend in \(one's\) own lifetime](#)
[a legend in \(one's\) own lunchtime](#)
[a legend in \(one's\) own mind](#)
[a legend in \(one's\) own time](#)
[lemon law](#)
[a leopard can't change its spots](#)
[a leopard doesn't change its spots](#)
[l'esprit de l'escalier](#)
[less and less](#)
[less haste more speed](#)
[let down \(one's\) guard](#)
[let down \(one's\) hair](#)
[let go and let God](#)



[let her go, Gallagher](#)
[let it drop](#)
[let it rest](#)
[let it slip](#)
[let me tell you](#)
[let nature take its course](#)
[let \(one\) down gently](#)
[let one rip](#)
[let \(one's\) guard down](#)
[let \(one's\) hair down](#)
[let \(someone\) loose \(on something\)](#)
[let \(someone\) off the hook](#)
[let \(something\) drop](#)
[let \(something\) loose](#)
[let \(something\) rest](#)
[let \(something\) slip](#)
[let the good times roll](#)
[let \(the\) perfect be the enemy of \(the\) good](#)
[let there be light](#)
[letdown](#)
[let's get one thing straight](#)
[let's get something straight](#)
[let's not and say \(that\) we did](#)
[let's roll](#)
[letters after \(one's\) name](#)
[level-headed](#)
[level playing field](#)
[lex dubia non obligat](#)
[libel chill](#)
[a licence to print money](#)
[lick-arse](#)
[lick-ass](#)
[a lick of the tar brush](#)
[lick \(someone\) out](#)
[lick \(someone's\) arse](#)
[lick \(someone's\) ass](#)
[lick \(someone's\) boots](#)

[lick the pants off \(someone\)](#)
[a lick with the rough side of the tongue](#)
[lie ahead of \(someone or something\)](#)
[lie at \(one's\) door](#)
[lie back and think of England](#)
[lie before \(someone or something\)](#)
[lie down and die](#)
[a lie has no legs](#)
[lie low](#)
[the lie of the land](#)
[life-and-death](#)
[life and soul of the party](#)
[life is like a box of chocolates](#)
[a life of its own](#)
[the life of Riley](#)
[life-or-death](#)
[life saver](#)
[lift a finger](#)
[lift a hand](#)
[lift \(one's\) elbow](#)
[lift the curtain \(on something\)](#)
[light bucket](#)
[light in the loafers](#)
[lighten \(one's/someone's\) wallet](#)
[lightning fast](#)
[lightning in a bottle](#)
[lightning quick](#)
[lightning rod](#)
[the like](#)
[like 60](#)
[like a beached whale](#)
[like a bear with a sore head](#)
[like a bear with a sore head](#)
[like a bird in a gilded cage](#)
[like a bull in a china shop](#)
[like a cat in a strange garret](#)
[like a cat on a hot tin roof](#)

like a chicken with its head cut off
like a chicken with the pip
like a child in a sweetshop
like a deer caught in the headlights
like a deer in (the) headlights
like a dog with a bone
like a dog with two tails
like a dog with two tails
like a dog's breakfast
like a dog's dinner
like a dose of salts
like a fish needs a bicycle
like a fish out of water
like a flash
like a fox guarding the hen house
like a hole in the head
like a house afire
like a house on fire
like a kid in a candy store
like a million bucks
like a rat abandoning a sinking ship
like a rat deserting a sinking ship
like a rat from a sinking ship
like a red flag to a bull
like a red rag to a bull
like a spare prick at a wedding
like a streak
like a thief in the night
like an owl in an ivy bush
like as peas in a pod
like attracts like
like back
like cheese at four pence
like chickens with their heads cut off
like death warmed over
like death warmed up
like falling off (of) a log

[like for like](#)
[like Fort Knox](#)
[like fury](#)
[like herding cats](#)
[like it or not](#)
[like looking for a needle in a haystack](#)
[like money for jam](#)
[like money for old rope](#)
[like oil and water](#)
[like \(one's\) life depends on it](#)
[like painting the Forth Bridge](#)
[like piffy on a rock bun](#)
[like piffy on a rock cake](#)
[like rats abandoning a sinking ship](#)
[like rats deserting a sinking ship](#)
[like rats from a sinking ship](#)
[like rearranging deckchairs on the Titanic](#)
[like rolling off \(of\) a log](#)
[like ships in the night](#)
[like ships that pass in the night](#)
[like sixty](#)
[like taking candy from a baby](#)
[like talking to a brick wall](#)
[like talking to a wall](#)
[like the cat that got the cream](#)
[like the sound of \(one's\) own voice](#)
[like there ain't no tomorrow](#)
[like there were no tomorrow](#)
[like thieves in the night](#)
[like two peas in a pod](#)
[like watching grass grow](#)
[like watching paint dry](#)
[likeback](#)
[a likely story](#)
[likely story](#)
[a line in the sand](#)
[lingua franca](#)

[link whore](#)
[link whoring](#)
[the lion's den](#)
[lip service](#)
[lipstick on a pig](#)
[liquid courage](#)
[liquid lunch](#)
[list as long as \(one's\) arm](#)
[lit](#)
[litmus test](#)
[a little](#)
[a little bird](#)
[a little bird told me](#)
[a little bit of bread and no cheese](#)
[little bit rough and ready](#)
[a little bit rough around the edges](#)
[little black book](#)
[little bundle of joy](#)
[a little cog in a big machine](#)
[a little cog in a big wheel](#)
[little emperor](#)
[\(one's\) little finger told \(one\) that](#)
[a little frog in a big pond](#)
[a little from column A, a little from column B](#)
[a little green](#)
[little horror](#)
[the little lady](#)
[a little leery](#)
[little love lost](#)
[little man in the boat](#)
[the little matter of \(something\)](#)
[little person](#)
[little pitchers have long ears](#)
[a little pot is soon hot](#)
[\(little\) tin god](#)
[\(little\) white lie](#)
[the little woman](#)

[little wonder](#)
[live a charmed existence](#)
[live a charmed life](#)
[live and kicking](#)
[live by the sword, die by the sword](#)
[a live dog is better than a dead lion](#)
[live high off the hog](#)
[live high on the hog](#)
[live in a glass house](#)
[live in an/\(one's\) ivory tower](#)
[live in cloud-cuckoo land](#)
[live in cotton wool](#)
[live like fighting cocks](#)
[live off smell of an oily rag](#)
[live off the grid](#)
[live on a shoestring](#)
[live on the smell of an oily rag](#)
[a live one](#)
[live over the brush](#)
[live paycheck to paycheck](#)
[live payslip to payslip](#)
[live the life of Riley](#)
[live under the cat's foot](#)
[live up to \(one's\) end of the bargain](#)
[live up to \(someone's\) expectations](#)
[live wire](#)
[the living daylights](#)
[living death](#)
[living hell](#)
[living impaired](#)
[a living legend](#)
[a living soul](#)
[living the dream](#)
[a load of baloney](#)
[a load of bunk](#)
[load of crap](#)
[load of \(something\)](#)



[load off \(one's\) feet](#)
[load off \(one's\) mind](#)
[loaded dice](#)
[loaded language](#)
[loaded word](#)
[loaf about](#)
[loaf around](#)
[loaves and fishes](#)
[lock lips \(with someone\)](#)
[lock \(someone\) up and throw away the key](#)
[lock the stable door after the horse has bolted](#)
[lock, stock, and barrel](#)
[locked in a time warp](#)
[locker-room humor](#)
[locker-room talk](#)
[locker room talk](#)
[LOLcat](#)
[lone gunman](#)
[lone it](#)
[\(lone\) voice in the wilderness](#)
[lone wolf](#)
[a lonely little petunia in an onion patch](#)
[long absent, soon forgotten](#)
[long arm](#)
[long bread](#)
[long drink](#)
[long drink of water](#)
[long face](#)
[long finger](#)
[long game](#)
[long green](#)
[long haul](#)
[long memory](#)
[long pig](#)
[long pork](#)
[a long row to hoe](#)
[long-run](#)



[long run](#)
[long shot](#)
[long since](#)
[long time](#)
[long time, no hear](#)
[the longest pole knocks the persimmon](#)
[look a little peaked](#)
[look \(a little/bit\) off](#)
[look after number one](#)
[look as if butter wouldn't melt in \(one's\) mouth](#)
[look askance at \(someone or something\)](#)
[look askance upon \(someone or something\)](#)
[look \(at something\) through rose-colored glasses](#)
[look \(at something\) through rose-tinted glasses](#)
[look babies in the eyes](#)
[look beneath the surface](#)
[look down \(one's\) nose at \(someone or something\)](#)
[look for a dog to kick](#)
[look for trouble](#)
[look forward to \(something\)](#)
[look in on \(someone or something\)](#)
[look like a million](#)
[look like a million bucks](#)
[look like a million dollars](#)
[look like the cat that ate the canary](#)
[look on the bright side](#)
[look on the sunny side \(of life/things\)](#)
[look out for number one](#)
[look \(someone\) off](#)
[look through a millstone](#)
[look through blue glasses](#)
[look to \(one's\) laurels](#)
[look what the cat\('s\) dragged in](#)
[loose cannon](#)
[loose change](#)
[loose ends](#)
[loose lip\(s\)](#)



[loose talk](#)
[loosen the apron strings](#)
[loosen the purse strings](#)
[the Lord helps those who help themselves](#)
[lord of the flies](#)
[Lord willing and if the creek don't rise](#)
[the Lord works in mysterious ways](#)
[Lord's Supper](#)
[lose no time \(in\) doing \(something\)](#)
[lose \(one's\) bearings](#)
[lose \(one's\) bottle](#)
[lose \(one's\) buttons](#)
[lose \(one's\) cherry](#)
[lose \(one's\) faith \(in something or someone\)](#)
[lose \(one's\) footing](#)
[lose \(one's\) head](#)
[lose \(one's\) heart to \(someone\)](#)
[lose \(one's\) marbles](#)
[lose \(one's\) rag](#)
[lose \(one's\) shit](#)
[lose \(one's\) spirit](#)
[lose \(one's\) tongue](#)
[lose \(one's\)/the way](#)
[lose the number of \(one's\) mess](#)
[lose to](#)
[a losing battle](#)
[a losing game](#)
[loss of face](#)
[lost cause](#)
[lost in the wash](#)
[lost in translation](#)
[lost soul](#)
[a lot](#)
[lot lizard](#)
[a lot of baloney](#)
[a lot of bunk](#)
[a lot of malarkey](#)

[a lot of moola](#)
[a lot of pluck](#)
[a lot on \(one's\) plate](#)
[loud mouth](#)
[lounge lizard](#)
[love child](#)
[love goggles](#)
[love-in](#)
[love muscle](#)
[love nest](#)
[love-tooth in the head](#)
[loved up](#)
[low-down](#)
[low ebb](#)
[low man on the ladder](#)
[low man on the totem pole](#)
[the low road](#)
[lower \(one's\) guard](#)
[lower the bar](#)
[the lowest rung of the ladder](#)
[the lowest rung on the ladder](#)
[lubrication payment](#)
[luck in](#)
[\(one's\) lucky day](#)
[lucky devil](#)
[lucky dip](#)
[lully prigger](#)
[lump in \(one's\) throat](#)
[lump it](#)
[lump to \(one's\) throat](#)
[the lunatics are running the asylum](#)
[the lunatics have taken over the asylum](#)
[lust for life](#)
[lust for power](#)
[lying ahead of](#)
[lying at door](#)
[lying before](#)



M

[mad as a hornet](#)

[mad as a hornet](#)

[mad as a wet hen](#)

[mad as hell](#)

[mad as hops](#)

[mad as hops](#)

[mad money](#)

[made from whole cloth](#)

[made in China](#)

[made in the shade](#)

[made of sterner stuff](#)

[made out of whole cloth](#)

[magic bullet](#)

[magic carpet](#)

[magic eye](#)

[magic moment](#)

[magic touch](#)

[magic wand](#)

[mail \(something\) in](#)

[main man](#)

[main street](#)

[major league\(s\)](#)

[make a bed](#)

[make a beeline for \(someone or something\)](#)

[make a better door than a window](#)

[make a bolt for \(someone or something\)](#)

[make a break for \(someone or something\)](#)

[make a break for \(someone or something\)](#)

[make a bundle](#)

[make a clean break](#)

[make a clean break \(from/with someone or something\)](#)

[make a clean breast](#)

[make a decision](#)

[make a dog's breakfast \(of something\)](#)
[make a dog's dinner \(of something\)](#)
[make a face \(at someone\)](#)
[make a false step](#)
[make a fool \(out\) of \(someone or oneself\)](#)
[make a getaway](#)
[make a grandstand play](#)
[make a hole in \(something\)](#)
[make a hole in the water](#)
[make a leg](#)
[make a long arm for \(something\)](#)
[make a mark](#)
[make a mint](#)
[make a monkey \(out\) of \(someone or oneself\)](#)
[make a pile](#)
[make a run for \(someone or something\)](#)
[make a silk purse of a sow's ear](#)
[make a spectacle of \(oneself\)](#)
[make a wide stride](#)
[make advances at \(someone\)](#)
[make allowance\(s\) for \(someone or something\)](#)
[make an end of \(something\)](#)
[make an honest buck](#)
[make an honest woman \(out\) of \(someone\)](#)
[make as if](#)
[make as if](#)
[make as though](#)
[make baby Jesus cry](#)
[make beard](#)
[make blood boil](#)
[make blood run cold](#)
[make bones](#)
[make \(both\) ends meet](#)
[make buckle and tongue meet](#)
[make capital out of \(something\)](#)
[make chalk of one and cheese of the other](#)
[make contact with \(someone or something\)](#)

[make day](#)
[make do](#)
[make ears burn](#)
[make faces \(at someone\)](#)
[make fair weather](#)
[make fast work of \(someone or something\)](#)
[make fish of one and flesh of another](#)
[make game of \(someone or something\)](#)
[make ground](#)
[make ground against \(something\)](#)
[make ground on \(someone or something\)](#)
[make hackles rise](#)
[make hair stand on end](#)
[make hair stand up on the back of neck](#)
[make haste slowly](#)
[make haste slowly](#)
[make heads or tails \(out\) of \(someone or something\)](#)
[make heads roll](#)
[make heavy going of \(something\)](#)
[make heavy weather of \(something\)](#)
[make herself useful](#)
[make him hot under the collar](#)
[make him pay through the nose](#)
[make him see stars](#)
[make him turn over in his grave](#)
[make honest bucks](#)
[make horns at](#)
[make it hot for \(someone\)](#)
[make it or break it](#)
[make it rain](#)
[make it up as he goes](#)
[make jaw drop](#)
[make legs](#)
[make like](#)
[make like a banana and split](#)
[make matters worse](#)
[make mincemeat \(out\) of \(someone\)](#)

make news
make (one) hot under the collar
make (one) pay through the nose
make (one) see stars
make (one) turn over in (one's) grave
make (one's) beard
make (one's) blood boil
make (one's) blood run cold
make (one's) bones
make (one's) day
make (one's) hair stand on end
make (one's) mark
make (one's) mouth water
make (one's) own way
make (one's) skin crawl
make (one's/the) hair stand up on the back of (one's) neck
make (oneself or something) ready (for someone or something)
make (oneself) useful
make plain
make public
make quick work of (someone or something)
make sail
make short work of (someone or something)
make (someone's) ears burn
make (someone's) hackles rise
make (someone's) jaw drop
make (someone's) teeth itch
make something of it
make something of (one's) life
make something of (oneself)
make (something) up as (one) goes (along)
make sport of (someone or something)
make teeth itch
make (the) baby Jesus cry
make the beast with two backs
make the best of a bad bargain
make the cut

[make the hair stand up on the back of her neck](#)
[make the hard yard](#)
[make the welkin ring](#)
[make the world go round](#)
[make themselves useful](#)
[make time with \(someone\)](#)
[make turn over in grave](#)
[make wide strides](#)
[make you hot under the collar](#)
[make you pay through the nose](#)
[make you see stars](#)
[make yourself ready](#)
[mama's boy](#)
[man-about-town](#)
[a man after my own](#)
[man after \(one's\) own heart](#)
[man and wife](#)
[man boobs](#)
[man bun](#)
[man cave](#)
[man crush Monday](#)
[man down](#)
[man-eater](#)
[man for all seasons](#)
[man in the street](#)
[man is a wolf to man](#)
[man of few words](#)
[man of God](#)
[a man of his word](#)
[man of letters](#)
[man of many parts](#)
[man of means](#)
[a man of my kidney](#)
[man of parts](#)
[man of straw](#)
[man of the cloth](#)
[\(the\) man of the moment](#)



[man of the world](#)
[man-of-war](#)
[man on the make](#)
[man on the street](#)
[man plans and God laughs](#)
[man the fort](#)
[man up](#)
[a man who is his own lawyer has a fool for a client](#)
[\(the\) man/woman of the hour](#)
[a man/woman of the people](#)
[a man/woman on a mission](#)
[a man/woman with a mission](#)
[manbun](#)
[Mandela effect](#)
[manners maketh man](#)
[manoeuvre the apostles](#)
[a man's got to do what a man's got to do](#)
[man's man](#)
[mansplain](#)
[manspreading](#)
[many a mickle makes a muckle](#)
[many a time](#)
[many happy returns](#)
[many happy returns of the day](#)
[many string to her bow](#)
[the map is not the territory](#)
[the march of time](#)
[march to \(one's\) own beat](#)
[march to \(the beat of\) a different drum](#)
[march to the beat of a different drummer](#)
[march to \(the beat of\) \(one's\) own drum](#)
[\(one's\) marching orders](#)
[\(one's\) marching papers](#)
[mare's nest](#)
[Marie Celeste](#)
[marked man](#)
[market day](#)

[marriage inequality](#)
[marriage made in heaven](#)
[marry above \(one's\) station](#)
[marry above \(oneself\)](#)
[marry beneath \(oneself\)](#)
[marry into money](#)
[marry \(someone\) for \(his or her\) money](#)
[marry the gunner's daughter](#)
[marsh grass](#)
[mass destruction](#)
[Master of the Universe](#)
[match day](#)
[match made in heaven](#)
[a match made in heaven](#)
[a match made in hell](#)
[mate](#)
[matter a tuppence](#)
[a matter of course](#)
[matter of fact](#)
[a matter of form](#)
[matter of life and death](#)
[a matter of life or death](#)
[matter of opinion](#)
[matter of record](#)
[a matter of time](#)
[matter two pence](#)
[may the Force be with you](#)
[MCM](#)
[me oh my](#)
[me three](#)
[meal ticket](#)
[Meals on Wheels](#)
[mean the world to \(someone\)](#)
[means to an end](#)
[measure for drapes](#)
[measure swords](#)
[measure the drapes](#)

[measure twice and cut once](#)
[measure twice, cut once](#)
[the meat in the sandwich](#)
[meat market](#)
[the meat of the matter](#)
[meat rack](#)
[meat sweats](#)
[meatball surgery](#)
[medallion man](#)
[Meddlesome Matty](#)
[media darling](#)
[meet a sticky end](#)
[meet and greet](#)
[meet head-on](#)
[meet \(one\) halfway](#)
[meet \(one's\) death](#)
[meet \(one's\) end](#)
[meet \(one's\) maker](#)
[meet \(one's\) Waterloo](#)
[meet \(someone's\) expectations](#)
[meet the eye](#)
[meet trouble halfway](#)
[meeting of \(the\) minds](#)
[melon head](#)
[melting pot](#)
[member for Barkshire](#)
[meme](#)
[memory lane](#)
[ménage à trois](#)
[mend \(one's\) fences](#)
[merchant of doom](#)
[mercy fuck](#)
[mere mortal](#)
[merry-andrew](#)
[merry dance](#)
[mess of pottage](#)
[mess of \(something\)](#)



[mess with the bull and you get the horns](#)
[meth head](#)
[method in \(one's\) madness](#)
[\(a\) method in \(one's\) madness](#)
[\(a\) method to \(one's\) madness](#)
[Mexican standoff](#)
[mic drop](#)
[Mickey Mouse around](#)
[microaggression](#)
[Midas touch](#)
[middle-aged spread](#)
[middle of the road](#)
[might and main](#)
[mighty oaks from little acorns grow](#)
[mile a minute](#)
[a mile away](#)
[a mile off](#)
[milk the ram](#)
[millennial](#)
[Miller of Dee](#)
[millstone around \(one's\) neck](#)
[a mind is a terrible thing to waste](#)
[mind like a sieve](#)
[mind-numbing](#)
[mind of \(one's\) own](#)
[mind \(one's\) manners](#)
[mind \(one's\) p's and q's](#)
[mind \(one's\) p's and q's](#)
[mind the gap](#)
[the mind's ear](#)
[mine of information](#)
[miner's canary](#)
[mint chocolate chip](#)
[mint condition](#)
[mint it](#)
[mint money](#)
[miserly sort](#)

[misery guts](#)
[miss a beat](#)
[a miss is as good as a mile](#)
[Miss Right](#)
[miss the cushion](#)
[miss the cut](#)
[miss the mark](#)
[missing link](#)
[mission creep](#)
[mission is to drain the swamp](#)
[Mister Right](#)
[Mister Right](#)
[mix apples and oranges](#)
[mix it \(up\)](#)
[mixed bag](#)
[mixed emotions](#)
[mixed feelings](#)
[mixed message](#)
[a mixed picture](#)
[mixed signal](#)
[mocking is catching](#)
[a modest proposal](#)
[moll buzzer](#)
[Molotov cocktail](#)
[mom](#)
[\(one's\) moment in the sun](#)
[Monday morning quarterback](#)
[money can't buy happiness](#)
[money for jam](#)
[money for jam](#)
[money for old rope](#)
[money for old rope](#)
[money isn't everything](#)
[money laundering](#)
[money maker](#)
[money pit](#)
[money-spinner](#)



[money talks and bullshit walks](#)
[money talks, bullshit walks](#)
[money's worth](#)
[monkey around](#)
[monkey off \(one's\) back](#)
[monkey on \(one's\) back](#)
[a monkey on \(one's\) back](#)
[monkey wrench](#)
[monkey's allowance](#)
[monkeys might fly out of my butt](#)
[a month of Sundays](#)
[monthly meeting](#)
[moobs](#)
[mooch about \(somewhere\)](#)
[mooch around \(somewhere\)](#)
[mooch off \(of\) \(someone or something\)](#)
[the moon on a stick](#)
[moonlight flit](#)
[mop head](#)
[mop the floor with \(someone\)](#)
[mope about \(somewhere\)](#)
[mope around](#)
[moral compass](#)
[the moral high ground](#)
[moral low ground](#)
[more Catholic than the Pope \(himself\)](#)
[more cry than wool](#)
[more haste, less speed](#)
[more sinned against than sinner](#)
[more sinned against than sinning](#)
[more \(something\) than you can shake a stick at](#)
[more than one string to her bow](#)
[the more things change, the more they stay the same](#)
[more trouble than it is worth](#)
[more/bigger/greater than the sum of its parts](#)
[a morning person](#)
[morning, noon, and night](#)



[the most unkindest cut of all](#)
[mote in the eye](#)
[Mother Carey is plucking her chickens](#)
[a mother hen](#)
[mother lode](#)
[mother lode](#)
[mother of god](#)
[mother of pearl](#)
[a motor mouth](#)
[mount resistance](#)
[mountain oysters](#)
[mountain to climb](#)
[mouth breather](#)
[mouth-breather](#)
[mouth-breathing](#)
[mouth of a sailor](#)
[mouth to feed](#)
[mouth-watering](#)
[mouthful of marbles](#)
[movable feast](#)
[move house](#)
[move it](#)
[move \(one's\) body](#)
[move \(the\) deckchairs on the Titanic](#)
[move the goal](#)
[move the goal line](#)
[move the goalposts](#)
[move the yardsticks](#)
[move the/\(one's\) clock\(s\) back](#)
[move the/\(one's\) clock\(s\) forward](#)
[move through the gears](#)
[Mr. Right](#)
[Mr. Right](#)
[Mrs. Grundy](#)
[Mrs. Right](#)
[much as](#)
[muckamuck](#)



[muckety-muck](#)
[muckety muck](#)
[muffin top](#)
[mug's game](#)
[mummy's boy](#)
[mum's the word](#)
[murky waters](#)
[mush \(something\) up](#)
[music to \(someone's\) ears](#)
[musical chairs](#)
[a must](#)
[must be losing it](#)
[must needs](#)
[mutter \(something\) under \(one's\) breath](#)
[mutter \(something\) under \(one's\) breath](#)
[mutual admiration society](#)
[my](#)
[my angle](#)
[my applegart](#)
[my arse](#)
[my artistic style](#)
[my ass is on the line](#)
[my ass off](#)
[my autumn years](#)
[my back is up](#)
[my bad](#)
[my bag of tricks](#)
[my bark is worse than my bite](#)
[my bark is worse than my bite](#)
[my best bet](#)
[my best bib and tucker](#)
[my better half](#)
[my better half](#)
[my biological clock is ticking](#)
[my blood is up](#)
[my blood ran cold](#)
[my boo](#)



my butt is on the line
my cake is dough
my call
my conscience is clean
my conscience is clear
my door is always open
my ears are burning
my enemy's enemy is my friend
my eye!
my final resting place
my finest hour
my gig is up
my God
my God
my goodness
my gosh
my hands are full
my heart of hearts
my hearts desire
my huckleberry
my ivory tower
my kingdom for a horse
my last breath
my last resort
my little finger told me that
my lucky day
my marching orders
my marching papers
my moment in the sun
my native soil
my nerves are shot
my old dutch
my old flame
my old stomping ground
my old woman
my other half
my own flesh and blood



my place in the sun
my salad days
my salad years
my second childhood
my stripes
my strong suit
my take on
my time of the month
my true colours
my tuppence
my two pennies
my two penn'orth
my twopence
my Venus turned out a whelp
my way or the highway
my way out of a paper bag
my word
my, my
my, (oh, my)
a mystery to (one)

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N

[na-na na-na boo-boo](#)
[na-na na-na na-na](#)
[naff off](#)
[nah, bro](#)
[a nail-biter](#)
[nail in \(someone's or something's\) coffin](#)
[nail it](#)
[nail \(one's\) colors to the mast](#)
[name and shame](#)
[name to conjure with](#)
[Nantucket sleigh ride](#)
[narrow at the equator](#)
[narrow escape](#)
[a nasty wallop](#)
[nasty woman](#)
[\(someone's\) native soil](#)
[the nature of the beast](#)
[nature of the beast](#)
[nature's way of \(doing something\)](#)
[navigable waters](#)
[near and far](#)
[near miss](#)
[near post](#)
[near the knuckle](#)
[near to impossible](#)
[near to \(one's\) heart](#)
[the nearer the bone, the sweeter the meat](#)
[neat as a bandbox](#)
[neat as a new pin](#)
[neat as ninepence](#)
[necessary evil](#)
[necessity is the mother of innovation](#)
[neck and crop](#)

necker's knob
a necktie party
Need I say more?
need (something) (about) as much a fish needs a bicycle
need (something) (about) as much as (one) needs a hole in the head
need (something) like a fish needs a bicycle
need (something) like (one) needs a hole in the head
need-to-know
needle in a haystack
neither fish nor flesh
neither fish nor fowl
neither fish, flesh, nor fowl
neither fish, flesh, nor good red herring
neither hide nor hair
neremberg defence
(one's) nerves are shot
nest egg
Netflix and chill
never a bride
never a rose without a/the prick
never in a million years
never in a month of Sundays
never in (one's) wildest dreams
never let the sun go down on your anger
never look a gift horse in the mouth
never look back
never marry for money, but marry where money is
never miss a trick
never misses a beat
Never Never Land
the never-never plan
Never put off until tomorrow what you can do today.
never send a boy to do a man's job
never set the heather alight
never set the heather on fire
never set the Thames alight
never set the Thames on fire

[never set the world alight](#)
[never set the world on fire](#)
[never skips a beat](#)
[never you mind](#)
[a new ballgame](#)
[new broom](#)
[a new lease of life](#)
[new lease on life](#)
[a new lease on life](#)
[new man](#)
[a new man](#)
[new normal](#)
[new phone, who dis](#)
[new school](#)
[a new slant](#)
[new standard](#)
[new town](#)
[the next best thing](#)
[next in line](#)
[\(the\) next thing \(one\) knows](#)
[nibs](#)
[nice as ninepence](#)
[nice guy](#)
[nice job](#)
[nice little earner](#)
[nice one](#)
[nick knack](#)
[nickel and dime \(someone\) to death](#)
[nickel nurser](#)
[nigger in the woodpile](#)
[a night on the tiles](#)
[a night out](#)
[night owl](#)
[the Nikon choir](#)
[nine-day wonder](#)
[nine days' wonder](#)
[nine lives](#)

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nine tailors make a man
nineteen to the dozen
nip and tuck
nip in the air
nip slip
no big deal
no big whoop
no biggie
no bucks, no Buck Rogers
no buts
no buts (about it)
no chill
no cigar
no comparison
no-count
no cover
no DAPL
#no filter
no flies on (one)
no frills
no good deed ever goes unpunished
No good deed goes unpunished.
no good to beast or man
no guts, no glory
no hard feelings
no horse in this race
no ifs or buts
no ifs, ands, or buts
no joy
no joy in Mudville
no man's land
no matter how thin you slice it, it's still baloney
no matter how you slice it
no matter what/when/where/why/who/how
no mean feat
no mean feat
no more

no one ever went broke underestimating the intelligence of...
no one ever went broke underestimating the taste of...
no one in his/her/their right mind would (do something)
no one should be judge in his own cause
no plan survives contact with the enemy
no point crying over spilt milk
no pressure
no prizes for guessing (something)
no quarter
no quarter
no question of
no question that
no score
no screaming hell
no screaming hell
no-show
no skin off my back
no skin off (one's) back
no slouch
no slouch
no stretch of the imagination
no time to lose
no use crying over spilt milk
no use to beast or man
no way shape or form
no-win situation
no wonder
a nobody
a nod is as good as a wink
NODAPL
nod's as good as a wink
#nofilter
nom
a non-denial denial
non sequitur
non-starter
none of (one's) beeswax



[none of \(one's\) business](#)
[nook and cranny](#)
[nook or cranny](#)
[the noose is hanging](#)
[nose candy](#)
[nose for](#)
[a nose for something](#)
[nose into \(something\)](#)
[the nose knows](#)
[nose of wax](#)
[nose out of joint](#)
[nose-pick](#)
[nose-picker](#)
[nose-picking](#)
[nose to the grindstone](#)
[nosebleed seat](#)
[the nosebleed section](#)
[the nosebleeds](#)
[nosy parker](#)
[not a bad sort](#)
[not a dicky bird](#)
[not a hope in hell](#)
[not a little](#)
[not a minute too soon](#)
[not a moment too soon](#)
[not a peep from/out of \(someone\)](#)
[not all it is cracked up to be](#)
[not all it's cracked up to be](#)
[not any hard feelings](#)
[not anything to write home about](#)
[not anywhere near](#)
[not as black as \(one\) is painted](#)
[not bat an eyelash](#)
[not bat an eyelid](#)
[not be lost on \(someone\)](#)
[not be the only pebble on the beach](#)
[not be worth a brass farthing](#)



not be worth a plug nickel
not bear the sight of (someone or something)
not been herself
not been sleeping a wink
not believe a word of it
(not) breathe a word
not by a long chalk
not by any means
(not) care a fig
not care a hang (about something)
(not) care a hoot
(not) care a toss
not care (a) tuppence
not care two pins (about something)
not care twopence
not crap where you eat
not do a stroke (of work)
not dry behind the ears
not feel oneself
not feeling (oneself)
not find her way out of a paper back
not get a wink of sleep
not get anywhere
not give a continental
not give a damn about (someone or something)
not give a fig about (someone or something)
not give a hang (about something)
not give a monkey's
not give a rap about (someone or something)
not give a rat's arse (about something)
not give a rat's ass for/about (something or someone)
not give a shite (about something)
not give a tinker's damn about (someone or something)
not give (a) tuppence
not give two pins (about something)
not give twopence
not going to take it sitting down

not gotten a wink of sleep
not half bad
(not) half the person/man/woman (one) used to be
not have a hope in hell
not have a hope in hell (of doing something)
not have a penny to (one's) name
not have all day
not have all (one's) buttons
not have anything on
not have anything on (someone or something)
not have much between the ears
not have (one's) heart in (something)
not have the faintest idea
not have the foggiest idea
not have two nickels to rub together
not have two pennies to rub together
not having any
not (hear) a dicky bird
not herself
not hold still for (something)
not in a million years
not in a month of Sundays
not in Kansas
not in the biblical sense
not-invented-here syndrome
not just a pretty face
not just a pretty face
not just another pretty face
not knock yourself out
not know A from a windmill
not know B from a battledore
not know if (one) is afoot or on horseback
not know if (one) is coming or going
not know if (one) is coming or going
not know (someone) from a bar of soap
not know the time of day
not know whether one is coming or going

not know whether (one) is coming or going
not lost on her
not matter tuppence
not matter twopence
not mind her
not miss a beat
not monkey around with me
not much between the ears
not much cop
not much for looks
not of sound mind
not on my watch
not on your nelly
not on your tintype
not open (one's) mouth
not ourselves
not patronize me
not play around with me
not playing with a full deck
not put stock in (something)
not quite
not reveal her colors
not reveal her stripes
not rocket science
not rule in or rule out
not safe for work
not safe for work
not say a dicky bird
not say boo to a fly
not say boo to a goose
not say boo (to anyone)
not see farther than her nose
not see (one) for dust
not see straight
not see the point
not see the point in
not set the heather alight



not set the heather on fire
not set the Thames alight
not set the Thames on fire
not set the world alight
not set the world on fire
not shit where you eat
not short of a penny
not show her butt
not show her cards
not show her colors
not show her colours
not show her hand
not show her stripes
not skip a beat
not sleep a wink
not so bad
not so fast
not something to write home about
not stand still for (something)
not stand the sight of (someone or something)
not suitable for work
not suitable for work
not take (something) lightly
not take (something) sitting down
not take stock in (something)
(not) the be-all and end-all
not the done thing
not the half of it/(something)
not the only pebble on the beach
not themselves
not to say
not too bad
not touch (someone or something) with a barge pole
not touch (someone or something) with a barge pole
not touch (someone or something) with a ten-foot pole
not touch (someone or something) with a ten-foot pole
not up to much

[not up to par](#)
[\(not\) up to scratch](#)
[not up to scratch](#)
[not up to scratch](#)
[not up to snuff](#)
[not up to snuff](#)
[not up to the mark](#)
[not utter a word](#)
[not what it is cracked up to be](#)
[not win for losing](#)
[not worth a brass farthing](#)
[not worth a brass farthing](#)
[not worth a continental](#)
[not worth a dime](#)
[not worth a fig](#)
[not worth a hill of beans](#)
[not worth a plug nickel](#)
[not worth a plug nickel](#)
[not worth a red cent](#)
[not worth a straw](#)
[not worth a whistle](#)
[not worth the candle](#)
[not worth the paper it's printed on](#)
[not worth the trouble](#)
[not worth writing home about](#)
[not your daddy's](#)
[not your dad's](#)
[not your father's](#)
[not yourself](#)
[notch below](#)
[a notch in \(someone's\) bedpost](#)
[a notch in \(someone's\) belt](#)
[a notch on \(someone's\) bedpost](#)
[a notch on \(someone's\) belt](#)
[nothing is so good for the inside of a man as the outside of a horse](#)
[nothing like](#)
[nothing personal](#)

nothing special
nothing special
nothing to be sneezed at
nothing to be sniffed at
nothing to complain about
nothing to do with
nothing to sneeze at
nothing to sniff at
nothing to write home about
nourish a serpent in (one's) bosom
nourish a snake in (one's) bosom
nourish a viper in (one's) bosom
Now I've seen everything!
now (one's) cooking (with gas)
now (someone) has gone and done it
now (that) you mention it
now (that) you mention it
now that's something
NSFW
nuclear option
nudge nudge (wink wink)
nudge (someone) into (doing) (something)
nudge (someone or something) (somewhere)
nugget of information
nugget of truth
nugget of wisdom
number cruncher
number one with a bullet
Number Ten
numbers game
Nuremberg defense
nurse a drink
nurse a serpent in (one's) bosom
nurse a snake in (one's) bosom
nurse a viper in (one's) bosom
nurse (one's) drink
nurture a serpent in (one's) bosom

[nurture a snake in \(one's\) bosom](#)

[nurture a viper in \(one's\) bosom](#)

[nut-cutting time](#)

[nut \(someone\)](#)

[nut \(something\) out](#)

[nuzzle up against \(someone or something\)](#)

[nuzzle up \(to someone or something\)](#)

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O

[o dark 100](#)

[o dark 30](#)

[oat opera](#)

[oater](#)

[Obamacare](#)

[objective is to drain the swamp](#)

[Occam's razor](#)

[odd and curious](#)

[odd couple](#)

[odd duck](#)

[odd fish](#)

[\(the\) odd man out](#)

[\(the\) odd one out](#)

[odds and sods](#)

[of a kind](#)

[of a morning/afternoon/evening](#)

[of a piece](#)

[of a size](#)

[of biblical proportions](#)

[of great price](#)

[of little avail](#)

[of no account](#)

[of no avail](#)

[of no use to beast or man](#)

[of \(someone's\) ilk](#)

[of sound mind](#)

[of that ilk](#)

[of the blackest dye](#)

[of the deepest dye](#)

[of the first magnitude](#)

[of the same kind](#)

[of the same stripe](#)

[of unsound mind](#)



[off again, on again](#)
[off at a tangent](#)
[off board](#)
[off chance](#)
[off-color](#)
[off guard](#)
[off-kilter](#)
[off like a prom dress](#)
[off like a prom dress \(in May\)](#)
[\(off\) on a tangent](#)
[off \(one's\) chump](#)
[off \(one's\) dot](#)
[off \(one's\) dot](#)
[off \(one's\) face](#)
[off \(one's\) feed](#)
[off \(one's\) game](#)
[off \(one's\) gourd](#)
[off \(one's\) guard](#)
[off \(one's\) meds](#)
[off \(one's\) nut](#)
[off \(one's\) own bat](#)
[off \(one's\) rocker](#)
[off \(one's\) trolley](#)
[off pat](#)
[off plumb](#)
[off-roader](#)
[off the boat](#)
[off the chain](#)
[off the deep end](#)
[off the grid](#)
[off the radar](#)
[off the rails](#)
[off the reservation](#)
[off the table](#)
[off the table](#)
[off to a false start](#)
[off trolley](#)

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[off your chump](#)
[off your dot](#)
[off your dot](#)
[off your face](#)
[off your feed](#)
[off your game](#)
[off your gourd](#)
[off your guard](#)
[off your meds](#)
[off your nut](#)
[off your own bat](#)
[off your rocker](#)
[offer affordance\(s\)](#)
[offer an olive branch \(to someone\)](#)
[offer chapter and verse](#)
[an offer one can't refuse](#)
[offer \(someone\) \(one's\) condolences](#)
[offer the olive branch \(to someone\)](#)
[Officer Friendly](#)
[often as not](#)
[often as not](#)
[oh dark hundred](#)
[oh dark thirty](#)
[\(oh\) me, oh my](#)
[oh my](#)
[oh my fucking God](#)
[\(oh\) \(my\) God!](#)
[oh my goodness gracious](#)
[\(oh\) \(my\) gosh!](#)
[oh really](#)
[oh well](#)
[oil and water](#)
[oil burner](#)
[oil field trash](#)
[oil of angels](#)
[oil trash](#)
[a okay](#)

[the old Adam](#)
[old as the hills](#)
[old chestnut](#)
[old codger](#)
[the old days](#)
[old enough to vote](#)
[old fart](#)
[an old flame](#)
[old fogey](#)
[an old hand](#)
[an old head on young shoulders](#)
[old in and out](#)
[the Old Lady of Threadneedle Street](#)
[old maid](#)
[old money](#)
[old rose](#)
[old salt](#)
[old saw](#)
[old school](#)
[an old shoe](#)
[old sins cast long shadows](#)
[old sins have long shadows](#)
[old skool](#)
[the old sod](#)
[old stick](#)
[\(one's\) old stomping ground](#)
[\(old\) stomping ground](#)
[old windbag](#)
[old wives' tale](#)
[old woman](#)
[older adult](#)
[older brother](#)
[older sister](#)
[an olive branch](#)
[oll korrekt](#)
[OMFG](#)
[on a cloud](#)



[on a collision course](#)
[on a full stomach](#)
[on a hunch](#)
[on a lark](#)
[on a losing wicket](#)
[on a losing wicket](#)
[on a rampage](#)
[on a regular basis](#)
[on a side note](#)
[on a sticky wicket](#)
[on a \(subject or activity\) kick](#)
[on a tangent](#)
[on a tear](#)
[on a whim](#)
[on a/the toss of a/the coin](#)
[on about](#)
[on acid](#)
[on acid](#)
[on again, off again](#)
[on air](#)
[on air](#)
[on all hands](#)
[on an average](#)
[on an empty stomach](#)
[on an empty stomach](#)
[on an irregular basis](#)
[on bad terms](#)
[on beam ends](#)
[on behalf](#)
[on behalf](#)
[on Carey Street](#)
[on death's door step](#)
[on fleek](#)
[on her best behaviour](#)
[on her part](#)
[on her wrong side](#)
[on hire](#)

on in years
on leave
on long finger
on my life
on (one's) beam-ends
on one's behalf
on (one's) best behavior
on (one's) bill
on (one's) coattails
on (one's) good behavior
on (one's) honor
on (one's) honour
on (one's) lonesome
on (one's) own
on (one's) own initiative
on (one's) own volition
on (one's) pat
on (one's) Pat Malone
on (one's) person
on (one's) plate
on (one's) tod
on (one's/its) knees
on opposite sides of the barricade(s)
on our best behavior
on our bill
on our coattails
on our good behavior
on our honor
on our honour
on our knees
on our lonesome
on our own initiative
on our own volition
on our pat
on our Pat Malone
on our plate
on our tod

[on own](#)
[on pain of](#)
[on pain of death](#)
[on person](#)
[on quite a sticky wicket](#)
[on shipboard](#)
[on \(someone's\) behalf](#)
[on \(someone's\) behalf](#)
[on \(someone's\) part](#)
[on \(someone's\) wrong side](#)
[on talking terms](#)
[on \(the\) air](#)
[on the anvil](#)
[on the anxious seat](#)
[on the back foot](#)
[on the back of \(something\)](#)
[on the beam-ends](#)
[on the beat](#)
[on the beaten track](#)
[on the bleeding edge](#)
[on the bounce](#)
[on the bright side](#)
[on the brink of \(something\)](#)
[on the bum](#)
[on the cards](#)
[on the chance](#)
[on the clock](#)
[on the cuff](#)
[on the day hell freezes over](#)
[on the down low](#)
[on the downside](#)
[on the edge of \(something\)](#)
[on the fiddle](#)
[on the front foot](#)
[on the full-tilt boogie](#)
[on the game](#)
[on the go](#)

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on the grapevine
on the gravy train
on the Greek calends
on the high-road to Needham
on the hip
on the hook
on the hop
on the horn
on the hush
on the hush-hush
on the inside
on the Internet, nobody knows you're a dog
on the jar
on the leading edge
on the lines of (something)
on the long finger
on the make
on the march
on the nail
on the off chance
on the (off) chance
on the outside chance
on the outside, looking in
on the pad
on the plus side
on the pull
on the radar (screen)
on the rampage
on the razor's edge
on the shady side of
on the sick list
on the spur of the moment
on the square
on the string
on the table
on the toss of a coin
on the up

[on the upside](#)
[on the upswing](#)
[on the wrong side of history](#)
[on the wrong side of \(someone\)](#)
[on to her](#)
[on tod](#)
[on welfare](#)
[on wheels](#)
[on wrong side](#)
[on your beam ends](#)
[on your behalf](#)
[on your behalf](#)
[on your best behavior](#)
[on your best behaviour](#)
[on your bill](#)
[on your coattails](#)
[on your good behavior](#)
[on your honor](#)
[on your honour](#)
[on your knees](#)
[on your lonesome](#)
[on your own](#)
[on your own initiative](#)
[on your own volition](#)
[on your part](#)
[on your pat](#)
[on your Pat Malone](#)
[on your person](#)
[on your plate](#)
[once and again](#)
[once hell freezes over](#)
[once or twice](#)
[once the dust has settled](#)
[once \(the\) word gets out](#)
[once you go black, you never go back](#)
[one after another](#)
[one after the other](#)



one age with
one age with (someone)
one another
one at a time
one bad apple spoils the (whole) barrel
one bad apple spoils the (whole) bunch
one bad apple spoils the (whole) bushel
one-banana problem
one brick short of a (full) load
one brick shy of a (full) load
one by one
one can't beat that
one can't believe one's ears
one card shy of a (full) deck
one-day wonder
one does not wash one's dirty linen in public
one figures
one flesh
one for the Gipper
one giant leap for mankind
(one had) better be going
(one had) better get moving
(one had) better get on (one's) horse
one half of the world does not know how the other half lives
one hand washes the other (and both wash the face)
one heck of a
one heck of a (something or someone)
one hell of a
one hell of a mess
one hell of a (something or someone)
one hell of a time
one-hit wonder
one-horse race
one-horse town
one hour's sleep before midnight is worth two after
one hundred and ten percent
one-hundred-and-ten proof

one in the eye for
one-man band
one-night stand
one-note
one of those things
one-off
one over (the) eight
one puts one's pants on one leg at a time
one puts one's trousers on one leg at a time
one sandwich short of a picnic
one sandwich shy of a picnic
one saved the day
one sharp cookie
one sick puppy
one side
one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind
one-star
one step at a time
one step forward and two steps back
one step forward, two steps back
one swallow does not a spring make
one swallow does not make a spring
one (thing) after the other
a one-trick pony
one-two punch
one-up (someone)
a one way street
a one-way street
a one-way street
a one-way ticket to (somewhere or something)
one will rue the day
(one's/the) best bet
onesie-tvosie
only daughter
only fools and horses work
only Nixon could go to China
only son

[only the good die young](#)
[ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny](#)
[onward and upward](#)
[onwards and upwards](#)
[OOTD](#)
[open and aboveboard](#)
[an open book](#)
[\(open\) confession is good for the soul](#)
[open day](#)
[open her mouth](#)
[open house](#)
[an open invitation](#)
[an open marriage](#)
[open \(one's\) big mouth](#)
[open \(one's\) legs](#)
[open \(one's\) mouth](#)
[open sesame](#)
[open the door for](#)
[open the kimono](#)
[open \(up\) a can of whoop ass \(on someone\)](#)
[open \(up\) \(one's\) kimono](#)
[the opening of an envelope](#)
[opportunity knocks](#)
[opportunity knocks at every man's door](#)
[opposites attract](#)
[or get off the pot](#)
[or something \(like that\)](#)
[ordeal by fire](#)
[the order of the day](#)
[orders are orders](#)
[Oreo cookie](#)
[original character](#)
[other fish in the sea](#)
[\(one's\) other half](#)
[the other side](#)
[out-and-out](#)
[out back](#)



[out for the count](#)
[out-Herod Herod](#)
[out of all scotch and notch](#)
[out of central casting](#)
[out of condition](#)
[out of countenance](#)
[out of court](#)
[out of fix](#)
[out of her wheelhouse](#)
[out of house and home](#)
[out of humour](#)
[out of it](#)
[out of key](#)
[out of kilter](#)
[out of \(one's\) box](#)
[out of \(one's\) brain](#)
[out of \(one's\) face](#)
[out of \(one's\) gourd](#)
[out of \(one's\) hair](#)
[out of \(one's\) head](#)
[out of \(one's\) shell](#)
[out of \(one's\) skull](#)
[out of \(one's\) tree](#)
[out of plumb](#)
[out of \(something\)](#)
[out of sorts](#)
[out of square](#)
[out of steam](#)
[out of step](#)
[out of the box](#)
[out of the chute](#)
[out of the clear blue sky](#)
[out of time \(with someone or something\)](#)
[out of trim](#)
[out of your box](#)
[out of your brain](#)
[out on \(one's\) feet](#)

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[out on the tiles](#)
[out on the tiles](#)
[out the ass](#)
[out the wazoo](#)
[out there](#)
[outer core](#)
[outfit of the day](#)
[outpope the Pope](#)
[outside chance](#)
[out\(side\) \(of\) \(someone's\) wheelhouse](#)
[outside the box](#)
[the outside world](#)
[outsmart \(one\)self](#)
[outstay \(one's\) welcome](#)
[over hell's half acre](#)
[over shoes, over boots](#)
[over the board](#)
[over the course of](#)
[over the hills and far away](#)
[over the map](#)
[over the transom](#)
[over with](#)
[overshoot the mark](#)
[overstay \(one's\) welcome](#)
[overstep \(one's\)/its mark](#)
[overstep the bounds \(of something\)](#)
[\(one's\) own flesh and blood](#)
[an own goal](#)
[ox-in-the-ditch](#)
[the ox is in the ditch](#)

P

[pack fudge](#)
[pack heat](#)
[pack of lies](#)
[pack on the pounds](#)
[pack rat](#)
[pack \(someone or something\) \(in\) like sardines](#)
[packed \(in\) like sardines](#)
[packed to the gills](#)
[packed to the rafters](#)
[pad \(one's\)/the accounts](#)
[pad \(one's\)/the expense account](#)
[padded account](#)
[paddy wagon](#)
[paddywagon](#)
[paid-up](#)
[paid-up member \(of something\)](#)
[pain and suffering](#)
[pain in the arse](#)
[pain-in-the-arse](#)
[pain-in-the-ass](#)
[pain in the ass](#)
[pain in the butt](#)
[pain in the butt](#)
[pain-in-the-butt](#)
[pain-in-the-neck](#)
[pain in the neck](#)
[pain-in-the-rear](#)
[pain in the rear](#)
[paint a black picture \(of someone or something\)](#)
[paint \(something\) with a broad brush](#)
[paint the lily](#)
[painted cat](#)
[palace politics](#)

[panda car](#)
[the pants off \(of\)](#)
[paper chase](#)
[paper thin](#)
[paper tiger](#)
[paper trail](#)
[parade of horrors](#)
[parentally challenged](#)
[park that thought](#)
[park the bus](#)
[parrot \(someone's\) words](#)
[parson's nose](#)
[part to play](#)
[parting shot](#)
[party and play](#)
[party animal](#)
[party crasher](#)
[party foul](#)
[party pooper](#)
[pass a bum check](#)
[pass on to the Great Beyond](#)
[pass \(something\) with flying colours](#)
[pass the red face test](#)
[pass the Rubicon](#)
[pass under the yoke](#)
[a passing fancy](#)
[past cure](#)
[pat on the back](#)
[the patience of Job](#)
[patient as Griselda](#)
[patient dumping](#)
[patient of](#)
[patronize me](#)
[Paul Pry](#)
[pay dirt](#)
[pay \(one\) back in kind](#)
[pay \(one's\) last respects](#)

[pay \(one's\) respects](#)
[pay packet](#)
[pay \(someone\) on the nail](#)
[pay \(someone\) peanuts](#)
[pay the bills](#)
[pay the consequences](#)
[pay the fiddler](#)
[pay the freight](#)
[pay too dearly for \(one's\) whistle](#)
[pay with the roll of the drum](#)
[P.D.A.](#)
[pea in the shoe](#)
[peace offering](#)
[peaches and cream](#)
[pearl-clutch](#)
[pearl-clutching](#)
[pearl necklace](#)
[pearl of wisdom](#)
[pearly](#)
[pearly whites](#)
[pecking order](#)
[pee in \(someone's\) Cheerios](#)
[pee in \(someone's\) Corn Flakes](#)
[pee like a racehorse](#)
[pee \(one's\) pants](#)
[peed off](#)
[peeping Tom](#)
[peg it](#)
[a peg too low](#)
[pen pusher](#)
[penalty box](#)
[penchant for](#)
[pencil neck](#)
[pencil-necked](#)
[pencil pusher](#)
[pencil whip](#)
[penguin suit](#)



[penny dreadful](#)
[penny for your thoughts](#)
[penny pincher](#)
[a penny saved is a penny earned](#)
[a penny saved is a penny gained](#)
[a people person](#)
[people power](#)
[people's republic](#)
[pep talk](#)
[perfect storm](#)
[perk up \(one's/someone's\) ears](#)
[perp walk](#)
[a person after \(one's\) own](#)
[person of size](#)
[pester \(someone\) for \(something\)](#)
[Peter Pan syndrome](#)
[phone tag](#)
[pick a bone with \(someone\)](#)
[pick away at \(something\)](#)
[pick-me-up](#)
[pick of the bunch](#)
[pick \(one's\) battle\(s\)](#)
[pick \(one's\) nose](#)
[pick six](#)
[pick \(someone or something\) out of a hat](#)
[pick \(something\) up where \(one\) left off](#)
[pick up the gauntlet](#)
[pick up the hint](#)
[pick up what \(one\) is putting down](#)
[the picture of \(something\)](#)
[a picture paints a thousand words](#)
[pie-eating grin](#)
[the pièce de résistance](#)
[a piece of ass](#)
[piece of cake](#)
[piece of crap](#)
[piece of garbage](#)



[piece of shit](#)
[piece of snatch](#)
[piece of tail](#)
[piece of the action](#)
[piece of the pie](#)
[a piece of work](#)
[pied-à-terre](#)
[Pierian Spring](#)
[piffy on a rock bun](#)
[pig in a poke](#)
[pigs can fly](#)
[pigs have wings](#)
[pile on the pounds](#)
[pile Pelion on Ossa](#)
[pill-in-the-pocket](#)
[pill mill](#)
[pillar of strength](#)
[pillars to the temple](#)
[pin \(one's\) heart on \(one's\) sleeve](#)
[pin \(one's\) heart to \(one's\) sleeve](#)
[pinch and scrape](#)
[pinch \(one\) off](#)
[the pink dollar](#)
[pink money](#)
[the pink pound](#)
[pink slime](#)
[pink slip](#)
[pip \(someone\) at the post](#)
[pip \(someone\) to the post](#)
[pipe dream](#)
[pipped at the post](#)
[pipped to the post](#)
[piss about](#)
[piss and moan](#)
[piss and vinegar](#)
[piss-artist](#)
[piss in \(someone's\) Cheerios](#)

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[piss in \(someone's\) Corn Flakes](#)
[piss like a racehorse](#)
[piss money up the wall](#)
[piss on ice](#)
[piss on \(someone's\) bonfire](#)
[piss on \(someone's\) chips](#)
[piss \(one's\) pants](#)
[piss \(oneself\)](#)
[piss \(oneself\) laughing](#)
[piss up](#)
[piss-up](#)
[piss up a rope](#)
[pissed off](#)
[pissing contest](#)
[pissing in the wind](#)
[pissing match](#)
[pit stop](#)
[pitch a fit](#)
[pitch-perfect](#)
[pitched battle](#)
[the pitcher will go to the well once too often](#)
[pith of the matter](#)
[the pits](#)
[pixel peep](#)
[pixel peeper](#)
[pixel peeping](#)
[pizza face](#)
[\(a/one's\) place in the sun](#)
[place \(someone or something\) \(up\) on a pedestal](#)
[the place to be](#)
[place to call \(one's\) own](#)
[a plague on both your houses](#)
[plain Jane](#)
[plain sailing](#)
[plant a/the seed of doubt \(in someone's mind\)](#)
[plastic grin](#)
[plastic smile](#)

play a good knife and fork
play a losing game
play a part in (something)
play a role in (something)
play a waiting game
play (all) the angles
play both ends against the middle
play both sides against the middle
play catch-up
play ducks and drakes with
play dumb
play each end against the other
play each side against the other
play favourites
play first fiddle
play for laughs
play for love
play hide and seek
play hooky
play ignorant
play it straight
play Old Harry with (something)
play on words
play one against another
play one end against the other
play one off against another/each other/the other
play one side against the other
play (one's) cards close to (one's) chest
play (one's) cards close to (one's) chest
play (one's) cards close to (one's) vest
play (one's) cards right
play (one's) cards well
play phone tag
play Russian roulette
play second fiddle
play (someone) like a fiddle
play (something) close to (one's) chest

[play telephone tag](#)
[play the angles](#)
[play the devil with \(something\)](#)
[play the fool](#)
[play the gender card](#)
[play the goat](#)
[play the hand \(one\) is dealt](#)
[play the papers](#)
[play the race card](#)
[play \(the\) wag](#)
[play the waiting game](#)
[play their cards close to their chests](#)
[play their cards close to their chests](#)
[play their cards close to their vests](#)
[play their cards right](#)
[play their cards well](#)
[play them like a fiddle](#)
[play to the crowd](#)
[play to the gallery](#)
[play to win](#)
[play truant](#)
[play well with others](#)
[play with loaded dice](#)
[plead the Fifth \(Amendment\)](#)
[plod along](#)
[plod on](#)
[plough on](#)
[plow the sands](#)
[plug into](#)
[plumber's helper](#)
[PM](#)
[po' boy](#)
[poacher turned gamekeeper](#)
[pocket dial](#)
[pocket-sized](#)
[PO'd](#)
[poetry in motion](#)



[poison pen](#)
[poison-pen letter](#)
[poisoned chalice](#)
[poke \(one's\) nose in\(to\) \(something\)](#)
[policy of pin pricks](#)
[polish a turd](#)
[a polite fiction](#)
[political football](#)
[poo-hah](#)
[poop \(one's\) pants](#)
[a poor craftsman blames his tools](#)
[poor form](#)
[poor man's](#)
[poor relation](#)
[pop a cap in \(someone's\) ass](#)
[pop by \(for a visit\)](#)
[pop in \(for a visit\)](#)
[pop into \(someone's\) head](#)
[pop \(one's\) clogs](#)
[pop \(one's/someone's\) cherry](#)
[pop over \(for a visit\)](#)
[pop \(someone's\) bubble](#)
[pop the bubble of \(someone\)](#)
[pop the cherry](#)
[popcorn film](#)
[popcorn flick](#)
[popcorn movie](#)
[the pope's mustard maker](#)
[pope's nose](#)
[porch monkey](#)
[pork chop](#)
[port of call](#)
[portmanteau word](#)
[Portuguese man-of-war](#)
[poster boy](#)
[poster child](#)
[poster girl](#)



[pot luck](#)
[pot shot](#)
[potayto, potahto](#)
[Potemkin village](#)
[potter's clay](#)
[potter's field](#)
[potty about](#)
[potty mouth](#)
[pounce at](#)
[pounce at the death](#)
[pound it](#)
[pound salt](#)
[pound sand](#)
[pound \(something\) into \(one's/someone's\) head](#)
[pound \(something\) into \(one's/someone's\) thick skull](#)
[pour fuel on the fire](#)
[pour gas/gasoline on the fire](#)
[pour it on thick](#)
[pour salt in\(to\) the/\(someone's\) wound\(s\)](#)
[powder keg](#)
[power chord](#)
[power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely](#)
[praise from Sir Hubert](#)
[praise the Lord, and pass the ammunition](#)
[prawn cocktail offensive](#)
[pray tell](#)
[preach to deaf ears](#)
[prefer charges](#)
[press \(one's\) luck](#)
[press \(someone's\) buttons](#)
[press the panic button](#)
[pretty kettle of fish](#)
[a pretty pass](#)
[previous to](#)
[the price of cheese](#)
[the price of eggs](#)
[the price of fish](#)

[the price of meat](#)
[the price of tea in China](#)
[a price on \(one's\) head](#)
[prior to](#)
[#priorities](#)
[private branch exchange](#)
[private language](#)
[private message](#)
[problem child](#)
[a problem shared is a problem halved](#)
[proclaim \(something\) from the rooftops](#)
[Procrustean bed](#)
[professional student](#)
[professional victim](#)
[project management](#)
[a promise is a promise](#)
[a promise made is a promise kept](#)
[prop up the bar](#)
[prophet of doom](#)
[proud below the navel](#)
[prunes and prisms](#)
[prunes and prisms](#)
[psychological warfare](#)
[psychological warfare](#)
[pub crawl](#)
[pub crawl](#)
[public display of affection](#)
[public eye](#)
[public intellectual](#)
[the public weal](#)
[publicity hound](#)
[puke \(one's\) guts out](#)
[pull a disappearing act](#)
[pull a face \(at someone\)](#)
[pull a hoax \(on someone\)](#)
[pull a prank \(on someone\)](#)
[pull a rabbit out of a hat](#)



[pull a train](#)
[pull a trick \(on someone\)](#)
[pull a U-ie](#)
[pull a vanishing act](#)
[pull an all-nighter](#)
[pull caps](#)
[pull faces \(at someone\)](#)
[pull in the reins](#)
[pull my finger](#)
[pull \(one's\) chestnuts out of the fire](#)
[pull \(one's\) finger out](#)
[pull \(some/a few\) strings](#)
[pull \(some/a few\) wires](#)
[pull \(someone\) down a notch \(or two\)](#)
[pull \(someone\) down a peg \(or two\)](#)
[pull \(someone or something\) out of a hat](#)
[pull \(someone's\) bacon out of the fire](#)
[pull \(something\) out of \(one's\) ass](#)
[pull teeth](#)
[pull the other leg \(it's got bells on\)!](#)
[Pull the other one \(it's got bells on\)!](#)
[pull the rug \(out\) from under \(someone\)](#)
[pull the rug \(out\) from under \(someone's\) feet](#)
[pull the trigger \(on something\)](#)
[pull up a floor](#)
[pull up \(one's\) socks](#)
[pull up stumps](#)
[pull wires](#)
[pulled out of \(one's\) ass](#)
[pulling power](#)
[pumpkin head](#)
[punch above \(one's\) weight](#)
[punch below \(one's\) weight](#)
[Puppy Bowl](#)
[puppy love](#)
[purple patch](#)
[purple state](#)

[purse strings](#)
[pursuant to](#)
[push back the clock](#)
[push \(one's\) buttons](#)
[push \(one's\) luck](#)
[push \(one's\) weight around](#)
[pussy out](#)
[put a crimp in](#)
[put a dampener on \(something\)](#)
[put a damper on \(something\)](#)
[put a good face on](#)
[put a gun to \(someone's\) head](#)
[put a \(monkey\) wrench in\(to\) the works](#)
[put a price on \(someone's\) head](#)
[put a rope to the eye of a needle](#)
[put a stop to \(something\)](#)
[put a/the plug in the jug](#)
[put across](#)
[put affairs in order](#)
[put all \(one's\) eggs in one basket](#)
[put \(an animal\) down](#)
[put an end to \(something\)](#)
[put an idea in\(to\) \(someone's\) head](#)
[put ass on the line](#)
[put at ease](#)
[put at ease](#)
[put back the clock](#)
[put back up](#)
[put behind bars](#)
[put behind bars](#)
[put butt on the line](#)
[put clock back](#)
[put clock forward](#)
[put down \(an animal\)](#)
[put down for](#)
[put 'er there\(, pal\)](#)
[put food on the table](#)



[put genie back in the bottle](#)
[put hand to](#)
[put hands together](#)
[put hat in the ring](#)
[put head in the lion's mouth](#)
[put head in the wolf's mouth](#)
[put head on the block](#)
[put himself in someone else's place](#)
[put himself in someone else's shoes](#)
[put in force](#)
[put in her place](#)
[put in \(one's\) tuppence \(worth\)](#)
[put in \(one's\) two cents](#)
[put in \(one's\) two cents' worth](#)
[put in \(one's\) two pennies \(worth\)](#)
[put in \(one's\) two penn'orth](#)
[put in \(one's\) twopence \(worth\)](#)
[put in perspective](#)
[put in the hard yard](#)
[put in the picture](#)
[put into action](#)
[put it on a pedestal](#)
[put it on the back burner](#)
[put it on the front burner](#)
[put it on the long finger](#)
[put it right](#)
[put it straight](#)
[Put it there](#)
[put it through its paces](#)
[put it to rights](#)
[put John Hancock on](#)
[put life on the line](#)
[put lights out](#)
[put lipstick on a pig](#)
[put me at ease](#)
[put me behind bars](#)
[put me down for](#)



[put me on the griddle](#)
[put me on the hot seat](#)
[put me out of business](#)
[put me out of humor](#)
[put me out of sorts](#)
[put me right](#)
[put me straight](#)
[put me through my facings](#)
[put me through the hoop](#)
[put me through the mangle](#)
[put me through the wringer](#)
[put me to the sword](#)
[put me to work](#)
[put me under](#)
[put me under a microscope](#)
[put me under the cosh](#)
[put me under the microscope](#)
[put me under the pump](#)
[put me up on a pedestal](#)
[put mind to rest](#)
[put my affairs in order](#)
[put my ass on the line](#)
[put my back up](#)
[put my butt on the line](#)
[put my clock back](#)
[put my clock forward](#)
[put my hand to](#)
[put my hands together](#)
[put my hat in the ring](#)
[put my head in the lion's mouth](#)
[put my head in the wolf's mouth](#)
[put my head on the block](#)
[put my John Hancock on](#)
[put my life on the line](#)
[put my lights out](#)
[put my name in the hat](#)
[put my neck on the block](#)



put my neck on the line
put my oar in
put my pants on one leg at a time
put my shoulder to the wheel
put my thinking cap on
put my trousers on one leg at a time
put my two cents in
put my two cents' worth in
put myself across
put myself at ease
put myself in someone else's place
put myself in someone else's shoes
put no stock in (something)
put on a brave front
put on a pedestal
put on one side
put on (one's) dancing shoes
put on (one's) thinking cap
put on the acid
put on the back burner
put on the front burner
put on the long finger
put on the (old) feed bag
put (one) at (one's) ease
put (one) down for
put (one) on the griddle
put (one) on the hot seat
put one over on (one)
put one past (someone)
put one right
put one straight
put (one) through (one's) facings
put (one) through the wringer
put (one) to work
put (one) under
put (one's) affairs in order
put (one's) ass on the line



put (one's) butt on the line
put (one's) hand to (something)
put (one's) hands together (for someone or something)
put (one's) hat in(to) the ring
put (one's) head in the lion's mouth
put (one's) head in the wolf's mouth
put (one's) head on the block
put (one's) John Hancock on
put (one's) life on the line
put (one's) lights out
put (one's) neck on the block
put (one's) neck on the line
put (one's) oar in(to) (something)
put (one's) pants on one leg at a time (just like everybody else)
put (one's) shoulder to the wheel
put (one's) thinking cap on
put (one's) trousers on one leg at a time (just like everybody else)
put (one's) two cents in
put (one's) two cents' worth in
put (one's/someone's) back up
put (one's/someone's) mind to rest
put (one's/someone's) name in the hat
put (oneself) across
put (oneself) at (one's) ease
put (oneself) in (someone's) place
put (oneself) in (someone's) shoes
put our cat down
put our clock back
put our clock forward
put out a/the fire
put out fires
put out of business
put out the red carpet (for someone)
put out the welcome mat (for someone)
put (out) to sea
put someone at ease
put (someone) behind bars

[put \(someone\) in the picture](#)
[put \(someone or something\) out of business](#)
[put \(someone or something\) under a microscope](#)
[put \(someone or something\) under the microscope](#)
[put \(someone or something\) \(up\) on a pedestal](#)
[put \(someone\) out of humour](#)
[put \(someone\) out of sorts](#)
[put \(someone\) right](#)
[put \(someone\) straight](#)
[put \(someone\) through the hoop](#)
[put \(someone\) through the mangle](#)
[put \(someone\) to the sword](#)
[put \(someone\) under the cosh](#)
[put \(someone\) under the pump](#)
[put \(someone's\) teeth on edge](#)
[put \(something\) into action](#)
[put \(something\) in\(to\) perspective](#)
[put \(something\) on one side](#)
[put \(something\) on the back burner](#)
[put \(something\) on the front burner](#)
[put \(something\) on the long finger](#)
[put \(something\) right](#)
[put \(something\) straight](#)
[put \(something\) through its paces](#)
[put \(something\) to one side](#)
[put \(something\) to rights](#)
[put \(something\) to work](#)
[put stock in](#)
[put store by \(something or someone\)](#)
[put store in \(something or someone\)](#)
[put that right](#)
[put the acid on \(someone\)](#)
[put the animal down](#)
[put the bee on \(someone\)](#)
[put the bite on \(one\)](#)
[put the dampener on \(something\)](#)
[put the damper on \(something\)](#)

[put the genie back in the bottle](#)
[put the hammer down](#)
[put the plug in the just](#)
[put the screws to \(someone\)](#)
[put the touch on \(someone\)](#)
[put the whammy on](#)
[put the wind up \(someone\)](#)
[put the/\(one's\) clock\(s\) back](#)
[put the/\(one's\) clock\(s\) forward](#)
[put themselves across](#)
[put themselves at ease](#)
[put themselves in someone else's place](#)
[put themselves in someone else's shoes](#)
[put thinking cap on](#)
[put through facings](#)
[put through the hoop](#)
[put through the hoop](#)
[put through the mangle](#)
[put through the mangle](#)
[put through the wringer](#)
[put through the wringer](#)
[put to one side](#)
[put to rights](#)
[put to rights](#)
[put to sea](#)
[put to the blush](#)
[put to the proof](#)
[put to the sword](#)
[put to the sword](#)
[put to work](#)
[put to work](#)
[put trousers on one leg at a time](#)
[put two cents in](#)
[put two cents' worth in](#)
[put under](#)
[put under a microscope](#)
[put under the cosh](#)



[put under the microscope](#)
[put under the pump](#)
[put up a smoke screen](#)
[put-up job](#)
[put up on a pedestal](#)
[put you at ease](#)
[put you behind bars](#)
[put you down for](#)
[put you in the picture](#)
[put you on the griddle](#)
[put you on the hot seat](#)
[put you out of business](#)
[put you out of humor](#)
[put you out of sorts](#)
[put you right](#)
[put you straight](#)
[put you through the hoop](#)
[put you through the mangle](#)
[put you through the wringer](#)
[put you through your facings](#)
[put your affairs in order](#)
[put your ass on the line](#)
[put your back up](#)
[put your butt on the line](#)
[put your clock back](#)
[put your clock forward](#)
[put your hand to](#)
[put your hands together](#)
[put your hat in the ring](#)
[put your head in the lion's mouth](#)
[put your head in the wolf's mouth](#)
[put your head on the block](#)
[put your John Hancock on](#)
[put your life on the line](#)
[put your lights out](#)
[put your mind to rest](#)
[put your name in the hat](#)



put your neck on the block
put your neck on the line
put your oar in
put your pants on one leg at a time
put your shoulder to the wheel
put your thinking cap on
put your trousers on one leg at a time
put yourself across
put yourself at ease
put yourself in someone else's place
put yourself in someone else's shoes
(one) puts (one's) pants on one leg at a time
puts (one's) trousers on one leg at a time (just like everybody else)
pwn
Pyrrhic victory

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Q

[quake in \(one's\) boots](#)

[quake like a leaf](#)

[Quaker gun](#)

[the quality](#)

[quantum jump](#)

[quantum leap](#)

[\(a\) quarter of \(a given hour in time\)](#)

[quarter past \(a given hour in time\)](#)

[quarter-pounder](#)

[que sera sera](#)

[Queen Anne is dead](#)

[queen bee](#)

[Queen's weather](#)

[queer bashing](#)

[queer duck](#)

[queer fish](#)

[queer in the attic](#)

[quelle surprise](#)

[quench \(one's\) thirst at any dirty puddle](#)

[question mark](#)

[question mark over](#)

[a question of time](#)

[quibble about \(something\)](#)

[quibble over \(something\)](#)

[quiche-eater](#)

[quick as a bunny](#)

[quick as a flash](#)

[quick as lightning](#)

[a quick drop and a sudden stop](#)

[quick-fire](#)

[quick fix](#)

[quick one](#)

[quick study](#)

quicker than you can say Jack Robinson

quid pro quo

quiet as the grave

quit (something) cold turkey

quit the funny stuff

quit while the going is good

quote chapter and verse

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R

[the rabbit died](#)
[rabbit hole](#)
[rabble rouser](#)
[raccoon eye\(s\)](#)
[raccoons age](#)
[race against the clock](#)
[race against time](#)
[race out of the traps](#)
[rack and ruin](#)
[rack off](#)
[rag-chewing](#)
[rag the puck](#)
[rags-to-riches](#)
[ragtag and bobtail](#)
[rain-off](#)
[rained off](#)
[rained out](#)
[rainout](#)
[raise a red flag](#)
[raise an eyebrow](#)
[raise \(one's\) consciousness](#)
[raise \(one's\) hackles](#)
[raise \(one's\) hand](#)
[raise the alarm](#)
[raise the bar](#)
[raise the curtain \(on something\)](#)
[raise the specter of \(something\)](#)
[raise the white flag](#)
[raised by wolves](#)
[raised in the world](#)
[rake-off](#)
[rake over old coals](#)
[rake over the ashes](#)

[rake \(something\) together](#)
[random number](#)
[rang her bell](#)
[rap across the knuckles](#)
[rap on the knuckles](#)
[rap over the knuckles](#)
[rap sheet](#)
[rare as a hen's tooth](#)
[rare as rocking horse crap](#)
[rare as rocking horse poo](#)
[rare as rocking horse shit](#)
[rarely ever](#)
[rarer than hens' teeth](#)
[rat fink](#)
[rat race](#)
[rat run](#)
[rather you than me](#)
[rattle through \(something\)](#)
[raw deal](#)
[ray of light](#)
[ray of sunshine](#)
[razor-sharp](#)
[RBF](#)
[reach a pretty pass](#)
[reach for the moon](#)
[reach for the sky](#)
[reach for the stars](#)
[reach for the stars](#)
[read the fine print](#)
[read the small print](#)
[ready and willing](#)
[ready cash](#)
[ready for the knacker's yard](#)
[ready money](#)
[the real deal](#)
[a real dilly](#)
[a real dynamo](#)



[a \(real\) frog-choker](#)
[a \(real\) frog-strangler](#)
[a real howler](#)
[a real live one](#)
[real men don't eat quiche](#)
[real time](#)
[real time](#)
[a \(real\) toad-choker](#)
[a \(real\) toad-strangler](#)
[rearrange \(the\) deckchairs on the Titanic](#)
[reasonable person](#)
[rebound relationship](#)
[receive a sneck posset](#)
[receive \(one's\) just deserts](#)
[receive the fright of \(one's\) life](#)
[Received Pronunciation](#)
[reck \(one's\) own rede](#)
[reckless abandon](#)
[reckon without \(one's\) host](#)
[red as a beetroot](#)
[red cent](#)
[red dog](#)
[red-face test](#)
[red-faced](#)
[red flag](#)
[red-flag term](#)
[a red flag to a bull](#)
[red herring](#)
[red-letter day](#)
[red light](#)
[red man](#)
[red meat](#)
[red meat rhetoric](#)
[red mist](#)
[the red mist descends](#)
[a red rag to a bull](#)
[red sky at night, shepherd's delight](#)



[red sky in the morning, shepherd's warning](#)
[red state](#)
[red wine](#)
[redd up](#)
[redeem \(one\)self](#)
[redeye](#)
[reduce \(something\) to rubble](#)
[refrigerator mother](#)
[regular brick](#)
[reign of terror](#)
[reign supreme](#)
[remain in touch](#)
[remain to be seen](#)
[Renaissance man](#)
[rent boy](#)
[respice finem](#)
[rest on \(one's\) oars](#)
[rest \(squarely\) on \(someone's\) shoulders](#)
[resting bitch face](#)
[return to form](#)
[return to \(one's\) muttons](#)
[reveal \(one's\) \(true\) colors](#)
[reveal \(one's\) \(true\) stripes](#)
[revolving door](#)
[revolving door syndrome](#)
[rhyme off](#)
[rhyme or reason](#)
[rich seam](#)
[Richard Roe](#)
[rickle o' banes](#)
[rickroll](#)
[rid out](#)
[rid up](#)
[a riddle wrapped in an enigma](#)
[a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma](#)
[ride on a rail](#)
[ride \(on\) a wave of \(something\)](#)

[ride on \(one's\) coattails](#)
[ride \(on\) the coattails of \(someone\)](#)
[ride \(on\) the wave \(of something\)](#)
[ride \(one's\) hobby-horse](#)
[ride \(one's\) luck](#)
[ride or die](#)
[ride-or-die chick](#)
[ride roughshod over \(someone or something\)](#)
[ride shanks' mare](#)
[ride \(someone's\) ass](#)
[ride \(someone's\) back](#)
[ride \(someone's\) butt](#)
[ride tall in the/\(one's\) saddle](#)
[ride the pine](#)
[ride the rail\(s\)](#)
[ride with the punches](#)
[riffraff](#)
[rifle approach](#)
[a rift in the lute](#)
[rig out](#)
[right as a trivet](#)
[right as ninepence](#)
[right back at you](#)
[right back atcha](#)
[right foot foremost](#)
[the right hand doesn't know what the left hand is doing](#)
[right now](#)
[right off](#)
[right royal](#)
[right spot at the right time](#)
[right through like a dose of salts](#)
[right to life](#)
[right to work](#)
[right up her street](#)
[\(right\) up \(one's\) alley](#)
[\(right\) up there with \(someone or something\)](#)
[rim job](#)

[ring \(someone's\) bell](#)
[ringside seat](#)
[rip-off](#)
[rip-off merchant](#)
[rip-snorting mad](#)
[rip \(someone or something\) to shreds](#)
[ripe for the picking](#)
[ripen up](#)
[ripple effect](#)
[rise \(up\) in the world](#)
[a rising tide lifts all boats](#)
[rite of passage](#)
[rivet counter](#)
[rivet the eyes on](#)
[rn](#)
[road hog](#)
[a roaring success](#)
[roast snow in a furnace](#)
[rob the till](#)
[robber baron](#)
[rock hound](#)
[rock on](#)
[rock the house](#)
[rocket science](#)
[rocket up](#)
[rocking horse crap](#)
[rocking horse poo](#)
[rocking horse shit](#)
[rocking horse shit](#)
[roger that](#)
[a Roland for an Oliver](#)
[roll back the clock](#)
[roll back the years](#)
[roll in the hay](#)
[roll in wealth](#)
[roll \(one's\) eyes](#)
[roll out the red carpet \(for someone\)](#)



[roll out the welcome mat \(for someone\)](#)
[roll \(over\) in \(one's\) grave](#)
[roll the dice](#)
[roll with the punches](#)
[roller coaster](#)
[rolling in dough](#)
[rolling in it](#)
[rolling in money](#)
[romp home](#)
[romp in](#)
[romp to victory](#)
[roof over \(one's\) head](#)
[room for doubt](#)
[room-temperature IQ](#)
[root cause](#)
[rooting interest](#)
[rope of sand](#)
[the ropes](#)
[rose-colored](#)
[rose-colored glasses](#)
[rose-coloured spectacles](#)
[rose in the world](#)
[rose-tinted spectacles](#)
[Rosetta Stone](#)
[rotary dial](#)
[a rotten apple](#)
[\(a little/bit\) rough and ready](#)
[\(a little/bit\) rough around the edges](#)
[rough diamond](#)
[rough-hewn](#)
[a rough patch](#)
[a rough ride](#)
[rough sledding](#)
[rough sleeper](#)
[a rough time](#)
[a rough trot](#)
[round as Giotto's O](#)



[round of applause](#)
[a round peg in a square hole](#)
[round table](#)
[\(a\)round the bend](#)
[\(a\)round the clock](#)
[\(a\)round the corner](#)
[roundabouts and swings](#)
[a rousing send-off](#)
[roving eye](#)
[row back](#)
[rub salt in\(to\) the/\(one's\) wound\(s\)](#)
[rubber](#)
[rubber check](#)
[rubber check](#)
[rubber chicken dinner](#)
[rubber johnny](#)
[rubber jungle](#)
[rubber room](#)
[rubbish in, rubbish out](#)
[ruby slippers](#)
[rude awakening](#)
[rue the day \(that\) \(something\) happened](#)
[rue the day \(that something happened\)](#)
[ruffle a few feathers](#)
[ruffle \(one's\) feathers](#)
[ruffle some feathers](#)
[rule in](#)
[rule of thumb](#)
[rule OK](#)
[rule the school](#)
[rules are made to be broken](#)
[a rum do](#)
[a rum go](#)
[rumor campaign](#)
[rumor mill](#)
[rumour campaign](#)
[rumour mill](#)

[run a temperature](#)
[run a temperature](#)
[run about](#)
[run afoul of \(someone or something\)](#)
[run amok](#)
[run amuck](#)
[run around](#)
[run \(a\)round in circles](#)
[run down the clock](#)
[run for \(one's\) money](#)
[run for the hills](#)
[Run for the Roses](#)
[run foul of \(someone or something\)](#)
[run hot and cold](#)
[run of play](#)
[run off her feet](#)
[run off smell of an oily rag](#)
[run on empty](#)
[run on fumes](#)
[run on the smell of an oily rag](#)
[run \(one\) off \(one's\) feet](#)
[run \(one's\) own show](#)
[run out of town](#)
[run out the clock](#)
[run roughshod over \(someone or something\)](#)
[run the clock down](#)
[run the show](#)
[run wild](#)
[run with scissors](#)
[rung her bell](#)
[a running start](#)
[runs a temperature](#)
[runs a temperature](#)
[runs about](#)
[runs afoul](#)
[runs amock](#)
[runs amuck](#)

runs around
runs around in circles
runs down the clock
runs for the hills
a rush of blood
rush (someone) off his/her feet
rushed off her feet
Russian roulette

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S

[sacrifice \(something\) on the altar of a sad state \(of affairs\)](#)

[saddle tramp](#)

[safe bet](#)

[safe pair of hands](#)

[safe space](#)

[safety valve](#)

[sag off](#)

[SAHM](#)

[said good-bye to](#)

[said it all](#)

[said no one ever](#)

[said the actress to the pope](#)

[said uncle](#)

[sail against the wind](#)

[sail before the wind](#)

[salad days](#)

[salad years](#)

[salt in the/\(one's\) wound\(s\)](#)

[the salt of the earth](#)

[salty](#)

[salty dog](#)

[Sam Hill](#)

[same stripe](#)

[sanctuary city](#)

[sanctum sanctorum](#)

[sands are running out](#)

[a sandwich shy of a picnic](#)

[Santa's workshop](#)

[savage](#)

[save \(one's\) blushes](#)

[save \(one's\) own bacon](#)

[save \(one's\) own hide](#)



[save \(one's\) own neck](#)
[save \(one's\) own skin](#)
[saved the day](#)
[saving grace](#)
[saw wood](#)
[the sawdust circuit](#)
[the sawdust trail](#)
[say a few words](#)
[say again](#)
[say goodbye to \(something\)](#)
[say her name](#)
[say uncle](#)
[says it all](#)
[Scarborough warning](#)
[scarce as a hen's tooth](#)
[scarcely ever](#)
[scarcer than hens' teeth](#)
[scare \(someone\) silly](#)
[scare \(someone\) straight](#)
[scare story](#)
[scare the bejabbers out of \(someone\)](#)
[scare the bejabbers out of \(someone\)](#)
[scare the bejeebers out of \(someone\)](#)
[scare the bejesus out of \(someone\)](#)
[scare the crap out of \(someone\)](#)
[scare the life out of \(someone\)](#)
[scare the \(living\) daylights out of \(someone\)](#)
[scare the shit out of \(one\)](#)
[scaredy-cat](#)
[scarlet red](#)
[scarlet woman](#)
[a scholar and a gentleman](#)
[a scholar and a gentleman](#)
[the school of life](#)
[schoolboy error](#)
[scientia potentia est](#)
[the score](#)

score off (someone)
score (something) off (someone, something, or some place)
a score to settle
Scotch mist
scout about (for someone or something)
scout around (for someone or something)
Scout's honour
scrape (someone or something) together
scrape (someone or something) up
scrape (someone or something) up off (something)
scratch for (one)self
scratch (someone or something) together
scratch (someone or something) up
scratch that
scream loudest
scream (one's) head off
scream (something) from the rooftops
screw (one's) courage to the sticking place
screw (one)self up to concert pitch
screw the pooch
screw up (one's) courage to the sticking place
scruff of her neck
scuba diver
sea change
sea dog
seagull approach
seagull management
seagull manager
seal the deal
seat-of-the-pants
second banana
second bite of the apple
second bite of the cherry
second childhood
second-class citizen
second gear
Second place is the first loser.

[second string](#)
[see a man about a dog](#)
[see a man about a horse](#)
[see how the land lies](#)
[see how the wind blows](#)
[see how the wind is blowing](#)
[see in a bad light](#)
[see red](#)
[see \(someone's\) point](#)
[see the point in \(doing\) \(something\)](#)
[see the point \(of something\)](#)
[see \(the\) red mist](#)
[see which way the wind blows](#)
[see you next Tuesday](#)
[seek a knot in a bulrush](#)
[seismic shift](#)
[seize the moment](#)
[seize the moral high ground](#)
[self-care](#)
[self-made man](#)
[selfie](#)
[sell a wolf ticket](#)
[sell a woof ticket](#)
[sell-by date](#)
[sell in May](#)
[sell in May and go away](#)
[sell in May and stay away](#)
[sell \(one's\) birthright for a bowl of soup](#)
[sell \(one's\) birthright for a mess of pottage](#)
[sell \(one's\) body](#)
[sell sawdust to a lumber mill](#)
[sell \(something\) for a mess of pottage](#)
[sell wolf tickets](#)
[sell woof tickets](#)
[seller's market](#)
[send \(a\) mixed message\(s\)](#)
[send \(a\) mixed signal\(s\)](#)

[send a shiver down \(someone's\) spine](#)
[send a shiver up \(someone's\) spine](#)
[send a sow to Minerva](#)
[send owls to Athens](#)
[send shivers down \(one's\) spine](#)
[send shivers up \(someone's\) spine](#)
[send \(someone\) to an early grave](#)
[send the helve after the hatchet](#)
[a serpent in \(one's\) bosom](#)
[serpent in our bosom](#)
[serpent's tongue](#)
[serve a purpose](#)
[serve \(one\) right](#)
[serve \(one\) the same sauce](#)
[serve \(someone's\) purpose](#)
[serve the purpose](#)
[serve two masters](#)
[set a high/low bar](#)
[set a spell](#)
[set aback](#)
[set afire](#)
[set at odds](#)
[set at rest](#)
[set back the clock](#)
[set by the ears](#)
[set clock ahead](#)
[set clock back](#)
[set great store by \(something or someone\)](#)
[set in cement](#)
[set in cement](#)
[set in concrete](#)
[set in \(one's\) ways](#)
[set it straight](#)
[set it to rights](#)
[set no store by \(something or someone\)](#)
[set no store in \(something or someone\)](#)
[set \(one\) straight](#)

set (one) wise
set (one's) cap at (someone)
set (one's) cap for (someone)
set (one's) hand to
set (one's) heart at rest
set (one's) (own) house in order
set (one's) shoulder to the wheel
set (one's) teeth on edge
set (one's/someone's) back up
set (one's/someone's) mind to rest
set (oneself) up for a letdown
set pulses racing
set sail
set (someone) aback
set (someone) by the ears
set (someone or something) loose
set (someone or something) (up) on a pedestal
set someone's back up
set someone's cap at
set someone's cap for
set someone's mind to rest
set (someone's) pulse racing
set (something) at rest
set (something) in cement
set (something) in concrete
set something loose
set something on a pedestal
set (something) straight
set (something) to rights
set store by (something or someone)
set store in (something or someone)
set straight
set teeth on edge
set the bar (high/low)
set the heather alight
set the heather on fire
set the Thames alight

set the Thames on fire
set the world alight
set the world on fire
set the/(one's) clock(s) ahead
set the/(one's) clock(s) back
set their hand to
set their heart at rest
set their house in order
set their shoulder to the wheel
set them aback
set them by the ears
set them wise
set themselves up for a let-down
set to rights
set tongues (a-)wagging
set your back up
set your cap at
set your cap for
set your mind at rest
set your mind to rest
settle a score (with someone)
settle accounts
settle an old score (with someone)
settle on (something)
settle the score (with someone)
settle upon (something)
seven-day wonder
several bricks short of a (full) load
several cards short of a (full) deck
sewer rat
sex kitten
sex object
sex on a stick
sex on legs
the sex talk
sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll
sext

[sexual congress](#)
[sexual minority](#)
[sexual relations](#)
[sexual tension](#)
[shacked up](#)
[shade](#)
[shadow of \(one's\) former self](#)
[a shadow of \(one's\) former self](#)
[shady past](#)
[shaggy dog story](#)
[shake hands with the unemployed](#)
[shake in \(one's\) boots](#)
[shake in \(one's\) boots](#)
[shake in \(one's\) shoes](#)
[shake like a leaf](#)
[shake like an aspen leaf](#)
[shake on it](#)
[shake the pagoda tree](#)
[shaken up](#)
[sham Abraham](#)
[sham Abram](#)
[a shame](#)
[shank's mare](#)
[shank's nag](#)
[shank's pony](#)
[shark bait](#)
[shark baiter](#)
[sharp cookie](#)
[sharp practice](#)
[shed a tear](#)
[she'd better be going](#)
[she'd better get moving](#)
[she'd better get on her horse](#)
[she'd better keep quiet about it](#)
[she'd better keep still about it](#)
[shed \(some\) light on \(something\)](#)
[shed \(some\) light upon \(something\)](#)

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[shelf life](#)
[she'll be apples](#)
[she'll be right\(, mate\)](#)
[shell game](#)
[she'll rue the day](#)
[shepherd's delight](#)
[shepherd's warning](#)
[she's all in](#)
[she's apples](#)
[she's on](#)
[shift \(the\) deckchairs on the Titanic](#)
[shifty-looking](#)
[ship](#)
[shipper](#)
[ships in the night](#)
[ships that pass in the night](#)
[shirt-lifter](#)
[shirtless](#)
[shit a brick](#)
[shit-eating grin](#)
[shit \(one's\) pants](#)
[shit \(one\)self](#)
[the shit out of](#)
[shit stain](#)
[shit-stirrer](#)
[shit where you eat](#)
[shits a brick](#)
[shitshow](#)
[shitstorm](#)
[a shiver down \(one's\) spine](#)
[shiver me timbers](#)
[a shiver ran down \(one's/someone's\) spine](#)
[a shiver ran up \(one's/someone's\) spine](#)
[a shiver went down \(one's/someone's\) spine](#)
[a shiver went up \(one's/someone's\) spine](#)
[shoe \(one's\) mule](#)
[shoe the goose](#)

[shoestring budget](#)
[shoo-in](#)
[shook](#)
[shook hands with the unemployed](#)
[shook in her shoes](#)
[shook like an aspen leaf](#)
[shook on it](#)
[shook the pagoda tree](#)
[shoot for the stars](#)
[shoot off at the mouth](#)
[shoot off \(one's\) face](#)
[shoot \(one's\) cuffs](#)
[shoot \(someone\) a dirty look](#)
[shoot the messenger](#)
[shoot through like a Bondi tram](#)
[shoot through \(to somewhere\)](#)
[the short and the long of it](#)
[short-arse](#)
[a short fuse](#)
[short hairs](#)
[short haul](#)
[short leash](#)
[short of a length](#)
[short on looks](#)
[short run](#)
[short sharp shock](#)
[short-sheet](#)
[the short straw](#)
[short strokes](#)
[short strokes](#)
[short temper](#)
[shot](#)
[shot across the bow](#)
[a shot in the dark](#)
[a shot in the locker](#)
[shotgun approach](#)
[shotgun cottage](#)

[shotgun house](#)
[shotgun hut](#)
[shotgun marriage](#)
[shotgun shack](#)
[shotgun wedding](#)
[shoulder to cry on](#)
[shout \(one's\) head off](#)
[shout \(something\) from the rooftop\(s\)](#)
[shouting match](#)
[shove it/something up \(one's\) ass](#)
[shove over](#)
[shove \(something\)/it up your arse](#)
[show a/the white flag](#)
[show \(a/the\) white flag](#)
[show in bad light](#)
[show \(one's\) butt](#)
[show \(one's\) cards](#)
[show \(one's\) hand](#)
[show \(one's\) horns](#)
[show \(one's\) \(true\) colors](#)
[show \(one's\) \(true\) colours](#)
[show \(one's\) \(true\) stripes](#)
[show \(someone\) the back of \(one's\) hand](#)
[show \(someone\) what \(one's\) made of](#)
[show-stopper](#)
[show the cloven hoof](#)
[show the flag](#)
[shown the ropes](#)
[shrinking violet](#)
[shudder to think](#)
[shut down](#)
[a shut mouth catches no flies](#)
[shut \(one's\) eyes and think of England](#)
[shut the door in \(someone's\) face](#)
[shut your gob](#)
[shut your mouth](#)
[shut your pie hole](#)

[shut your trap](#)
[shut your yap](#)
[shy bladder](#)
[sick as a dog](#)
[sick as a parrot](#)
[sick in the head](#)
[sick list](#)
[sick list](#)
[the sick man of \(something or somewhere\)](#)
[sick note](#)
[a/one sick puppy](#)
[side boob](#)
[side effect](#)
[side issue](#)
[side wall](#)
[sigh of relief](#)
[a sight to behold](#)
[sign of the times](#)
[sign \(one's\) life away](#)
[significance level](#)
[significant other](#)
[silence means consent](#)
[silent as the dead](#)
[silent as the grave](#)
[silent partner](#)
[silk-stocking district](#)
[silky smooth](#)
[silly goose](#)
[silly money](#)
[silly season](#)
[silver bullet](#)
[silver foil](#)
[silver spoon](#)
[silver surfer](#)
[a silver tongue](#)
[silver tongue](#)
[simple English](#)

[simple English](#)
[sine qua non](#)
[sing from the same hymn sheet](#)
[sing from the same hymnbook](#)
[sing from the same songbook](#)
[sing from the same songsheet](#)
[sing in tribulation](#)
[sing like a canary](#)
[sing off the same hymn sheet](#)
[sing off the same hymnbook](#)
[sing off the same songbook](#)
[sing off the same songsheet](#)
[sing \(someone's or something's\) praises](#)
[sing soprano](#)
[sing the praises of \(someone or something\)](#)
[sing the same tune](#)
[sinking fast](#)
[sinking feeling](#)
[sinking ship](#)
[siphon the python](#)
[siren song](#)
[sisters before misters](#)
[sit a spell](#)
[sit at \(someone's\) feet](#)
[sit at the feet of \(someone\)](#)
[sit like piffy on a rock bun](#)
[sit like piffy on a rock cake](#)
[sit on it](#)
[sit tall in the/\(one's\) saddle](#)
[sit upon hot cockles](#)
[sitting duck](#)
[six and two threes](#)
[six in one, \(and\) half a dozen in the other](#)
[six of one, \(and\) half a dozen of the other](#)
[six ways from Sunday](#)
[six ways to Sunday](#)
[size queen](#)

SJW

skeleton at the feast

skeleton crew

skeleton in (the/one's) closet

skeleton in (the/one's) cupboard

skiddoo st.

the skids

skim the surface (of something)

skimp and save

skin an eel by the tail

skin in the game

skin in the game

skin the bear at once

skip a beat

skip a beat

skip town

skirt chaser

skittles party

skive off

skive (something)

skunk at a garden party

slack-jawed

slag (someone) (off)

slang off

slanging match

slap in the face

slap on the back

slap on the wrist

slash

slash fic

a slave to

slay

sledge-hammer argument

sleep a wink

sleep at the switch

sleep at the wheel

sleep like a baby



[sleep like a log](#)
[sleep like a top](#)
[sleep rough](#)
[sleep with the fishes](#)
[sleep with the fishes](#)
[sleeping at the switch](#)
[sleeping partner](#)
[sleeping policeman](#)
[sleepy head](#)
[sleeveless errand](#)
[slice of life](#)
[slice of the action](#)
[slice of the cake](#)
[slice of the pie](#)
[slide into \(one's\)/the DMs](#)
[slide off](#)
[slime ball](#)
[sling off at \(someone\)](#)
[slip beneath the/\(someone's\) radar](#)
[slip into something more comfortable](#)
[slip of the pen](#)
[slip of the tongue](#)
[slip one over on \(someone\)](#)
[slip through the cracks](#)
[slip under the/\(someone's\) radar](#)
[slippery slope](#)
[slop bowl](#)
[sloshed to the gills](#)
[slot \(someone or something\) in](#)
[slough of despond](#)
[slow as molasses](#)
[slow as molasses in January](#)
[slow but sure](#)
[slow march](#)
[slower than molasses](#)
[slower than molasses in January](#)
[slowly but surely](#)

[slowpoke](#)
[slug away \(at something\)](#)
[a sly dog](#)
[small arms](#)
[a small cog in a large machine](#)
[a small cog in a large wheel](#)
[small fortune](#)
[a small frog in a big pond](#)
[the small matter of \(something\)](#)
[small wonder](#)
[small wonder](#)
[smart aleck](#)
[smart-arse](#)
[smart-ass](#)
[smart bomb](#)
[smart cookie](#)
[smart mouth](#)
[smart-mouth \(someone\)](#)
[smarty pants](#)
[smash \(something\) to smithereens](#)
[smash the teapot](#)
[smashed to smithereens](#)
[the smell of an oily rag](#)
[smell of the lamp](#)
[the smell of the lamp](#)
[smell test](#)
[smoke pole](#)
[smoke the peace pipe \(with someone\)](#)
[smoking gun](#)
[smooth as a baby's bottom](#)
[smooth as silk](#)
[a snake in \(one's\) bosom](#)
[snake in the grass](#)
[snake oil salesman](#)
[snakes and ladders](#)
[snatch defeat from the jaws of victory](#)
[snatch \(someone\) from the jaws of death](#)

[snatch victory from the jaws of defeat](#)
[snatched from the jaws of death](#)
[sneaky Pete](#)
[sneck posset](#)
[sniff test](#)
[snipe hunt](#)
[snot-nosed](#)
[snow job](#)
[snow on the mountain](#)
[snow on the roof](#)
[snowball effect](#)
[a snowflake](#)
[snowman](#)
[snuff movie](#)
[snuggle bunny](#)
[so-called](#)
[so far as](#)
[so forth](#)
[so long as](#)
[so no pressure](#)
[so on](#)
[so on and so forth](#)
[so quiet you could hear a pin drop](#)
[so still you could hear a pin drop](#)
[so there](#)
[so what](#)
[soak \(one\) to the skin](#)
[soak \(someone or something\) through](#)
[soak \(someone\) to the bone](#)
[soaked through](#)
[soaked to the bone](#)
[soaking wet](#)
[soap plant](#)
[soapbox orator](#)
[soapy Sam](#)
[sob story](#)
[a sobering thought](#)

social climber
social justice warrior
social justice warrior
the social ladder
socialized medicine
sod all
soft fire makes sweet malt
soft life
soft mick
soft power
soft sawder
soft shoe
softly-softly
softly, softly approach
softly, softly, catchee monkey
soil (one's) hands
soldier of fortune
solitary wasp
some kind of
some measure
some people have all the luck
some people!
some pumpkins
some punkins
(some score) from the East German judge
somebody up there is looking out for me
somebody up there loves me
somebody's heart's desire
somebody's strong suit
someone after my own
(someone had) better keep quiet about it
(someone had) better keep still about it
someone puts someone's pants on one leg at a time
someone puts someone's trousers on one leg at a time
someone up there is looking out for me
someone up there loves me
someone will rue the day

[someone's better half](#)
[someone's other half](#)
[someone's salad days](#)
[someone's stripes](#)
[someone's true colours](#)
[something awful](#)
[\(something\) be damned](#)
[something to do with](#)
[\(something\) will get \(someone\) nowhere](#)
[\(something\) won't get \(someone\) anywhere](#)
[son of a gun](#)
[son of Belial](#)
[son of thunder](#)
[song and dance](#)
[soon forgotten](#)
[a sop to Cerberus](#)
[a sore loser](#)
[sore point](#)
[sore spot](#)
[a sorry state](#)
[a sorry state \(of affairs\)](#)
[sought a knot in a bulrush](#)
[the soul of discretion](#)
[sound as a barrel](#)
[sound the alarm](#)
[sounding board](#)
[sour cherry](#)
[sour note](#)
[sour stomach](#)
[sow a/the seed of doubt \(in someone's mind\)](#)
[sow dragon's teeth](#)
[space cadet](#)
[spaghetti western](#)
[Spanish flag](#)
[spank the monkey](#)
[spare at the spigot and spill at the bung](#)
[spare \(someone's\) blushes](#)

[spare tire](#)
[spare tyre](#)
[spark plug](#)
[spark spread](#)
[spat in the wind](#)
[spat out the dummy](#)
[speak a mile a minute](#)
[speak by the card](#)
[speak daggers](#)
[speak for \(one\)self](#)
[speak in circles](#)
[speak of the devil](#)
[speak of the devil, and he appears](#)
[speak of the devil, and he is sure to appear](#)
[speak of the devil, and he shall appear](#)
[speak of the devil, and he will appear](#)
[speak out of both sides of \(one's\) mouth](#)
[speak out of turn](#)
[speak softly and carry a big stick](#)
[speak well for](#)
[spear carrier](#)
[special delivery](#)
[special measures](#)
[special needs](#)
[\(special\) snowflake](#)
[spectator sport](#)
[speech is silver, but silence is golden](#)
[speech is silver, silence is gold](#)
[speech is silver, silence is golden](#)
[speed freak](#)
[speedhead](#)
[Speedy Gonzales](#)
[spend like a sailor \(on \(shore\) leave\)](#)
[spend money like a drunken sailor](#)
[spick and span](#)
[spill \(one's\) seed](#)
[spin doctor](#)

[spine-tingling](#)
[the spirit of the law](#)
[spit feathers](#)
[spit in\(to\) the wind](#)
[spit \(out\) the dummy](#)
[spitstick](#)
[spitting distance](#)
[the spitting image of \(someone\)](#)
[spitting in the wind](#)
[splice the mainbrace](#)
[Spock ears](#)
[spoiled for choice](#)
[spoilt for choice](#)
[spoken out of turn](#)
[spoken word](#)
[spoon-feed \(someone\)](#)
[a spoonful of sugar helps the medicine go down](#)
[sporting blood](#)
[sporting chance](#)
[spot check](#)
[spot on](#)
[spot on the mark](#)
[spread far and wide](#)
[spread it on thick](#)
[spring fever](#)
[a spring in \(one's\) step](#)
[spring to mind](#)
[spring up like mushrooms](#)
[springes to catch woodcocks](#)
[spur-of-the-moment](#)
[squad](#)
[squad goals](#)
[square meal](#)
[square one](#)
[square peg](#)
[a square peg in a round hole](#)
[square rod](#)

[squash \(someone or something\) \(in\) like sardines](#)
[squashed \(in\) like sardines](#)
[the squeaking wheel gets the grease](#)
[the squeaky wheel gets the oil](#)
[squint like a bag of nails](#)
[a stab in the back](#)
[a stab in the dark](#)
[stack the cards \(against someone or something\)](#)
[stack the deck \(against\) \(someone or something\)](#)
[stack Z's](#)
[stag night](#)
[stag party](#)
[stage-door Johnny](#)
[staircase wit](#)
[the stake](#)
[stalking horse](#)
[stand behind \(someone or something\)](#)
[stand by \(one's\) guns](#)
[stand fast](#)
[stand firm](#)
[stand from under](#)
[stand \(in\) back of \(someone or something\)](#)
[stand in \(one's\) own light](#)
[stand in \(someone's\) shoes](#)
[stand in the gap](#)
[stand on \(one's/its\) own](#)
[stand on the shoulders of giants](#)
[stand still for \(something\)](#)
[stand stock still](#)
[stand the sight of \(someone or something\)](#)
[stand the test of time](#)
[standard-bearer](#)
[standard fare](#)
[standing on \(one's\) head](#)
[Standing Rock](#)
[Starbs](#)
[stare \(something/someone\) in the face](#)

[start from where you are](#)
[start \(off\) with a clean slate](#)
[start over with a clean slate](#)
[start the ball rolling](#)
[start tongues \(a-\)wagging](#)
[starting price](#)
[starvin' Marvin](#)
[state of affairs](#)
[stay at home](#)
[stay-at-home mom](#)
[stay hungry](#)
[stay in touch](#)
[stay the course](#)
[stay the distance](#)
[stay woke](#)
[steady as she goes](#)
[steady hand on the tiller](#)
[steady the ship](#)
[steal a march on \(someone or something\)](#)
[steal a march over \(someone or something\)](#)
[steal a march upon \(someone or something\)](#)
[steal the march on \(someone or something\)](#)
[steal the march over \(someone or something\)](#)
[steal the march upon \(someone or something\)](#)
[stealthing](#)
[steely-eyed](#)
[steely-nerved](#)
[step by step](#)
[a step in the right direction](#)
[step into dead men's shoes](#)
[step into \(someone's\) shoes](#)
[step on \(someone's\) toes](#)
[step up \(one's\) game](#)
[a stepping stone](#)
[stick a fork in \(me/it/something\)](#)
[stick by \(one's\) guns](#)
[stick in \(one's\) two penn'orth](#)

[stick in the mud](#)
[stick it to the man](#)
[stick it/\(something\) up your arse!](#)
[stick it/\(something\) up your ass!](#)
[stick \(one's\) nose in\(to\) \(something\)](#)
[stick \(one's\) oar in\(to\) \(something\)](#)
[stick \(one's\) spoon in the wall](#)
[stick to beat \(someone or something\) with](#)
[stick up \(one's\) ass](#)
[sticking-place](#)
[sticking point](#)
[sticks and stones](#)
[a sticky situation](#)
[a sticky wicket](#)
[a stiff upper lip](#)
[still in the game](#)
[sting in the tail](#)
[the stink eye](#)
[stir \(one's\) stumps](#)
[stir shit](#)
[a stitch in time \(saves nine\)](#)
[stock phrase](#)
[stole a march on](#)
[stole a march over](#)
[stole a march upon](#)
[stole the march on](#)
[stole the march over](#)
[stole the march upon](#)
[stomping ground](#)
[stone's throw](#)
[stooge](#)
[stool pigeon](#)
[stoop labor](#)
[stoop labour](#)
[stoop to conquer](#)
[stop and smell the roses](#)
[stop dead](#)

[stop press](#)
[stop \(someone\) dead](#)
[stop the lights](#)
[stop-watch critic](#)
[a stopped clock is right twice a day](#)
[storm clouds](#)
[a storm in a teacup](#)
[a storm in a teakettle](#)
[a storm in a teapot](#)
[storm off](#)
[storm out of the blocks](#)
[storm out of the traps](#)
[storming mad](#)
[stormy petrel](#)
[stovepipe hat](#)
[straight arrow](#)
[straight away](#)
[\(straight\) from central casting](#)
[straight off](#)
[\(straight\) out of central casting](#)
[straight out of the chute](#)
[straight shooter](#)
[strain a point](#)
[strain at the leash](#)
[strange bird](#)
[strange duck](#)
[strap on a pair](#)
[strap on the \(old\) feed bag](#)
[strapped for cash](#)
[straw in the wind](#)
[straw poll](#)
[the straw that breaks the donkey's back](#)
[the straw that broke the donkey's back](#)
[straw that stirs the drink](#)
[straw vote](#)
[streaming service](#)
[street appeal](#)

[stretch \(one's\) legs according to the coverlet](#)
[stretch the rules](#)
[strike a sour note](#)
[strike oil](#)
[strike \(one's\) flag](#)
[strike pay dirt](#)
[strike sail](#)
[strike \(someone\) dumb](#)
[strike through](#)
[strike while the iron is hot](#)
[strike whilst the iron is hot](#)
[striking distance](#)
[string to \(one's\) bow](#)
[strings attached](#)
[strings attached](#)
[stripes](#)
[stroke of business](#)
[stroke of fortune](#)
[stroke of luck](#)
[stroke of work](#)
[stroke of work](#)
[stroll down memory lane](#)
[strong point](#)
[strong stomach](#)
[strong suit](#)
[struck dumb](#)
[stuck his nose in](#)
[stuck his oar in](#)
[stuck his spoon in the wall](#)
[stuck in a time warp](#)
[stuck in his two penn'orth](#)
[stuck it to the man](#)
[stud muffin](#)
[stuffed like a turkey](#)
[stuffed shirt](#)
[stuffed to the gills](#)
[stumble at a straw](#)

[stumbling block](#)
[stupid is as stupid does](#)
[sub rosa](#)
[sub \(sandwich\)](#)
[submarine \(sandwich\)](#)
[success depends on your backbone, not your wishbone](#)
[success has many fathers, failure is an orphan](#)
[suck a big one](#)
[suck a egg](#)
[suck a lemon](#)
[suck ass](#)
[suck balls](#)
[suck cock](#)
[suck donkey balls](#)
[suck it](#)
[suck it up](#)
[suck the big one](#)
[suck the kumara](#)
[a \(sudden\) rush of blood \(to the head\)](#)
[suffer the consequences](#)
[sugar-coat the pill](#)
[sugar pill](#)
[sugar the pill](#)
[sum of its parts](#)
[summer and winter](#)
[sun worshipper](#)
[sup with Sir Thomas Gresham](#)
[superfood](#)
[superior orders](#)
[sure as a gun](#)
[sure as death and taxes](#)
[sure as shooting](#)
[sure as the wind blows](#)
[sure bet](#)
[surprise, surprise](#)
[survive the test of time](#)
[swaddling clothes](#)

[swag](#)
[swagger](#)
[swallow the anchor](#)
[swam with the fishes](#)
[swap horses in midstream](#)
[swear a blue streak](#)
[swear like a sailor](#)
[swear like a trooper](#)
[swear on a stack of Bibles](#)
[swear on \(one's\) mother's grave](#)
[sweat equity](#)
[the sweat of \(one's\) brow](#)
[sweep \(something\) under the mat](#)
[sweet cherry](#)
[sweet deal](#)
[sweet fuck all](#)
[the sweet hereafter](#)
[sweet Jesus!](#)
[sweet Mary, mother of God](#)
[sweet tooth](#)
[sweet young thing](#)
[sweeten the pill](#)
[swept off her feet](#)
[swim against the stream](#)
[swim upstream](#)
[swim with sharks](#)
[swim with the current](#)
[swim with the stream](#)
[swim with the tide](#)
[swing for the fences](#)
[swing state](#)
[swings and roundabouts](#)
[swipe left](#)
[swipe right](#)
[Swiss bank account](#)
[sword-and-sandal](#)
[sword and sorcery](#)

[a sword of Damocles hangs over \(one's\) head](#)

[swore a blue streak](#)

[swore like a sailor](#)

[swore like a trooper](#)

[swore on a stack of bibles](#)

[swore on her mother's grave](#)

[sworn enemy](#)

[syphon the python](#)

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T

[table scrap](#)

[table talk](#)

[the tables are turned](#)

[tag and rag](#)

[tag team](#)

[take 10](#)

[take 5](#)

[take a bawling out](#)

[take a bead on \(someone or something\)](#)

[take a beating](#)

[take a bite of the reality sandwich](#)

[take a breath](#)

[take a breather](#)

[take a bullet](#)

[take a chance](#)

[take a crap](#)

[take a dive](#)

[take a drag \(on something\)](#)

[take a drubbing](#)

[take a dump](#)

[take a fall](#)

[take a fancy to \(someone or something\)](#)

[take a fit](#)

[take a gamble](#)

[take a hammering](#)

[take a hint](#)

[take a leaf from \(someone's\) book](#)

[take a leaf out of \(one's\) book](#)

[take a licking and keep on ticking](#)

[take a licking but keep on ticking](#)

[take a liking to \(someone or something\)](#)

[take a load off \(one's feet\)](#)

[take a load off \(one's\) mind](#)

[take a long walk off a short pier](#)
[take a long walk on a short pier](#)
[take \(a lot of\) stick \(from someone\)](#)
[take a lot off \(someone's\) mind](#)
[take a meeting](#)
[take a message to Garcia](#)
[take a number](#)
[take a page from \(someone's\) book](#)
[take a page out of \(someone's\) book](#)
[take a punishing](#)
[take a rain check](#)
[take a ride to Tyburn](#)
[take a risk](#)
[take a run at \(someone\)](#)
[take a run at \(something\)](#)
[take a seat](#)
[take a shellacking](#)
[take a shine to \(one\)](#)
[take a shit](#)
[take a shot in the dark](#)
[take a spin \(to some place\)](#)
[take a stab at \(doing\) something](#)
[take a stab in the dark](#)
[take a straw poll](#)
[take a stroll down memory lane](#)
[take a telling-off](#)
[take a trip down memory lane](#)
[take a tumble](#)
[take a walk down memory lane](#)
[take a walk on the wild side](#)
[take a wife](#)
[take a/the bullet \(for someone\)](#)
[take aback](#)
[take an axe to](#)
[take an eye for an eye](#)
[take at face value](#)
[take ball and go home](#)

take by surprise
take care of the pence, and the pounds will take care of themselves
take care of the pennies, and the pounds will look after themselves
take care of the pennies, and the pounds will take care of themselves
take chances
take cherry
take cold
take comfort in (something)
take cum grano salis
take eggs for money
take eye off the ball
take fire
take five
take for a fool
take for a spin
take for an idiot
take for gospel
take guard
take her place
take ill
take in the wrong way
take in tow
take in water
take it as read
take it in the neck
take it lightly
take it off the table
take it out of context
take it outside
take it sitting down
take it the wrong way
take it up the ass
take no notice of (something or someone)
take no stock in (something)
take offence (at something)
take offense (at) (something)
(someone's) take on (something)

[take \(one\) aback](#)
[take \(one\) by surprise](#)
[take \(one\) in tow](#)
[take \(one\) to the cleaners](#)
[take \(one's\) ball and go home](#)
[take \(one's\) eye off the ball](#)
[take out the trash](#)
[take risks](#)
[take seats](#)
[take sick](#)
[take silk](#)
[take somebody to the cleaners](#)
[take \(someone\) for a fool](#)
[take \(someone\) for an idiot](#)
[take \(someone or something\) at face value](#)
[take \(someone's\) cherry](#)
[take \(someone's or something's\) place](#)
[take something as read](#)
[take \(something\) for a spin](#)
[take \(something\) for gospel](#)
[take \(something\) in the wrong way](#)
[take \(something\) in tow](#)
[take \(something\) lightly](#)
[take \(something\) off the table](#)
[take \(something\) out of context](#)
[take \(something\) sitting down](#)
[take \(something\) the wrong way](#)
[take soundings](#)
[take stick](#)
[take strolls down memory lane](#)
[take ten](#)
[take the ball before the bound](#)
[take the bark off](#)
[take the bear by the tooth](#)
[take the biscuit](#)
[take the Browns to the Super Bowl](#)
[take the bull by its horns](#)

[take the bull by the horns](#)
[take the bullet](#)
[take the cake](#)
[take the cash and let the credit go](#)
[take the fifth \(amendment\)](#)
[take the game to](#)
[take the gilt off the gingerbread](#)
[take the high ground](#)
[take the high road](#)
[take the hint](#)
[take the lead](#)
[take the liberty of \(doing something\)](#)
[take the liberty to do \(something\)](#)
[take the low road](#)
[take the Michael \(out of someone or something\)](#)
[take the mike \(out of someone or something\)](#)
[take the moral high ground](#)
[take the offensive](#)
[take the piss \(out of\) \(someone or something\)](#)
[take the place of \(someone or something\)](#)
[take the rein\(s\)](#)
[take the shadow for the substance](#)
[take the teeth out of](#)
[take the veil](#)
[take the weight off \(one's\) feet](#)
[take the weight off \(one's\) legs](#)
[take the wheel](#)
[take the wrong way](#)
[take things out of context](#)
[take this in the wrong way](#)
[take this lightly](#)
[take time by the forelock](#)
[take to the cleaners](#)
[take to the hills](#)
[take to the hustings](#)
[take to the stump](#)
[take to the tall timber](#)

[take to wife](#)
[take trips down memory lane](#)
[take up the gauntlet](#)
[take up the hatchet](#)
[take us aback](#)
[take us for a fool](#)
[take us for an idiot](#)
[take us in tow](#)
[take vows](#)
[take walks down memory lane](#)
[take your ball and go home](#)
[take your cherry](#)
[take your eye off the ball](#)
[take your place](#)
[taken aback](#)
[talent management](#)
[talk a mile a minute](#)
[talk like an apothecary](#)
[talk of the devil](#)
[talk of the devil, and he is bound to appear](#)
[talk of the devil, and he is sure to appear](#)
[talk of the devil, and he shall appear](#)
[talk of the devil, and he will appear](#)
[the talk of the town](#)
[talk out of both sides of \(one's\) mouth](#)
[talk out of \(one's\) arse](#)
[talk out \(of\) \(one's\) ass](#)
[talk out of \(one's\) hat](#)
[talk out of turn](#)
[talk rot](#)
[talk some sense into \(one\)](#)
[talk some sense into \(someone's\) head](#)
[talk through \(one's\) arse](#)
[talk through \(one's\) ass](#)
[talk through \(one's\) hat](#)
[talk through the back of \(one's\) neck](#)
[talk to the hand](#)

[talk twenty to the dozen](#)
[tall cotton](#)
[tall drink](#)
[a tall drink of water](#)
[tall in the saddle](#)
[tall story](#)
[tall tale](#)
[tangled web](#)
[tanked up](#)
[TANSTAAFL](#)
[tap the admiral](#)
[tar and feather](#)
[Target run](#)
[a taste of \(one's\) own medicine](#)
[TBT](#)
[teach a man to fish](#)
[teach \(one's\) grandmother to suck eggs](#)
[tear a strip off \(someone\)](#)
[tear someone off a strip](#)
[tear up the pea patch](#)
[teensy-weensie](#)
[teeny-weenie](#)
[teeny-weeny](#)
[teeter on the brink of \(something\)](#)
[teeter on the edge of \(something\)](#)
[telephone tag](#)
[tell a \(little\) white lie](#)
[tell fortunes](#)
[tell it to Sweeney](#)
[tell it to the marines](#)
[tell \(one\) where to shove it](#)
[tell \(someone\) a thing or two \(about someone or something\)](#)
[tell \(someone\) what's what](#)
[tell \(someone's\) fortune](#)
[tell the truth](#)
[tell you the truth](#)
[temper tantrum](#)

[a tempest in a teacup](#)
[a tempest in a teakettle](#)
[a tempest in a teapot](#)
[tempus fugit](#)
[ten a penny](#)
[ten to the dozen](#)
[tentpole cinema](#)
[tentpole film](#)
[tentpole movie](#)
[TEOTWAWKI](#)
[the terrible twos](#)
[territorial pissing](#)
[the terrorists will have won](#)
[test bed](#)
[test of time](#)
[tête à tête](#)
[TGIT](#)
[than the average bear](#)
[than the sum of its parts](#)
[thank you captain obvious](#)
[thankful for small mercies](#)
[thanks for nothing!](#)
[thanks for small blessings](#)
[thanks for small mercies](#)
[that a boy](#)
[that a gal](#)
[that a girl](#)
[that charge](#)
[that figures](#)
[that is just me](#)
[that is something](#)
[that is the honest truth](#)
[that is the way the cookie crumbles](#)
[that is the way the mop flops](#)
[that is what she said](#)
[that lucky devil](#)
[that old fart](#)



that old saw
that which doesn't kill you makes you stronger
that will do
that will never do!
that works for me!
that/(one's) time of the month
Thatcher's children
(that's a) likely story
that's a turn-up for the book(s)
that's all
that's another matter
that's another story
that's another thing
that's how the cookie crumbles
that's how the mop flops
that's it
that's my boy
that's my girl!
That's putting it mildly
that's quite something
that's (someone or something) for you
that's the boy
that's the breaks
that's the gal
that's the girl
that's the honest truth
(that's) the nature of the beast
that's the pits
that's the way life is
that's the way the cookie crumbles
that's the way the mop flops
that's what she said
that's what's up
(the good) Lord willing and the creek don't rise
the/ last breath
them's the breaks
there and back



there are many ways to skin a cat
there are other (good) fish in the sea
there are other pebbles on the beach
there are plenty more pebbles on the beach
there are plenty of (other) pebbles on the beach
there for everyone to see
there is (a) method in (one's) madness
there is (a) method to (one's) madness
there is always room at the top
there is an exception to every rule
there is no harm in (someone's) doing (something)
there is no use crying over spilt milk
there is reason in the roasting of eggs
there is truth in wine
there we go
there will be the devil to pay
there you are
there you go
there you have it
there's a sucker born every minute
there's a turn-up for the book(s)
(there's) no comparison
there's no I in team
(there's) no point crying over spilt milk
there's none so deaf as those that will not hear
there's nowt so queer as folk
there's one for (record) the book(s)
they that live longest see most
they'd better be going
they'd better get moving
they'd better get on their horse
they'd better keep quiet about it
they'd better keep still about it
they'll rue the day
they're only after one thing
thick as a brick
thick as a shit

[thick as a short plank](#)
[thick as short planks](#)
[thick of things](#)
[thick skin](#)
[thick-skulled](#)
[thief in the night](#)
[thief in the night](#)
[thigh-slapper](#)
[thin air](#)
[thin as a rail](#)
[thin as a rake](#)
[thin as a stick](#)
[a thin line](#)
[thin on the ground](#)
[thin on top](#)
[thin section](#)
[a thing of beauty is a joy forever](#)
[the thing of it is](#)
[thing of the past](#)
[things could be better](#)
[things could be worse](#)
[things couldn't be better](#)
[things that go bump in the night](#)
[think aloud](#)
[think of England](#)
[think of England](#)
[think of the children](#)
[think \(one\) hung the moon](#)
[think \(one's\) shit doesn't stink](#)
[think \(one's\) shit don't stink](#)
[think out loud](#)
[think \(someone\) hung the moon and the stars](#)
[think tank](#)
[think the sun shines out \(someone's\) backside](#)
[third person](#)
[third string](#)
[third time lucky](#)

[third time pays for all](#)
[third time's a charm](#)
[third wheel](#)
[thirdhand](#)
[this and that](#)
[this charge](#)
[this instance](#)
[this side of the black stump](#)
[this snipe hunt](#)
[this too shall pass \(away\)](#)
[this \(very\) minute](#)
[this, that, and the other](#)
[thorn in \(one's\) side](#)
[thorn in \(someone's\) side](#)
[thorn in the flesh](#)
[those are the breaks](#)
[those that have, get more](#)
[Those who can, do. Those who can't, teach.](#)
[those who can't do, teach](#)
[those who have, get more](#)
[those who live by the sword, die by the sword](#)
[thread and thrum](#)
[thread the needle](#)
[three-dimensionality](#)
[three-martini lunch](#)
[three on a match](#)
[three-on-the-tree](#)
[three-ring circus](#)
[three score and ten](#)
[three sheets to the wind](#)
[three skips of a louse](#)
[threenager](#)
[thrill killer](#)
[thrilled to bits](#)
[thrilled to death](#)
[thrilled to pieces](#)
[through the back door](#)

through the grapevine
a throw
throw a bone
throw a bone to (someone)
throw a googly
throw a scare into (someone)
throw a sickie
throw a spanner in(to) the works
throw a (temper) tantrum
throw a tub to the whale
throw a wobbler
throw a wobbly
throw an eye on (something)
throw an eye over (something)
throw away the key
throw caution to the wind(s)
throw chunks
throw discretion to the wind(s)
throw enough mud at the wall, some of it will stick
throw money away
throw (one) a bone
throw (one) off the scent
throw (one) off the track
throw (one's) bonnet over the windmill
throw (one's) cap over the windmill
throw (one's) hat over the windmill
throw (one's) toys out of the pram
throw (one's) weight about
throw (one's) weight around
throw (one's/someone's) name in the hat
throw shade
throw smoke
throw (some) light on (something)
throw (some) light upon (something)
throw (some) shapes
throw (someone) a googly
throw (someone) off the trail

[throw \(someone\) under the bus](#)
[throw \(something\) into question](#)
[throw straws against the wind](#)
[throwback Thursday](#)
[thrown a scare into](#)
[thrown a sickie](#)
[thrown a wobbler](#)
[thrown a wobbly](#)
[thrown caution to the wind](#)
[thrown chunks](#)
[thrown discretion to the wind](#)
[thrown off balance](#)
[thrown off the scent](#)
[thrown off the track](#)
[thrown off the trail](#)
[thrown our toys out of the pram](#)
[thrown our weight about](#)
[thumb on the scale](#)
[thumbnail sketch](#)
[thus and so](#)
[thus and such](#)
[thus and thus](#)
[tick all the \(right\) boxes](#)
[tick over](#)
[a \(ticking\) time bomb](#)
[tickle \(someone's\) funny bone](#)
[tickle the dragon's tail](#)
[tickled pink](#)
[tickled to death](#)
[tie on the \(old\) feed bag](#)
[tie \(one\) \(up\) in knots](#)
[tie \(oneself\) in\(to\) knots](#)
[tie \(oneself\) \(up\) in knots](#)
[tie \(someone\) in\(to\) knots](#)
[tie up \(some/a few\) loose ends](#)
[tied to \(someone's\) apron strings](#)
[tiger team](#)

[tight arse](#)
[tight as the bark on a tree](#)
[tight ass](#)
[a tight corner](#)
[tight-lipped](#)
[tight-lipped](#)
[a tight spot](#)
[tighten the purse strings](#)
[tighten the reins](#)
[till all hours \(of the day and night\)](#)
[till death do us part](#)
[till death us do part](#)
[till doomsday](#)
[till \(one\) \(is\) blue in the face](#)
[till/until the bitter end](#)
[tilt the balance](#)
[tilt the scale\(s\)](#)
[time and material](#)
[time and tide tarry for no man](#)
[time bomb](#)
[time burglar](#)
[time heals all wounds](#)
[time immemorial](#)
[time is of the essence](#)
[the time of the month](#)
[time out of mind](#)
[timing is everything](#)
[tin ear](#)
[a tin god](#)
[Tinker to Evers to Chance](#)
[TINSTAAFL](#)
[a tip of the hat](#)
[tip \(one's\) hat](#)
[tipping down](#)
[tipping \(it\) down](#)
[tiptoe around \(someone or something\)](#)
[tire kicker](#)

tired and emotional
tired and emotional
tired to death of (something)
tissue of lies
tits up
TL;DR
to a certain degree
to a certain extent
to a fare-thee-well
to a nicety
to a turn
to all appearances
to an extent
to barely make it
to barely make it on time
to be honest
to be named later
to bomb
to cap it all off
to coin a phrase
to do with
to heel
to hell in a handbasket
to hell with (someone or something)
to little avail
to make matters worse
to no avail
to (one's) heart's desire
to (one's) knowledge
to rights
to some degree
to some extent
to tell (you) the truth
to that end
to the effect that
to the end of (one's) days
to the ends of the Earth

[to the ends of the world](#)
[to the full](#)
[to the nines](#)
[to the purpose](#)
[to the quick](#)
[to the teeth](#)
[to the victor belong the spoils](#)
[to the victor go the spoils](#)
[to thine own self be true](#)
[to this end](#)
[to top it all off](#)
[a toad choker](#)
[a toad strangler](#)
[the toast of \(the town\)](#)
[toe-to-toe](#)
[toes up](#)
[toilet mouth](#)
[toke up](#)
[toll the death knell](#)
[Tom, Dick, and Harry](#)
[Tom, Dick, or Harry](#)
[tomato can](#)
[tomato juice](#)
[tomayto, tomahto](#)
[Tommy Atkins](#)
[tongue-in-cheek](#)
[tongue in cheek](#)
[tongue-lashing](#)
[tonsil hockey](#)
[tonsil tennis](#)
[too clever by half](#)
[too close for comfort](#)
[too far north](#)
[too good to be true](#)
[too hot to handle](#)
[too hot to hold \(someone\)](#)
[too long; didn't read](#)



[too many balls in the air](#)
[too many chefs in the kitchen](#)
[too many cooks](#)
[too many cooks in the kitchen](#)
[too many cooks spoil the soup](#)
[toot \(one's\) own horn](#)
[toot \(one's\) own trumpet](#)
[tooth and nail](#)
[a tooth for a tooth](#)
[top billing](#)
[top edge](#)
[top hand](#)
[top hat](#)
[top it \(all\) off](#)
[top of mind](#)
[top of the morning \(to you\)](#)
[top \(one\)self](#)
[top-shelf](#)
[tore a strip off](#)
[tore her off a strip](#)
[tore up the pea patch](#)
[torpedo juice](#)
[torque \(someone\) off](#)
[torqued off](#)
[#tortitude](#)
[toss a bone to \(someone\)](#)
[toss \(one's\) hat in\(to\) the ring](#)
[toss \(one's/someone's\) name in the hat](#)
[toss \(someone\) a bone](#)
[a toss-up](#)
[a totally different ballgame](#)
[totus porcus](#)
[touch cloth](#)
[touch cotton](#)
[a touch of the tar brush](#)
[touch of the tar brush](#)
[touch \(oneself\)](#)

[touch wood](#)
[tough act to follow](#)
[tough cookie](#)
[tough cookies](#)
[tough luck](#)
[a tough nut \(to crack\)](#)
[a tough nut to crack](#)
[a tough pill to swallow](#)
[a tough spot](#)
[tough titties](#)
[tough titty](#)
[tour de force](#)
[toy boy](#)
[toys in the attic](#)
[track record](#)
[trade blows](#)
[trade off the orchard for an apple](#)
[traditional marriage](#)
[trail \(one's\) coat](#)
[trailer \(park\) trash](#)
[train of thought](#)
[train wreck](#)
[transcendental meditation](#)
[trapped in a time warp](#)
[tread lightly](#)
[tread on air](#)
[tread on \(someone's\) toes](#)
[treat them mean, keep them keen](#)
[trench mouth](#)
[trick of the trade](#)
[trick \(oneself or something\) up](#)
[trick up \(one's\) sleeve](#)
[a trifle](#)
[trigger](#)
[trigger warning](#)
[trip balls](#)
[trip out](#)



[Trojan horse](#)
[trouble and strife](#)
[trouble in paradise](#)
[troubled waters](#)
[true believer](#)
[\(one's\) true colours](#)
[\(one's\) \(true\) stripes](#)
[true to \(one's\) colors](#)
[trump card](#)
[the truth be known](#)
[the truth be told](#)
[try \(one's\) utmost](#)
[tub of guts](#)
[tub of lard](#)
[the tune the old cow died of](#)
[tuppence](#)
[\(one's\) tuppence \(worth\)](#)
[turd in the punchbowl](#)
[turf \(someone\) out](#)
[turf war](#)
[turfed](#)
[turfed out](#)
[turkey shoot](#)
[turkey slap](#)
[turn a corner](#)
[turn a phrase](#)
[turn an honest penny](#)
[turn around \(something\)](#)
[turn back the clock](#)
[turn belly up](#)
[turn full circle](#)
[turn in \(one's\) badge](#)
[turn into a pumpkin](#)
[turn of events](#)
[turn of phrase](#)
[turn of the screw](#)
[turn \(one's\) coat](#)

[turn \(one's\) face to the wall](#)
[turn \(one's\) hand to \(something\)](#)
[turn \(over\) in \(one's\) grave](#)
[turn \(someone\) around \(one's\) \(little\) finger](#)
[turn \(someone or something\) loose](#)
[turn \(someone\) round \(one's\) \(little\) finger](#)
[turn \(someone's\) crank](#)
[turn \(something\) to account](#)
[turn swords into ploughshares](#)
[turn the air blue](#)
[turn the corner](#)
[turn the scale\(s\)](#)
[turn the screw\(s\) \(on someone\)](#)
[turn the trick](#)
[turn the/\(one's\) clock\(s\) back](#)
[turn the/\(one's\) clock\(s\) forward](#)
[turn tits up](#)
[turn tricks](#)
[turn two](#)
[a turn-up for the book\(s\)](#)
[turning a corner](#)
[turning a phrase](#)
[turning an honest penny](#)
[turning around something](#)
[turning back the clock](#)
[turning belly up](#)
[turning full circle](#)
[turning her clock back](#)
[turning her clock forward](#)
[turning her coat](#)
[turning her crank](#)
[turning her loose](#)
[turning in her grave](#)
[turning into a pumpkin](#)
[turnt](#)
[turnt up](#)
[tweetstorm](#)



[twelve-ounce curls](#)
[twenty-three skiddoo](#)
[twenty-three skiddoo st.](#)
[twenty to the dozen](#)
[twenty winks](#)
[twerk](#)
[twinkle in \(one's\) eye](#)
[twinkle in \(one's\) father's eye](#)
[twinkle of an eye](#)
[twinkly-eyed](#)
[twinning](#)
[twist \(someone\) around \(one's\) \(little\) finger](#)
[two a penny](#)
[two birds with one stone](#)
[Two Bob](#)
[two can play that game](#)
[two cents](#)
[two for two](#)
[two left feet](#)
[two of a kind](#)
[\(one's\) two pennies \(worth\)](#)
[\(one's\) two penn'orth](#)
[two-second rule](#)
[two sides of the same coin](#)
[two thumbs up](#)
[two-way street](#)
[two wrongs make a right](#)
[\(one's\) twopence \(worth\)](#)
[the tyre kicker](#)

U

U-turn

ugly duckling

un-friend

unavailable energy

uncanny valley

uncharted waters

an Uncle Tom

Uncle!

under a cloud (of suspicion)

under a microscope

under erasure

under false colors

under foot

under glass

under (one's) breath

under (one's) feet

under (one's) thumb

under (one's) very eyes

under pain of

under pain of death

under par

under separate cover

under (someone's) spell

under the aegis of

under the auspices of

under the carpet

under the cosh

under the covers

under the gun

under the microscope

under the pump

under the rug

under the spell of (someone)

under the weather
under the yoke
under the yolk
under (the/someone's) radar
underpromise and overdeliver
undertow
unfriend
the university of life
an unknown quantity
uno ab alto
unring a bell
untested waters
until all hours (of the day and night)
until doomsday
until kingdom come
until (one) is blue in the face
until the bitter end
until the last dog is hung
the unwashed masses
up a gum tree
up a stump
up (a/the) creek (without a paddle)
up against a brick wall
up against it
up against (something)
up alley
up and about
up-and-comer
up and down
up and running
up for (something)
up her street
up in arms
up in the air
up on (one's) ear
up (one's) alley
up (one's) sleeve

up (one's) street
up shit creek (without a paddle)
up shit's creek (without a paddle)
up-skirt
up the duff
up the stick
up the walls
up the wazoo
up the yin-yang
up there
up there with
up to elbows
up to eleven
up to eleven
up to eyes
up to grade
up to ninety
up to no good
up to (one's) ears in (something)
up to (one's) eyeballs (in something)
up to (one's) eyes (in something)
Up to (one's) neck in alligators
up to (one's) neck in (something)
up to scratch
up to something
up to the gills
up with the chickens
up with the crows
up with the lark
up with the lark(s)
up your alley
up your alley
up your sleeve
up your street
up your street
uphill battle
(upon) my word

upon the heels of
upon the whole
upskirt
upwardly mobile
use it or lose it
use (one's) head
use (one's) noggin
use (one's) noodle
user base
utter a word

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V

v

[vajayjay](#)

[vajazzle](#)

[valley of death](#)

[valley of the shadow of death](#)

[vape](#)

[variety is the spice of life](#)

[vaulting school](#)

[velvet handcuffs](#)

[\(one's\) Venus turns out a whelp](#)

[verbal assault](#)

[verbal diarrhea](#)

[Vermont charity](#)

[vertically challenged](#)

[Vicar of Bray](#)

[vicious circle](#)

[view in a bad light](#)

[a viper in \(one's\) bosom](#)

[viral](#)

[virgin ears](#)

[virgin territory](#)

[viviparous lizard](#)

[voice crying in the wilderness](#)

[a voice in the wilderness](#)

[volte-face](#)

W

[w00t](#)

[w00t w00t](#)

[wading bird](#)

[wag \(it\)](#)

[wag off](#)

[wag \(one's\) tongue](#)

[WAGs](#)

[wait for dead men's shoes](#)

[wait for it](#)

[wait on \(someone\) hand and foot](#)

[wait upon \(someone\) hand and foot](#)

[waiting game](#)

[wake up and smell the roses](#)

[wake-up call](#)

[wake up on the wrong side of \(the\) bed](#)

[wake up with the chickens](#)

[walk a mile in \(someone's\) shoes](#)

[walk away scot-free](#)

[walk down memory lane](#)

[walk down the aisle](#)

[walk of life](#)

[walk on eggshells](#)

[walk on the wild side](#)

[walk on water](#)

[walk softly and carry a big stick](#)

[walk Spanish](#)

[walk the chalk](#)

[walk the dog](#)

[walk the talk](#)

[a walking disaster](#)

[walking papers](#)

[wall of silence](#)

[Wall Street](#)

[wallflower](#)
[wallow in the mire](#)
[wangle \(one's\) way into \(someplace or some situation\)](#)
[wangle someone into \(someplace or some situation\)](#)
[wanton kittens make sober cats](#)
[war bride](#)
[a war of nerves](#)
[war of words](#)
[warm and fuzzy](#)
[warm fuzzy](#)
[warm regards](#)
[warning shot](#)
[warrior ant](#)
[wash a brick](#)
[wash-and-wear](#)
[wash \(one's\) dirty linen in public](#)
[wash \(one's\) hands](#)
[wash \(someone's\) mouth out \(with soap\)](#)
[waste no time \(in\) \(doing something\)](#)
[a waste of breath](#)
[a waste of energy](#)
[waste \(one's\) breath](#)
[watch \(one's\) mouth](#)
[watch \(one's\) tongue](#)
[watch \(oneself\)](#)
[watch \(someone's\) back](#)
[a watched kettle never boils](#)
[a watched kettle never boils](#)
[a watched pot never boils](#)
[water feature](#)
[water power](#)
[water under the bridge](#)
[watered-down](#)
[wave \(a/the\) white flag](#)
[wave goodbye to \(something\)](#)
[wave the bloody shirt](#)
[way back](#)

way back when
way of life
(one's) way out of a paper bag
the way the cookie crumbles
the way the mop flops
the way the wind blows
the way the wind is blowing
WCW
weak at the knees
weak in the knees
weak-kneed
weak link
weak tea
weaker vessel
wear (one's particular profession's) hat
wear out (one's) welcome
wear rose-colored glasses
wear sackcloth and ashes
wear several hats
wear the bull's feather
wear the cap and bells
wear the horns
wear the willow
wear too many hats
wear two hats
weather breeder
we'd better be going
we'd better get moving
we'd better get on our horse
we'd better keep quiet about it
we'd better keep still about it
wedding cake
the wee small hours (of the night/morning)
weeaboo
weeb
a week from next Tuesday
a week is a long time in politics



weep millstones
weep (one's) heart out
weigh anchor
the weight of the world
weight off (one's) mind
welcome (someone or something) with open arms
welfare Cadillac
well dog my cats
well met
well padded
we'll rue the day
well-stacked
well versed
(well,) I'll be hanged!
(well,) I'll be!
(well,) imagine that!
well, well, (well)
welp
we're beat
we're even
we're not in Kansas anymore
we're shot
Were you born in a tent?
werk
wet behind the ears
wet blanket
wet dream
wet (one's) beak
wet (one's) pants
wet (oneself)
wet the bed
whack-a-mole
a whale of a
a whale of a (good) time
whale tail
What am I, chopped liver?
what are the odds

what are you angling at
what are you like
what did your last slave die of
what do I know
what do you want to bet (that)
what do you want, a cookie
What does that have to do with the price of cheese
What does that have to do with the price of eggs
What does that have to do with the price of fish
What does that have to do with the price of meat
What does that have to do with the price of tea in China
what does that have to do with the price of tea in China
what doesn't kill you makes you stronger
what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas
what happens on the road stays on the road
what happens on tour stays on tour
what has been seen cannot be unseen
what hath God wrought
what I am made of
what in blazes
what in blue blazes
what in creation
what in hell
what in Sam Hell
what in tarnation
what in tarnation
what (in) the devil
what in the hell
what in the world
what in thunderation
what is the good
what is the use
what it (all) comes down to
what must be, must be
what on earth
what (one) has coming
what the

what the actual fuck
what the fuck
what the fuck
what the hell
what the hey
what was (one) smoking
what was that
what would Jesus do
what you have coming
what you lose on the swings, you gain on the roundabouts
what you're made of
what you've never had you never miss
what, me worry
whatever it takes
what(ever) will be, will be
what's good for the goose is good for the gander
what's her take on that
what's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander
what's (someone's) beef (with someone or something)
What's that got to do with the price of cheese?
What's that got to do with the price of eggs?
What's that got to do with the price of fish?
What's that got to do with the price of meat?
What's that got to do with the price of tea in China?
what's the difference
what's the good of (doing something)
what's the use (of doing something)
what's up with (someone)
what's what
whatsamatta
the wheel has come full circle
the wheel of fortune
wheel within a wheel
the wheels are in motion
the wheels are turning
the wheels fell off
when hell freezes over

when in blazes
when in blue blazes
when in creation
when in Sam Hell
when in tarnation
when in thunderation
when it rains, it pours
when life gives you lemons, make lemonade
when monkeys fly out of my butt
when one door closes, another opens
when one door shuts, another one opens
when (one's) ship comes home
when opportunity knocks
when pigs can fly
when pigs have wings
when (the) word gets out
when two Fridays come together
when two Sundays come together
when two Sundays meet
where (one) lives
where the shoe pinches
wherever you go, there you are
(whether) by accident or design
which way the wind blows
which way the wind lies
whichever way you slice it
whichever way you slice it
while we're young
whip a U-ie
whip-round
whipping boy
whips and jingles
whisper sweet nothings
whisper sweet nothings in (one's) ear
whispering campaign
whistle a different tune
whistle (one) down the wind

[whistle-stop](#)
[whistle-stop tour](#)
[white around the gills](#)
[white coat hypertension](#)
[white elephant](#)
[white flag](#)
[white hole](#)
[the White House](#)
[white knight](#)
[a white lie](#)
[white magic](#)
[white man](#)
[white marriage](#)
[white on rice](#)
[white paper](#)
[white sheep](#)
[white wedding](#)
[white wine](#)
[Whitman's sampler](#)
[whiz kid](#)
[who am I kidding](#)
[who are you, and what have you done with \(someone\)](#)
[who ate all the pies](#)
[Who breaks a butterfly upon a wheel?](#)
[who calls the shots here?](#)
[who died and left you in charge](#)
[who died and made you boss](#)
[who in blazes](#)
[who in blue blazes](#)
[who in creation](#)
[who in Sam Hell](#)
[who in tarnation](#)
[who in thunderation](#)
[who knows what](#)
[who wears the trousers?](#)
[who writes this stuff](#)
[who'd have thunk it](#)

[whole cloth](#)
[a \(whole\) new ballgame](#)
[a whole other kettle of fish](#)
[whomp on](#)
[whomp up](#)
[whoop-ass](#)
[who's a pretty boy then](#)
[who's she, the cat's mother?](#)
[who's \(someone\) when \(he's/she's/they're\) at home](#)
[why in God's name](#)
[why on earth](#)
[wicked tongue](#)
[wide berth](#)
[wide boy](#)
[wide of the mark](#)
[widen \(one's\) horizons](#)
[widow's mite](#)
[widow's peak](#)
[wiggle room](#)
[wigs on the green](#)
[wild abandon](#)
[wild card](#)
[wild cherry](#)
[wild goose chase](#)
[a wild goose never laid a tame egg](#)
[wild oats](#)
[wild turkey](#)
[\(will there be\) anything else?](#)
[will to win](#)
[willful ignorance](#)
[willing and able](#)
[willing horse](#)
[win one for the Gipper](#)
[win \(something\) in a walk](#)
[wind at \(one's\) back](#)
[wind back the clock](#)
[wind \(someone\) around \(one's\) \(little\) finger](#)

[wind \(someone\) round \(one's\) \(little\) finger](#)
[wind up in](#)
[window dressing](#)
[window-shopping](#)
[wink of an eye](#)
[wink wink \(nudge nudge\)](#)
[winner takes all](#)
[winning ways](#)
[winning!](#)
[winter rat](#)
[wipe \(one's\) slate clean](#)
[wipe \(someone's\) eye](#)
[wipe the floor with \(someone\)](#)
[wireless network](#)
[wise apple](#)
[wise-ass](#)
[wise guy](#)
[wisecracker](#)
[wish list](#)
[witch hunt](#)
[with a heavy hand](#)
[with a heavy heart](#)
[with a high hand](#)
[with a light heart](#)
[with a loose screw](#)
[with a screw loose](#)
[with all \(one's\) might](#)
[with an eye on](#)
[with an eye towards](#)
[with any luck](#)
[with bloody hand](#)
[with both hands](#)
[with child](#)
[with egg on \(one's\) face](#)
[with half a heart](#)
[with honours even](#)
[\(with\) kind regards](#)



(with) might and main
with no frills
with no further ado
with no strings attached
with no trace
with one accord
with (one's) eye on
with (one's) eyes closed
with (one's) eyes wide open
with (one's) head held high
with (one's) pants down
with (one's) tongue in (one's) cheek
with reckless abandon
with relation to
with reservations
with strings attached
with the best of intentions
with the exception of
with the sweat of (one's) brow
with time to spare
(with) tongue in cheek
with wild abandon
within ames ace
within arm's reach
within the bounds of possibility
without a care in the world
without any strings attached
without batting an eyelash
without batting an eyelid
without flinching
without letup
without missing a beat
without provocation
without reserve
without skipping a beat
without turning a hair
withstand the test of time

[wit's end](#)
[woke](#)
[woke up on the wrong side of bed](#)
[a wolf in sheep's clothing](#)
[wolf whistle](#)
[wolfpack](#)
[woman-about-town](#)
[a woman after my own](#)
[woman after \(one's\) own heart](#)
[woman crush Wednesday](#)
[woman for all seasons](#)
[woman of few words](#)
[woman of God](#)
[a woman of her word](#)
[woman of letters](#)
[woman of many parts](#)
[woman of means](#)
[the woman of the hour](#)
[\(the\) woman of the moment](#)
[woman of the people](#)
[woman of the world](#)
[a woman on a mission](#)
[a woman with a mission](#)
[a woman's place is in the home](#)
[a woman's work is never done](#)
[womp womp](#)
[won in a walk](#)
[won one for the Gipper](#)
[won't budge an inch](#)
[won't take no for an answer](#)
[wooden mare](#)
[wooden spoonist](#)
[wooden top](#)
[woot](#)
[woot woot](#)
[word gets around](#)
[word of mouth](#)

[word on the street](#)
[word on the wire](#)
[a word to the wise](#)
[a word to the wise is enough](#)
[wordplay](#)
[words of one syllable](#)
[words stick in \(one's\) throat](#)
[words to that effect](#)
[work for peanuts](#)
[work for pittance](#)
[work nights](#)
[work \(one's\) butt off](#)
[work \(one's\) magic](#)
[work \(one's\) way through](#)
[work smarter, not harder](#)
[work spouse](#)
[work the crowd](#)
[work the oracle](#)
[work the room](#)
[work till you drop](#)
[work to rule](#)
[work until you drop](#)
[work up to the collar](#)
[working girl](#)
[a working over](#)
[world at \(one's\) feet](#)
[a world of difference](#)
[the world over](#)
[world shattering](#)
[worldly desires](#)
[worldly wisdom](#)
[worlds apart](#)
[worlds away](#)
[worm information](#)
[worm \(one's\) way in](#)
[worm's eye view](#)
[worn rose-colored glasses](#)



worn too many hats
worried sick
worship the porcelain god
worst comes to worst
worth a Jew's eye
worth every penny
worth (its/one's) weight in gold
worth (one's) while
worth pondering
worth the whistle
worthwhile cause
worthy cause
(one) would do well to (do something)
would sooner
(would you) care to dance
(would you) care to join me/us
wouldn't shout if a shark bit him
wouldn't touch it with a bargepole
wouldn't you know
wouldn't you know it
wound up in
wrack and ruin
wrangle for an ass's shadow
wrangle (something) out
wrangle (something) out of (someone)
wrap it before you tap it
wrap (one's) head around
wrap (someone) around (one's) little finger
wrap (someone) around (one's) (little) finger
wrap (someone) round (one's) (little) finger
wrap up
wrapped around (one's) little finger
wrestle with a pig
wriggle off the hook
writ large
write a bum check
write home about

write off (one's) losses
write on water
writing is like chicken scratch
written all over (one's) face
the wrong crowd
the wrong foot
the wrong side of (someone)
the wrong side of the bed
WTF

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X

[x factor](#)
[x's and o's](#)

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Y

[yak shaving](#)
[yankee dime](#)
[Yankee go home](#)
[yap, yap, yapping all day](#)
[yap, yap, yapping all day long](#)
[yardarm to yardarm](#)
[yasss](#)
[yasss queen](#)
[year dot](#)
[yearning desire](#)
[yell \(one's\) head off](#)
[yell silently](#)
[yellow brick road](#)
[yellow cake](#)
[yellow dog](#)
[yellow grease](#)
[yellow light](#)
[yellow press](#)
[yellow state](#)
[yen](#)
[yeoman's service](#)
[yes-man](#)
[yes man](#)
[yes \(one\) to death](#)
[yesterday's man/woman](#)
[yield the ghost](#)
[yield to pressure](#)
[YOLO](#)
[you ain't particular](#)
[you all](#)
[you and whose army](#)
[you are what you eat](#)
[you attract more flies with honey than vinegar](#)

you be the judge of that
you bet your bottom
you can barely hear yourself think
you can bet on it
you can dish it out, but you can't take it
you can dispense with (something)
you can hardly believe your eyes
you can hardly hear yourself think
you can have too much of a good thing
you can run, but you can't hide
you can scarcely believe your eyes
you can sell sawdust to a lumber mill
you can take a horse to water, but you can't make him drink
you can't beat that
you can't believe your ears
you can't bluff a bluffer
(you) can't fight city hall
you can't go home again
you can't live with them, you can't live without them
you can't live with them, you can't live without them
you can't polish a turd
you can't put a wise head on young shoulders
you can't put an old head on young shoulders
you can't run with the hare and hunt with the hounds
(you) can't take it with you (when you go)
you can't tell a book by its cover
you can't unring a bell
you can't win for losing
(you) can't win them all
(you) could have fooled me
you could have knocked me down with a feather
you could have knocked me down with a feather
you could have knocked me over with a feather
you could have knocked me over with a feather
you could hear a pin drop
you could hear the grass grow(ing)
you could sell an icebox to an Eskimo

you could sell ice to Eskimos
you crumb
you deal with it
you do not wash your dirty linen in public
You don't change horses in the middle of the race.
You don't change horses mid-race.
you don't know when to quit
you dope
you feel like a million dollars
you figure
you gals
you got to crack a few eggs to make an omelet
you guys
you had better be going
you had better get moving
you had better get on your horse
you had better keep quiet about it
you had better keep still about it
you heel
you just don't get it
you kiss your mother with that mouth?
you know it
you know what
you little imp
you little scallywag
you look a little peaked
you look like a million
you look like a million bucks
you lot
you lucky devil
you make me sick
you never know what you've got till it's gone
you old fart
you only live once
you put your pants on one leg at a time
you put your trousers on one leg at a time
you read me

you saved the day
you should know a man seven years before you stir his fire
you shouldn't have
(you) silly goose
you snooze, you lose
you so-and-so
you take it
you think
you want to start something
you weasel
you what
you will rue the day
you wish
you would do well to
you'd better be going
you'd better get moving
you'd better get on your horse
you'd better keep quiet about it
you'd better keep still about it
you'll be the death of me
you'll catch your death
you'll catch your death of cold
you'll catch your death (of cold)
you'll never guess
young fogey
young lady
young man
young once
younger brother
younger sister
your ass
your blood's worth bottling
your man
your mom
you're a godsend
you're a lifesaver
you're a numbskull

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you're a peach
you're an angel
you're chicken
you're imagining things
you're nuts
you're on!
you're only as old as you feel
you're pulling my leg
you're seeing things
yours sincerely
you've got a lot of nerve
you've got a point there
you've got me
you've got to be in it to win it
you've got to crack a few eggs to make an omelette

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Z

[zealous devotee](#)

[zenith of \(one's\) career](#)

[zero day](#)

[zero hour](#)

[zero-sum game](#)

[zero to hero](#)

[zit face](#)

[zzz](#)

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0-9

0 dark 100 See [oh dark hundred](#).

0 dark 30 See [oh dark thirty](#).

0-day Used to describe a software security vulnerability that has just been exploited or discovered, often before the software developers can formally announce or create a fix (thus giving them "zero days" to preemptively address the issue). *It was a 0-day attack—the developers had no idea that their program could be hacked in that way.*

1 day wonder See [one-day wonder](#).

10 Downing Street The address of the residence of the prime minister of the United Kingdom, used by extension to refer to the prime minister or the current UK government. Primarily heard in UK. *Swift condemnation of the attack has come from 10 Downing Street, the White House, and the Kremlin.*

10 to the dozen See [ten to the dozen](#).

110 percent See [a hundred and ten percent](#).

110 proof Extremely strong or potent. Its original sense refers to the alcohol content of liquor. *This cleanser is 110 proof. If it can't get the stain out, nothing can.*

12-ounce curls The act of drinking beer (which is commonly sold in 12-ounce cans), jokingly likened to a weightlifting exercise. *The only exercise John seems to do these days is 12-ounce curls.*

15 minutes of fame A brief period of celebrity or notoriety. The term was coined by artist Andy Warhol. *Jane had her 15 minutes of fame when she appeared on the nightly news broadcast.*

1600 Pennsylvania Avenue The address of the White House, the residence of the President of the United States of America, used to refer to the White House or the presidency itself. Primarily heard in US. *1600 Penn. Ave. has not yet taken an official stance on this issue.*

19 to the dozen See [nineteen to the dozen](#).

2 way street See [two-way street](#).

20 to the dozen See [talk twenty to the dozen](#).

20 winks See [twenty winks](#).

23 skidoo To clear out or get away in haste before getting into or causing trouble, referring either to oneself or to another. "23" may refer to the Flatirons Building in New York City (located on 23rd Street), around which great winds tend to blow. It may also derive from an older use meaning to tell someone to clear out of one's way. Primarily heard in US. *It looks like there's trouble brewing here. I'd better 23 skidoo! Quit loitering around here. 23 skidoo!*

23 Skidoo Street A fictitious location referring to a place away from possible or looming trouble, taken from the phrase "23 skidoo." Primarily heard in US. *Those guys ahead look rough, let's head over to 23 Skidoo Street.*

3-on-the-tree The gear shift on older makes of U.S. automobiles (especially those made between 1939 and 1970), which was located on the steering column and had three speeds. Primarily heard in US. *My grandad still has his old 3-on-the-tree truck sitting in the shed.*

3 ring circus See [three-ring circus](#).

3 sheets to the wind See [three sheets to the wind](#).

3rd wheel See [third wheel](#).

4-letter word See [four-letter word](#).

4-on-the-floor 1. A manual transmission with four speeds that is located on the floor of an automobile beside the driver. *I don't know if I'll be able to pass my driving test; I had to learn on my dad's old 4-on-the-floor.* 2. A musical rhythm characterized by steady and uniformly accented beats in 4/4 time, typically referring to electronic music. *I'm not a huge fan of that club, they only play 4-on-the-floor tunes.*

40 minutes of hell See [forty minutes of hell](#).

40 ways from Sunday See [forty ways from Sunday](#).

40 ways to Sunday See [forty ways to Sunday](#).

40 winks See [forty winks](#).

the 400 See [the Four Hundred](#).

4th wall joke See [fourth wall joke](#).

50-50 chance See [fifty-fifty chance](#).

5th wheel See [fifth wheel](#).

6 ways to Sunday See [six ways to Sunday](#).

a 7 day wonder See [seven-day wonder](#).

8 ways from Sunday See [eight ways from Sunday](#).

8 ways to Sunday See [eight ways to Sunday](#).

800-pound gorilla A person, group, or organization so powerful (either by size or by influence) that it does not need to heed the rules or threats of others. It refers to the riddle "Where does an 800-pound gorilla sit?" (Answer: "Wherever it likes.") Primarily heard in US. *Don't mess with that guy; he's like an 800-pound gorilla! These big corporations act like 800-pound gorillas, making up the rules to suit themselves.*

8th wonder of the world See [the eighth wonder of the world](#).

9-day wonder See [nine-day wonder](#).

A

a-ha moment See [aha moment](#).

A into G An abbreviation of "arse into gear" (or "ass into gear"), meaning to get going or moving. Primarily heard in New Zealand. *You're starting off a little bit slow this morning, you need to get your A into G.*

à la In the manner or style of something or someone else. The phrase is a shortened form of the French *à la mode de*, meaning "in the manner of." *The lead actor delivered hilarious slapstick à la The Three Stooges, but also had a grace and charm that was irresistible.*

à la carte Available to be purchased individually instead of bundled with other items. Most often describes items on a menu that are not part of a main dish. *I wasn't very hungry, so I opted to buy a few side items à la carte instead of a full meal.*

à la mode **1.** Served with ice cream. *My favorite dessert is apple pie à la mode.* **2.** Very fashionable. *Big shoulder pads were à la mode in the 1980s, but most people now would not dare to wear them.*

A-OK Operating or existing in perfect working order or in the best condition to be hoped for. Primarily heard in US. *We've got the new engine fitted to the car now, and so far it's running A-OK! I've felt A-OK since I left the hospital last week.*

A1 Of the very highest caliber, standard, or quality. *That was a positively A1 performance last night.*

Aaron's beard Another name for several bushy flowering plants, including the rose of Sharon. The name alludes to the Biblical Aaron and his very long beard. A: *"I see these plants everywhere but I can never remember what they're called."* B: *"Oh, that bush? That's Aaron's beard."*

abandon hope, all ye who enter here A message warning one about a hopeless situation from which there is no return. The Italian version of this phrase appears in Dante's *Divine Comedy* as the inscription on the entrance to Hell. The phrase is most often used humorously. *I'll never forget my first day as an intern and the sign above my cubicle that said, "Abandon*

all hope, all ye who enter here."

abandon (oneself) to To allow oneself to enjoy something fully. *On the chilly fall day, Maria abandoned herself to the comforts of hot tea and a warm blanket.*

abandon ship **1.** Literally, to escape from a sinking ship. *We had to abandon ship after the collision with the rocks tore a hole in the hull.* **2.** By extension, to leave a failing organization or bad situation. *Amid rumors that the company was filing for bankruptcy, the employees started to abandon ship.*

abbreviate (something) to **1.** To shorten a word or phrase into an abbreviation or acronym. *Many government agencies have long names that are often abbreviated to acronyms. The pop star abbreviated her name to the first letter of her first name and the first two letters of her last name.* **2.** To condense or shorten something. *During our busy season, our lunch hour is often abbreviated to 30 minutes so we can keep up with the demand. The judge abbreviated the sentence to just 10 months.*

abduct (someone) from To kidnap. *Someone abducted that little girl from her parents' home in the middle of the night. I hope the dog wasn't abducted from our yard.*

abet (someone) in To help someone in an activity, usually an illegal one. *If you drove the robber's getaway car, then you abetted him in a crime! Everyone thinks you abetted Connie in starting this rumor.*

abide by To obey something, usually an established rule. *Because Donna refuses to abide by her parents' rules, I worry that she'll be told to move out of their house.*

abide by a decision To accept, follow, and comply with a decision, especially that which is handed down by a judge. *Though it stings my dignity, I have to abide by the court's decision to not allow me to drive a car for the next 12 months.*

abide with To stay or remain with someone. *If you would like to rest for a while, you can abide with me.*

able to breathe again **1.** Literally, capable of inhaling and exhaling without difficulty. *Once the climbers returned from the top of the mountain, they felt like they were finally able to breathe again.* **2.** Figuratively,

recuperating from a busy or stressful period of time. *After a long, hectic summer, many parents feel like they are able to breathe again once their kids are back in school.*

able to cut it Capable of performing at a high level; capable of success. *I know she hasn't had that much experience in this field, but I think she will be able to cut it.*

able to do it Capable of completing a particular task or doing something. *I offered to help her change her flat tire, but she said she was able to do it herself.*

able to (do something) blindfolded Very adept at doing something, with very little or no difficulty; able to complete or accomplish something in a relaxed, carefree, or effortless manner. *It took me a little while to get used to this job, but now I'm able do it blindfolded! You should ask Johnny for help, he can do calculus blindfolded.*

able to do (something) standing on (one's) head Very adept at doing something, with very little or no difficulty; able to complete or accomplish something in a relaxed, carefree, or effortless manner. *It took me a little while to get used to this job, but now I'm able do it standing on my head! You should ask Johnny for help—he's able to do this level of math standing on his head.*

able to (do something) with (one's) eyes closed Very adept at doing something, with very little or no difficulty; able to complete or accomplish something in a relaxed, carefree, or effortless manner. *It took me a little while to get used to this job, but now I'm able do it with my eyes closed! You should ask Johnny for help, he can do calculus with his eyes closed.*

able to fog a mirror Alive, perhaps barely. (If one holds up a mirror to one's nose or mouth, the breath will cause fog to appear.) *I spent the whole day moving furniture, so I'm barely able to fog a mirror now. He'll date any woman who's able to fog a mirror.*

able to get a word in edgewise Able to speak despite other people dominating the conversation (hence the image of squeezing words in "edgewise"—sideways). Usually used in the negative. *When Mary came up for air in her monologue, I was finally able to get a word in edgewise about my own weekend! The third-tier candidate wasn't able to get a word in*

edgewise at the debate.

able to make (something) Able to attend an event or other social gathering. *I have a prior commitment, so I won't be able to make the event Friday night. My work schedule changed, so I'm able to make your party after all!*

able to take a joke To have the capacity to remain calm or be amused in response to good-natured teasing. *I'm certainly able to take a joke, but what you said to me was downright mean. A: "Do you think he'll be offended if I say something about his terrible driving?" B: "Nah, he's able to take a joke."*

able to take just so much Incapable of enduring much physical or mental distress. *Quit teasing your little brother, he's able to take just so much.*

able to take only so much Incapable of enduring much physical or mental distress. *Quit teasing your little brother, he's able to take only so much.*

abortive action An action that fails and/or ends abruptly or causes something else to fail or end abruptly. *The measure to increase pay for senators that was included in the tax reform bill was an abortive action, causing the entire bill to die on the senate floor. The general's effort to mount a counteroffensive proved an abortive action, leaving half of his troops decimated in the wake of battle.*

abound in To be abundant or plentiful with. *In the spring, the fields abound in blooming tulips.*

abound with To be abundant or plentiful with. *The world abounds with criminals and scam artists looking to take advantage of unsuspecting victims. In the spring, the fields abound with blooming tulips.*

about as much as a fish needs a bicycle See [need \(something\) \(about\) as much as a fish needs a bicycle](#).

about as much as a hole in the head See [need \(something\) \(about\) as much as \(one\) needs a hole in the head](#).

an about-face A sudden, complete turn or change of direction. This phrase can describe one's physical movement or a change in concept. *She did an about-face and walked back up the steps once she saw that the subway*

wasn't running. Based on the reactions we got from test audiences, we need to do an about-face with the movie's plot.

about last night... Used as the opening to a conversation regarding the events of the previous evening, often involving an unpleasant or embarrassing topic. *So, about last night... I was a little out of control. I guess I had too much to drink.*

about (one's) business Focusing on one's own tasks or routine. The phrase emphasizes that one is minding one's own business without any unusual deviation, especially without bothering others. Typically used with the verb "go." *I was just going about my business when I was stopped for questioning. Be about your business, everyone, there's nothing to see here.*

about (one's) ears Around one. Said when something has failed. *When her business went bankrupt, her whole world collapsed about her ears.*

about (one's) person In one's possession. *He always had an umbrella about his person, even on sunny days.*

about time See [\(it's\) about time](#).

about time too An expression used to emphasize that something should have occurred a long time ago. *They're finally hiring some extra help around here, and it's about time too—another one of my employees resigned today.*

about to (do something) Intending to do something imminently or in the near future. *I was just about to take out the garbage when you called to remind me! She's just about to start her new job this morning.*

about-turn An abrupt reversal in the opposite direction, either physically or in regards to an idea, opinion, intention, or behavior. *His about-turn on the topic of gun control surprised many of his opponents and frustrated many of his constituents. We were just about to return home last night when we made an about-turn and headed straight into another pub.*

above all (else) More than anything. *All animals are great, but, above all, I love dogs. I know you love playing soccer, but you need to focus on your schoolwork above all. Above all, love one another.*

above and beyond Exceeding expectations or requirements. *The young officer went above and beyond when he repaired the old woman's home so that the township wouldn't condemn it. I will award extra credit to anyone who does research above and beyond the parameters of the assignment.*

above and beyond the call of duty More than what is expected of someone. *Wow, I can't believe you finished our whole report while I was out sick. You really went above and beyond the call of duty on this one!*

above average Better than most people or things in a certain area. *Because Jerry's SAT scores were well above average, he was able to attend the college of his choice. Our sales were above average for this market.*

above board Legitimate, honest, and/or legal. *I expected that big company to try to take advantage of us, but so far all of their dealings with us have been above board. These documents look above board to me, Tom—go ahead and process them.*

above (one's) bend Exceeding one's knowledge or ability. *Lifting that heavy box is definitely above my bend—my arms are too scrawny for that! He's a great handyman but electrical work is above his bend.*

above (one's) head Being too advanced or difficult for one to be able to comprehend, understand, or complete; beyond one's abilities. *I thought I could handle this advanced math class, but the stuff we're learning is just way above my head.*

above (one's) huckleberry Exceeding one's knowledge or ability. *He's a great handyman but electrical work is above his huckleberry. Lifting that heavy box is definitely above my huckleberry—my arms are too scrawny for that!*

above (one's) pay grade 1. The responsibility of those who are of a higher authority than oneself, denoted by the level of pay that one receives in comparison to one's superiors. *All these questions you're asking are above your pay grade. He had some great ideas about how to run the company, but contributing such things was above his pay grade. 2. Above or beyond one's general skill, knowledge, ability, or willingness to participate. *He soon realized that the details of the IT development project were a bit above his pay grade. Sorry, fishing garbage out of the lake is above my pay grade.**

above (one's) paycheck Beyond one's level of authority or expertise. *I would love to sign off on those documents for you, Jim, but that's above my paycheck. Gina can't decide if we get interns this summer or not—that's above her paycheck!*

above par Better than average. *If you need a graphic designer, I highly*

recommend Jeff. His work is well above par. Her performance in sales this quarter is above par, so she deserves a bonus.

above reproach So perfect as to avoid criticism. *His performance has been above reproach. I cannot think of a single reason he shouldn't be promoted. Just because you get good grades doesn't mean you're above reproach.*

above suspicion Not suspected of any wrongdoing or crime. *Because everyone thought he was such a good citizen, he remained above suspicion after the robbery.*

above the curve Being greater, better, or more advanced than the average in the relative field, especially in research or innovative pursuits. *The research being done on leukemia here is far above the curve anywhere else in the world.*

above the fray Uninvolved in an argument or debate. *Kristen always tried to stay above the fray whenever there was a disagreement at work. It's difficult to stay above the fray when dealing with hostile family members.*

above the law Not required to adhere to current laws, rules, or standards. *Many computer hackers act as though they are above the law when they steal valuable data from companies and attempt to sell it online. The city's elected officials thought they were above the law when they stole money from taxpayers to sustain their expensive and luxurious lifestyles.*

above the salt Of or in a position of high standing, rank, regard, or repute. The term is derived from the social hierarchy of nobility in medieval times, in which salt, a precious commodity then, was set in the middle of the dining table. Those of high noble rank were seated "above the salt," that is, closer to the lord and lady of the house, while those in lower social standing were seated "below" it. *Even though my boss is above the salt, he still makes a point of mingling with everyone in the company. Mike considers himself above the salt since getting that big promotion at the law firm last month.*

Abraham's bosom figurative Where the righteous go after death. The phrase alludes to Abraham, the first Biblical patriarch. *I know it's a sad time, but we just have to keep in mind that Grandma is in a much better place now, at Abraham's bosom, than in the hospital.*

abrasive tone A sound that is grating, dissonant, or generally unpleasant

to hear. *I find that a lot of music has such an abrasive tone these days that I can't even bear to listen to it.*

abreast of 1. Keeping pace with someone or something. *Charlie finished the race in second place because he could not stay abreast of the winner. 2.* Knowing the most current information about a person, thing, or event. Typically used with the verb "keep." *There are so many software vulnerabilities that it's difficult to keep abreast of them all. I'm worried about Stu, so please keep me abreast of any changes in his health.*

abscond with To leave with someone or something that one is not authorized to take. *The crook absconded with the coffee shop's tip jar when the cashier wasn't looking. Don't leave your child unattended—someone could abscond with him!*

absence makes the heart grow fonder A separation causes one to feel even more positive about the absent person or thing. *We'll see if absence makes the heart grow fonder after our time apart. I really started to miss school over winter break. Absence makes the heart grow fonder, I guess.*

absent-minded Forgetful or inattentive of everyday details or duties, possibly due to a preoccupation with other thoughts. *My absent-minded housemate is always lost in composing new poems and never remembers to clean the house or take out the trash!*

absent-minded professor An otherwise intelligent person who often lacks common sense or forgets or overlooks important details. *Louis is brilliant, but he's such an absent-minded professor when it comes to remembering to attend important meetings.*

absent (oneself) from To leave a place, often to avoid something. *If my ex-boyfriend does come, I'm going to absent myself from the party.*

absent without leave Not present for a duty or situation without permission. The phrase is usually used in reference to military service, and is often abbreviated with the acronym "AWOL." *The young soldier was arrested for being absent without leave.*

absolute power corrupts absolutely One who holds unchecked power or authority is likely to become corrupt or abuse one's position. This phrase is usually attributed to 19th-century historian Lord Acton. *He really started abusing the authority of his office when he was promoted to CEO.*

Absolute power corrupts absolutely.

absolutely not A strong declaration of refusal or denial. A: "Hey, can you loan me some money?" B: "Absolutely not! You still haven't paid back the money you borrowed from me last time."

absolve from guilt To consider innocent, clear of all suspicion, or pardon from any cause of guilt. *The knights of the crusades committed many atrocities in their campaign, but they were absolved from guilt by the heads of the church.*

absolve (one) from To declare that someone is free from blame or responsibility for something. *The evidence that the defense attorney presented in court convinced the jury to absolve his client from the crime. I know you're sorry. I absolve you from your guilt, son.*

absolve (one) of To declare that someone is free from blame or responsibility for something. *Once Betty saw the security footage of a different employee stealing money from the cash register, she absolved Jacob of the crime. I know you're sorry. I absolve you of your guilt, son.*

absolved from guilt Considered innocent, cleared of all suspicion, or pardoned from any cause of guilt. *The knights of the crusades committed many atrocities in their campaign, but they were regarded as absolved from guilt because of their religious patronage.*

absorb (oneself) in To occupy or preoccupy oneself completely with activity or pursuit. *Greg absorbed himself in video games every day after school. I wanted to impress Juliet, so I absorbed myself in music by her favorite band.*

absorb (something) with To draw or pull a liquid into a porous item. *I had to absorb the water from the overflowing toilet with large towels to keep it from leaking through the floor.*

absorb (something/someone) in(to) 1. To integrate into a new environment or situation. *At least the new company has been able to absorb all of the old employees into its corporate structure* 2. To draw or pull a liquid into a porous item. *The paper towel quickly absorbed the liquid into itself.*

absorbed by See [be absorbed by \(something\)](#).

absorbed in thought Fully and deeply engrossed in a thought or idea,

often to such a degree as to be unaware of or insensitive to the outside world. *It's no use trying to talk to Helen when she's absorbed in thought like that; it's as if we don't even exist!*

abstain from To refrain from consuming something or doing some activity. *Katie wants to lose weight, so she has vowed to abstain from sugar.*

abstain from voting To refrain from casting a vote for someone or something. *Many argue that citizens who abstain from voting put the democratic process in jeopardy. Because I didn't like either candidate, I decided to abstain from voting for the first time in my life.*

abstract idea An idea or thought that is intangible or outside the constraints or possibilities of the real world. *Some regard love as but an abstract idea, as it is impossible to define what makes love real.*

abstract (something) from **1.** To take something without permission. *Despite all of the company's security measures, hackers abstracted classified information from the server.* **2.** To extract key information from a longer document or text. *I had to abstract all of the relevant information from that lengthy report and then present it to management.*

abuse of distress The wrongful or unlawful use or sale of property that has been seized in order to force payment or the performance of some contractual obligation (known in law as the process of distress or distraint). *It was a clear case of abuse of distress: the landlord, without a court order, changed the locks on the door and then seized and sold the tenants' belongings only an hour after serving them a notice of eviction.*

abuse of privileges The wrongful or unlawful misuse of power in one's duties, either at the expense of others or to the advantage of the abuser. *The governor displayed a flagrant abuse of privileges, channeling state funds toward a project owned by her son-in-law at the expense of more worthwhile causes. The moderator was deemed to have committed an abuse of privileges, deleting comments that opposed his own.*

abut on To adjoin or meet at an edge or boundary. *He is finding it difficult to sell his house since his property abuts on a cemetery.*

abut (up) against To lean or press onto something else. *Thanks to all that flooding, the old shed now abuts against the house. That tree is abutting*

up against your roof—you need to have someone come and take it down.

abysmal failure Failure that is total and extreme in measure or implication. *The business was an abysmal failure, and everyone was out of a job within a month.*

accede to 1. To agree to a set of terms, conditions, or demands. *The government will not accede to the terrorist's demands.* **2.** To begin serving in a position of authority or in an official capacity. *Come January, he will accede to the office of governor.*

accede to pressure To bow down or yield to pressure from an outside force, especially as regards a political, business, or military action or decision. *Congress was forced to accede to pressure from the public and abandon its proposal to increase taxes.*

accept (something) as 1. To take or recognize something as performing a certain function, such as being a form of payment. *I accept your offer to fix my car as reimbursement for the money you owe me. Please accept these flowers as my apology.* **2.** To acknowledge something as existing in a certain state, such as being true. *If he ever wants this situation resolved, he needs to accept Mary's story as the truth. You need to accept this as reality, and move on.*

accept (something) as gospel To believe that something is absolutely true without any hesitation or reservations. *When we're growing up, we accept what our parents tell us as gospel. The beloved professor's opinions on the subject are accepted as gospel by his students.*

acceptable damage Destruction or casualties that are considered reasonable because they happen in the context of a war or military attack. *Many would argue that even one lost life should not be considered acceptable damage. The general considered the destruction of the tanks to be acceptable damage since his soldiers returned from the mission alive and uninjured.*

acceptable losses Destruction or casualties that are considered reasonable because they happen in the context of a war or military attack. *The general considered the destruction of the tanks to be acceptable losses since his soldiers returned from the mission alive and uninjured. Many would argue that any lost lives should not be considered acceptable losses*

access to The ability to use or reach something or someone, through any number of means. *I won't have access to my work email while I'm away on vacation. No, I don't have direct access to the CEO, but I'll call his assistant.*

accident of birth Any and all particulars surrounding one's birth (physical characteristics, social background, and even nationality) that are considered a result of parentage and the specific circumstances of birth, and are therefore entirely out of one's control. *My poverty when I was young was merely an accident of birth; through hard work and determination, I was able to overcome it and lead a successful life.*

an accident waiting to happen A person, thing, or situation that appears to be imminently dangerous or troublesome. Often but not always used somewhat humorously. *Don't leave that ladder in the middle of the yard, it's just an accident waiting to happen! My toddler is starting to walk now, and she is just an accident waiting to happen.*

accidentally on purpose Seemingly unintentionally but actually deliberately. *Paula is pretty shy, so I think she forgot to attend the party accidentally on purpose.*

accidents (will) happen Mishaps and setbacks are just a natural and inevitable part of life. This phrase is often said in an attempt to comfort someone after an accident has happened. A: *"I am so sorry that I backed into your car!"* B: *"That's OK, accidents will happen."* *I know you didn't mean to spill your juice, sweetheart—accidents happen.*

acclimate (someone/something) to To help a person or thing to adjust to a new environment, role, etc. *I've been spending a lot of time at home, acclimating our new puppy to life with our family. It's difficult to acclimate that type of plant to a colder climate. We initially had to focus on acclimating our adopted daughter to life in this country.*

accommodate (one) with To fulfill one's needs, often with special consideration after something has gone awry. *Thankfully, the hotel was able to accommodate us with a non-smoking room after all. I was told there were no rentals left, but once I mentioned my famous father, the clerk was suddenly able to accommodate me with a luxury car.*

accommodate (oneself) to To assimilate or adjust to a new environment or a different set of rules or expectations. *The new student*

struggled to accommodate himself to the new school and often got in trouble as a result. If you're going to live with us, you need to accommodate yourself to our rules.

accommodate (someone's) wishes To alter or tailor a situation so as to specifically cater to the desires, preferences, or designs of another person or persons. *The laws exist this way for a reason, and you can't expect us to change them simply to accommodate your wishes.*

accompanied by Joined by; presented along with. *The slice of pie was accompanied by a scoop of vanilla ice cream. My husband is sick, so I'll be accompanied by my son at the charity auction.*

accompany (one) **1.** To travel with someone. This phrase can be used in reference to both people and things. *While I enjoy spending time alone, I sometimes wish I had someone to accompany me on vacations. Pete's dog was more than happy to accompany him to the park. My cell phone always accompanies me when I leave the house.* **2.** To play a musical instrument in support of a featured band or performer. *While her little sister played the flute, Sarah accompanied her on the clarinet. Will you accompany me on piano when I sing at the talent show?*

accompany (one) with To play a musical instrument in support of a featured band or performer. *I need someone to accompany me with piano when I sing at the talent show.*

accord with To match or agree with something. *The suspect's statement does not accord with the information witnesses have given us.*

according to all accounts Based on all reports or sources. *According to all accounts, Lisa was last seen was at the Italian restaurant on the corner. According to all accounts, he was out of town the night of the murder.*

according to Cocker Indicates and/or emphasizes that something is correct, right, or reliable. Refers to 17th-century English arithmetician Edward Cocker. Primarily heard in UK. *Now that I've read over my thesis five times, I am quite sure it's free of errors and completed according to Cocker! The car leaking that much oil does not seem to be according to Cocker—I think you should take it to the shop as soon as possible.*

according to Gunter Indicates and/or emphasizes that something is correct, right, or reliable. Considered the American equivalent of the British

phrase, "according to Cocker." Refers to 16th-century English mathematician Edmund Gunter. *Now that I've read over my thesis five times, I am quite sure it's free of errors and completed according to Gunter! The car leaking that much oil does not seem to be according to Gunter—I think you should take it to the shop as soon as possible.*

according to Hoyle According to accepted standards or rules. The phrase refers to 17th-century British writer Edmond Hoyle, who wrote extensively on the rules of card games. *According to Hoyle, this is the proper way to change a tire. I refuse to propose to my boyfriend. The man is supposed to propose to the woman, according to Hoyle.*

according to (one's) own lights Based on one's beliefs or inclinations. *You may not agree with Kara's free-spirited lifestyle, but she has always lived according to her own lights.*

according to (someone/something) 1. As stated by another individual or source. *According to the almanac, we're going to have a very hot summer this year. That restaurant is excellent, according to Tom. 2.* Proportionate to something. *Nate gets paid time and a half according to how many hours of overtime he works.*

account for 1. To determine the location or state of a person or thing. *After the plane crash, authorities were unable to account for five of the passengers, and they still haven't found them. The cashier was unable to account for the missing cash from the register at the end of her shift. 2.* To give an explanation of something, typically at the request of someone who wants to fill a gap in information. *When Justin finally got home, his parents demanded that he account for his whereabouts earlier in the night. Can you account for the missing files?*

accredit (something) to (someone) To attribute an action or achievement to someone. *We did write that song together, but I accredit the catchy melody to my brother—that was all his idea. You have truly inspired your students, so we accredit this renewed interest in the school newspaper entirely to you, Mrs. Smith.*

accrue to To be paid or credited into an account or a store of something. *How much interest has accrued to your savings account? By June, eight more days will have accrued to your vacation time.*

accuse (one) of To blame someone for a crime or wrongdoing. *I can't*

believe he would accuse me of stealing money out of his wallet. Don't accuse him of lying without any evidence.

accustom (one) to To familiarize someone with something. *You need to accustom the new interns to the layout of the building. Seth will accustom you to this project before our next meeting. Accustom yourself to the new software before we start using it more frequently.*

accustomed to To have become familiar or comfortable with something. This phrase is often used to describe aspects of one's daily routine. *Now that she is no longer in school, Stella has become accustomed to staying up late and sleeping until noon. I never thought I would become accustomed to working in a warehouse, but now I almost enjoy it.*

ace in To be fortunate in gaining admittance somewhere. *Gary managed to ace in a few minutes before the store closed for the night.*

ace in the hole A major advantage that one keeps hidden until an ideal time. The phrase originated in poker, in which an ace is the most valuable card. Primarily heard in US. *His embarrassing secret is my ace in the hole, and I plan to reveal it to everyone the next time he mocks me publicly.*

ace it To achieve total success at something, or to complete something to the best of one's ability. *I'm not worried, I always ace it at job interviews. I'm sure he'll ace it at the match tomorrow morning.*

ace out 1. To have good fortune. *I aced out at work today when the boss did not assign me that big project.* **2.** To narrowly escape a bad situation. *Jack hit the gas at the right moment and aced out of a car accident.* **3.** To outmaneuver or outperform someone, often resulting in victory. *Harry finished the game with a strike and aced out Bob in the bowling tournament.*

ace (something) To do exceptionally well in something, especially an exam or other high-pressure situation. *I feel like I aced that interview, so I'm pretty sure the job is mine. I managed to ace that test without even studying for it.*

ace up (one's) sleeve A secret advantage. *My stamina is the ace up my sleeve for this race—the other runners don't stand a chance! The defense attorney waited for just the right time to play the ace up her sleeve—a new eye-witness.*

ache for 1. To feel a strong desire for someone or something. *She ached*

for the companionship of her husband when he was deployed overseas. **2.** To feel sadness and/or empathy for someone. *I ache for those little children who just lost their parents in a car accident.*

achieve the impossible To succeed at or overcome a task that is thought (sometimes hyperbolically) to be outside the realm of possibility. *People can achieve the impossible if they work together. I felt like I had achieved the impossible when finally I received that promotion last week.*

Achilles' heel A weakness or vulnerability that can lead to permanent destruction or downfall. In Greek mythology, the hero Achilles was killed after being struck in the heel—the only weak spot on his body. *Improper security measures were the failed company's Achilles' heel. I'm a good student, but I know I won't score high enough on the scholarship test because math is my Achilles' heel.*

aching heart A feeling of pain or despair in the absence of someone one loves. *I had such an aching heart during the holidays this year, the first ones without my mother.*

acid test A conclusive test. The phrase comes from the 19th-century practice of testing metals in nitric acid to determine if they contained gold. *Restructuring the organization will be the acid test that determines whether or not it can survive the sudden downturn in the economy.*

acknowledge (one) as To publicly announce or accept that one possesses certain qualities or has attained a specific achievement or result. *All she wanted was for her old boss to finally acknowledge her as the new director of the organization. The dissidents refused to acknowledge the new leader as legitimate.*

acknowledge (one) to be right To publicly announce or accept that one is correct in some position, action, or statement. *After a lengthy interview with investigators, the suspect acknowledged the witness to be right. The finance department acknowledged Henry to be right about the accounting error.*

acknowledge the corn To admit to or acknowledge one's fault, shortcoming, mistake, crime, or naiveté. *When they arrested me, I decided I might as well acknowledge the corn and confess to stealing the car. Especially since I was still driving it.*

acknowledge (the) receipt of To recognize, often formally, that something has been received, usually an item that has been delivered. *Jason signed a form to acknowledge the receipt of the letter. Did you get a notification acknowledging receipt of your package?*

acquaint (one) with To help someone become familiar or comfortable with something. *You'll need to acquaint me with the rules of their culture. Can you please acquaint Eric with the new procedure for data entry?*

acquainted with (someone/something) 1. Having met someone, but not knowing them well. *I'm just acquainted with Daniel because we have many friends in common. Are you acquainted with my sister? I can't remember if you two met before.* 2. Knowledgeable about or familiar with something. *I need to become acquainted with the rules of this game. Dale is acquainted with the new procedure for data entry, so he will show it to you.*

acquiesce to To yield or succumb to one's requests or demands. *After a long negotiation, the company acquiesced to the union's demands. I don't want to relocate, and my husband finally acquiesced to my wishes.*

acquired taste Something, especially food or drink, that is unpleasant at first, but which becomes (or will become) more enjoyable over time. *I once thought sushi was totally gross, but I've found that it's something of an acquired taste.*

acquit (one) of To determine that one is not guilty of a crime or other wrongdoing. *Everyone in the courtroom was shocked when the jury acquitted the defendant of murder.*

across hell's half acre See [all over hell's half acre](#).

across the board See [all over the board](#).

across the board Applying to or impacting every part or individual in a group or spectrum of things. *Some senior employees are unhappy that the new dress code applies to everyone across the board. The politician is expected to call for tax increases across the board.*

across the map See [all over the map](#).

across the pond Across the Atlantic Ocean, almost always referring to either the British Isles or the United States, depending on which side of the ocean the speaker is from. *I think we're going to head across the pond to*

London for our vacation this summer. Well, I have several relatives living across the pond in Boston, so we may go there on holiday this year.

act as To serve or perform a job or role, often temporarily. *Until Kayla returns from her maternity leave, Sharon will act as lead analyst. You will now act as file clerk and benefits coordinator, and your salary will reflect this change.*

act for 1. To be a representative for someone else. *Because I have power of attorney for my mother, I can act for her in legal and financial matters when she is no longer able to do so. 2.* To perform a job or role in place of the person that usually does it. *Yes, Kayla usually leads this project, but I am acting for her while she is on maternity leave.*

act of congress That which is extremely difficult to achieve or requires a large amount of effort or patience to enact. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *It's like you have to have an act of congress before the city council will pay to fix the roads in this town. Trying to get my doctor on the phone is like an act of congress!*

act of faith 1. An action that reveals or proves one's religious devotion. *In my sister's religion, walking on hot coals is an act of faith. 2.* An action that reveals or proves one's interest or trustworthiness. *The millionaire investor is meeting with us as an act of faith, so our presentation has to be absolutely perfect! 3.* An action that tests one's morals and/or beliefs. *Leaving your infant with another person is a real act of faith when you're a new mom.*

act of God A natural disaster, or any similar large-scale event beyond human control. *I don't care about a little rain—only an act of God will keep us from getting married today. There is no way to prepare for a sudden act of God like an earthquake.*

an act of war 1. A violent action that could initiate large-scale fighting. *If we invade that country, it will be an act of war. 2.* By extension, any unwelcome action that elicits an angry response. *You played my video games when I wasn't home? Oh, that's an act of war, little brother!*

act (one's) age To act in accordance with one's expected level of maturity. *Really, John, act your age a little, you're like a child sometimes. I'm glad that Sarah is so committed to her studies, but sometimes I wish she would act her age and go out with friends a bit.*

act (one's) age To behave maturely, especially in a way that is considered appropriate for one's age level. Usually used as an imperative for one who is considered to be acting immaturely. *You're an adult, so act your age and stop yelling in public. Mom, you can't wear a provocative dress like that to my graduation—act your age! Jeremy needs to start acting his age if he's going to fit in at this school.*

act out 1. To behave poorly or inappropriately, especially considering one's age. *My son is always so happy at home, so I can't understand why he's suddenly acting out at school. You're in middle school now, so if you act out in class, you will be sent to the principal's office.* **2.** To perform a role, often an imaginary one (as in a play). *Jennifer did a superb job acting out the role of Auntie Mame in the play. I don't want to upset my mom during the holidays, so I am acting out the part of dutiful daughter.* **3.** To express one's negative feelings, usually to another person. *I got tired of Mark constantly acting out his anger out on me, so I ended our relationship.* **4.** To communicate through actions or gestures instead of words. *Henry was suffering from a severe case of laryngitis and had lost his voice, so he had to act out his thoughts during the meeting. There's no talking in this game—you have to act out the movie you're assigned, and we will try to guess it.*

act the fool 1. To behave comically or playfully, often to amuse others. *If you continue to act the fool, you're going to have to leave the classroom. Joe never acts the fool—he's always serious.* **2.** To behave irresponsibly or immaturely, especially in an environment where it is especially inappropriate. *Don't let me catch any of you kids acting the fool at the museum—it's a privilege to even go inside. We finally get invited to a nice dinner party and you have to go and act the fool—what's wrong with you?*

act the goat To behave comically or playfully, often to amuse others. *Joe never acts the goat—he's always serious. If you continue to act the goat, you're going to have to leave the classroom.*

act up 1. Of a person, to behave poorly or inappropriately. *If you act up in class, you will be sent to the principal's office.* **2.** Of a thing, to malfunction or operate incorrectly. *My car's transmission started acting up during my commute to work. My phone acted up again this morning; I think I need to take it to a professional.* **3.** Of a medical condition, to become problematic or troublesome, usually after a period of remission. *Jake played football with his*

friends today, and now his old knee injury is acting up. It's springtime, so of course my allergies are acting up again.

act (up)on 1. To take action in a situation. *The report is due tomorrow, so I need you to act on it immediately. Please act upon this subpoena for records at once.* **2.** To take action that is strongly influenced by certain information or advice. ("Upon" is most commonly used to convey this meaning.) *Acting upon my doctor's orders, I cleared my schedule and spent the week recuperating at home. A; "I can't believe he said that about us!" B: "Well, he's probably just acting on his mother's instruction, and that woman hates us."* **3.** To impact in some way. *The barking dogs next door are acting on my patience.*

actions speak louder than words Actions are more revealing of one's true character since it is easy to say things or make promises, but it takes effort to do things and follow through. *Paul made all sorts of promises when he was on the campaign trail. However, actions speak louder than words, so we'll see how many of those promises he actually keeps. Julie always says she'll donate to the school, and she never does, so I doubt she will this year. Actions speak louder than words, after all.*

activist judge A judge or justice (particularly of the US Supreme Court) who rules in accordance with their personal ideology rather than with how the law is strictly written; often used in a derogatory or pejorative sense. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *Many attributed the strict environmental rulings to the activist judge who was appointed last November and is known for his love of nature.*

activist justice A court justice whose rulings are dictated more by personal leanings than the law. *I can't believe that judge! What is he, an activist justice—handing out rulings based on his own bent?*

ad hoc Created when necessary for a specific purpose (as opposed to being planned or prepared in advance). The phrase is Latin for "to this." *Let's form an ad hoc committee to make some recommendations to the board, and then we'll decide how to address this issue. Ad hoc wireless networks often present security risks to unsuspecting mobile device users.*

ad infinitum Continuously without end. The phrase is Latin for "to infinity." *Repairs to the old house seemed to go on ad infinitum—every time we finished a project, another awaited us.*

ad-lib **1.** adjective Of or characterized by an impromptu fashion, with little or no preparation beforehand. *Jazz improv is always a bit ad-lib by design; you can't plan what you might play!* **2.** adverb Done in an impromptu or free-hand fashion, with little or no preparation beforehand. *His comedy is always so unique; I hear he does the whole thing ad-lib.* **3.** noun Something, usually performative in nature, that is done with little or no preparation beforehand. *His speech this morning felt like it was a bit of an ad-lib. I don't think he prepared any notes ahead of time.* **4.** verb To say, do, or perform something in an impromptu fashion, with little or no preparation beforehand. *I had forgotten to rehearse my lines for the audition, so I just decided to ad-lib the whole way through.*

ad nauseam Continuously and to excess. The phrase is Latin for "to nausea" (to the point that one becomes ill). *I couldn't help but check my watch as Beth talked ad nauseam about her boyfriend's accomplishments.*

Adam Tiler An obsolete term for the accomplice of a pickpocket, who is given and escapes with the stolen goods. Here, "Adam" refers to the first man (as in the Garden of Eden), while "Tiler" is an obsolete slang term for a pickpocket. *We have caught the pickpocket, but some Adam Tiler made off with the money.*

adapt (something) for To change or adjust something for a new or different purpose. *I heard that the studio is adapting that book for a movie. Have they adapted the building for wheelchair accessibility?*

adapt (something) from To create one thing from another. *The film was adapted from a famous novel.*

adapt (something) to **1.** To become familiar or comfortable with something. When used in this way, the phrase does not take a noun or pronoun between "adapt" and "to." *When Fran moved to China, she struggled to adapt to her new surroundings.* **2.** To modify or adjust something to fit or work properly with something else. *Brian had to buy special cables so that he could adapt his old VCR his new TV.*

add fuel to the fire To do or say something to make an argument, problem, or bad situation worse; to further incense an already angry person or group of people. *The debate was going poorly for the senatorial candidate, and his strikingly uncouth comments simply added fuel to the fire. Revelations of the CEO's massive retirement package added fuel to the fire*

for consumers already furious over the company's dubious financial dealings.

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add insult to injury To exacerbate an already problematic situation in a way that is humiliating; to make someone who has just experienced injury or defeat feel worse about the situation with one's words. A: "Well, it's not like you were having a great season before you broke your leg." B: "Thanks for adding insult to injury." *I was already late for work and, to add insult to injury, I spilled coffee all over myself.*

add (something) into To mix or join two or more things together. *Make sure you add milk into the brownie mix before putting the pan in the oven. Can we add some more herbs into the sauce? It's pretty bland.*

add (something) together To calculate the sum or total of multiple items. *Can you take these receipts and add the totals together for me?*

add up **1.** To calculate the sum or total of multiple items. *Can you add up these numbers? I'm worried I made an error in my calculations.* **2.** To equal the expected or presumed amount. *These numbers just aren't adding up—I think I made a mistake somewhere.* **3.** To be logical or believable. *I listened to Jill's explanation, but I'm still skeptical—something just doesn't add up.* **4.** To become a significant amount. Usually used in reference to increasing expenses. *With all of the driving I do for work, the cost of gas and maintenance really starts to add up. It will take a while for you to become a master, but all this practice really does add up.* **5.** To judge someone or

something *As I waited for my interview to start, I studied the other candidates and added up my competition.*

add up to To equal or amount to something. *The cash in the drawer doesn't add up to the amount of sales we made today. These new details do not add up to the story the witnesses told us.*

addict (one) to To become, or cause someone else to become, dependent on a particular substance or thing. *That first use of cocaine addicted me to it. So many people have addicted themselves to caffeine.*

address (one) as **1.** To use someone's specific title in speech or writing. *It is proper to address her as "Madam Secretary."* **2.** To treat someone in a certain way. *Yes, I'm your friend, but I'm also your boss, so please address me as your superior during work hours.*

address (oneself) to **1.** To speak to a specific person or group at the exclusion of others. *Right now, I'm only addressing myself to the graduating seniors. I'll talk to the other grades tomorrow.* **2.** To focus on a certain problem or situation. *I needed to address myself to the burst pipe in my basement—that's why I didn't attend the dinner party.*

address (something) to **1.** To direct or express one's thoughts or opinions to a person or group. *If you're trying to get donations for the school, address your speech to the parents, not the recent graduates. As these seem to be recurring issues, I need to address the complaints to my whole department.* **2.** To put the recipient's name and address on a package or envelope to be mailed. *Penny addressed the package to her brother before taking it to the post office.*

adhere to **1.** To stick to a surface. *The masking tape was so old that it would no longer adhere to anything.* **2.** To follow a plan, belief system, or course of action. *If I don't adhere to a strict routine during the workweek, I usually start feeling stressed. I'm not serving pork at the dinner party because I know Richard adheres to a Kosher diet.* **3.** To believe in a particular idea or concept. *He adheres to the belief that working long hours and staying late at the office is the only way to get promoted.*

adjourn for To temporarily end a meeting or gathering with the intent of continuing it at a later time. *Since we were getting hungry, we decided to adjourn for lunch.*

adjourn to To suspend a meeting or gathering with the intent of continuing it in another location. *There was a mishap in scheduling for the conference room, so we had to adjourn to the cramped office next door and finish our meeting there.*

adjust (oneself/something) to **1.** Of a person, to become familiar or comfortable with something, often a change in one's life. *I know you're not thrilled with this new schedule, but can you please try to adjust yourself to it?* **2.** Of a thing, to modify something to fit or work properly with something else. *We had to adjust the office layout to create space for the new employees.*

administer (something) to **1.** To provide something to someone, usually a form of care or help. *The organization held a fundraiser so that they could administer aid to the poor.* **2.** To inject or deliver something, such as medication. *The doctor administered the flu shot to his patient.*

admire (one) for To form a positive opinion of someone for a particular quality or attribute. *George admired Jenna for her ability to remain calm in stressful situations. I admire Mother Teresa for her unwavering devotion to the poor.*

admire to To want to do something. *Of course, George! I would admire to go to the dance with you.*

admit defeat To yield to the opposition or accept that one is wrong in some pursuit. *Well, I ran a good campaign, but it is time I admitted defeat in this election.*

admit (one) to **1.** To permit one to enter. *This ticket will admit you to the art exhibit. We were admitted to the club after we showed the security guard our identification.* **2.** To confess or acknowledge a personal wrongdoing. When used in this way, there is no noun or pronoun between "admit" and "to." "To" can be followed by either the misdeed or the recipient of the confession. *Beth finally admitted to cheating on the test. Ryan would not admit to his parents that he had damaged their car.*

admit (someone/something) into **1.** To allow something to be used as evidence in a trial. *The prosecuting attorney tried to admit new documents into evidence.* **2.** To allow one membership or entry. *That university only admits the best applicants into its law program. Luckily, a*

worker admitted us into the store, even though it was about to close.

admonish (one) for To reprimand one for a wrongdoing. *Katherine admonished Theresa for arriving late to work.*

adopt (someone/something) as **1.** To choose one for a specific role. *We were so impressed with her efforts that we adopted her as the new leader of the organization.* **2.** To claim ownership of something or establish guardianship of someone. *I told Marshall my idea for the project last week, and now he has apparently adopted it as his own. My parents adopted me as their son when I was just two months old.*

adore (one) for To admire or love one for a certain trait or ability. *I adore Jean for her studiousness—she is the hardest worker I've ever met. She adores him for his muscular build and thick head of hair.*

adorn (someone/something) with To embellish or decorate someone or something with some kind of decoration. *We always adorn our tree with lights, ornaments, and tinsel on Christmas Eve. She adorned herself with expensive jewelry before going to the cocktail party.*

adrenaline junkie One who constantly seeks out the sudden increase of energy associated with dangerous activities, similar to the way drug addicts seek out the "high" achieved by drug use. *I do about 10 skydives a year because I love the rush so much. People consider me a bit of an adrenaline junkie.*

adrenaline rush A sudden increase in energy or vivacity resulting from a moment of danger or intense activity. *I've never had an adrenaline rush like I had from skydiving; I was buzzing with energy for hours afterward!*

adult verb To act mature and responsible. This slang term is typically used humorously by young adults. *Ugh, I can't adult today—I'm going back to bed.*

adulterate (something) with To dilute or corrupt one substance with another. *After an increase in fatal overdoses, the police discovered that the local drug dealers were adulterating heroin with fentanyl. The remake adulterates the classic story with a political agenda.*

adulterous behavior Actions that bely not only an unfaithfulness to one's spouse, but also a propensity toward deceit and licentiousness in general. *I suspect that Ollie has been engaging in adulterous behavior*

recently. *I wonder if his husband has picked up on it.*

adulting slang The (sometimes daunting) task of acting mature and responsible. Usually used humorously by young adults. *Does this mean I have to cook for myself now? I hate adulting. Adulting is the worst—as soon as I get paid, the money goes directly to bills.*

advance notice A notification, signal, or sign that something is going to happen or is expected to happen. *I know that we were all surprised that Dad decided to move to China, but I think his learning Mandarin last year was something of an advance notice.*

advance (something) to To pay money ahead of schedule. *Maria's boss advanced next week's paycheck to her so that she could pay her car repair bill.*

advance toward To move forward or maneuver toward a location or goal *The army advanced toward the enemy capital. I crossed the street to avoid the strange man advancing toward me.*

advance (up)on To move forward or maneuver toward a location or goal, such as in a military offensive or a similarly coordinated march or effort. *The army advanced upon the enemy capital. After gathering at city hall, the protesters advanced on the senator's office.*

advanced in years Of an older age. *Though my grandpa loves to read, he is rather advanced in years and has a hard time making out small print anymore.*

advertise for To make information known to a wider audience, usually with the intention to obtain or sell a product or service. *When her house needed repairs, Kelly advertised for a handyman. The company hired me to advertise for their new product line.*

advise against To recommend not pursuing a particular plan or action. *I would advise against quitting your job if you are not actively pursuing another opportunity. My mechanic advised against driving the car until the transmission was repaired.*

advise (one) about To recommend or offer suggestions to someone. *Jim advised Carla about her tax liability. I advised him about the potential problems with his plan, but he implemented it anyway.*

advise (one) against To make a recommendation to someone to not

pursue a particular plan or action. *She advised him against taking out another mortgage on the house. The professor advised his students against skipping class if they wanted a passing grade at the end of the semester.*

advise (one) of To share insight or recommendations on a particular topic with a person or group. *My lawyer advised me of how to handle my mother's estate. Patrick advised her of the possible issues she should expect during the negotiation process.*

advise (one) on To share insight or recommendations on a particular topic with a person or group. *My lawyer advised me on how to handle my mother's estate. Patrick advised her on the possible issues she should expect during the negotiation process.*

aesthetically challenged Distinctly unattractive or unpleasant to the eye; homely. A euphemistic and humorously politically correct term, usually said of a person. Primarily heard in UK. *Deborah's new boyfriend is a bit aesthetically challenged, but she loves him and I guess that's all that counts.*

AF rude slang An abbreviation for "as fuck" that usually follows an adjective as an intensifier. *Wow, with that leather jacket on, you look cool AF! That party was crazy AF, man! You should have been there!*

affable personality A personality that is friendly, approachable, sociable, amicable, and/or likeable. *He might not be the best instructor in the school, but he has such an affable personality that he is everyone's favorite.*

affinity for A passionate interest in or affection for something or someone. *She must have an affinity for women with dark hair because her girlfriends are always brunettes. You can always find Lucy at the library—she has a real affinity for reading.*

affirmative action A policy that promotes the recruitment or advancement of minority groups (as relates to race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or people with disabilities) so as to create a more diverse environment, especially as a means to counter discrimination against those minorities. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *While some people view affirmative action as an unfair hiring method, the company stands by it as a useful means of promoting diversity.*

affix (one's) signature to To sign one's name to something, such as a document. *Jason reads every contract thoroughly before affixing his*

signature to the bottom of it. Once you affix your signature to this last document, you'll be the owner of a brand-new car!

affix (something) to To stick or fasten something on another object. *Please affix stamps to these envelopes and then drop them in the mailbox.*

afflict (one) with **1.** To cause one to contract an ailment or disease. A person's name or pronoun can appear before "with." *My classroom has been almost empty all week because one kid afflicted the others with chicken pox. When you have a child in preschool, you'll be afflicted with every illness.* **2.** To cause another person hardship or difficulty. When used in this sense, a noun or pronoun typically does not appear between "afflict" and "with." *Once I finally recovered from my illness, I was afflicted with medical bills.* **3.** To force someone to spend time with an irritating person. A person's name or pronoun typically appears before "with." *Please don't afflict me with your obnoxious brother this evening.*

afraid not See [\(I'm\) \(a\) afraid not](#).

afraid of (one's) own shadow Easily scared; jumpy; timid. *Everyone was surprised that Janice led the meeting with confidence, as she normally seems afraid of her own shadow. Please don't take my sister to a haunted house on Halloween—she's afraid of her own shadow.*

afraid so See [\(I'm\) \(a\) afraid so](#).

after a fashion **1.** In a sufficient but rudimentary or unimpressive manner. *I can ride a motorcycle, after a fashion. I wouldn't ride one on a busy highway, though. I can write, after a fashion, but my sister is a genius—she far outshines me with the written word.* **2.** In an inadequate or incomplete way. *Tom fixed the car, after a fashion, so it's running again but still makes that terrible noise.*

after a sort Poorly, imperfectly, or without great care. *I managed to fix my bike after a sort. It still sounds like it's about to fall apart, but at least it still moves!*

after a storm comes a calm Things often improve after a difficult, chaotic, or stressful time. *Bankruptcy is very emotionally taxing, but try to remember that after a storm comes a calm.*

after a while Following a certain period of time, usually one that is relatively short. *It's a little bit strange driving on the opposite side of the road*

in Ireland, but you get used to it after a while.

after (a) while, crocodile An playful way to say goodbye before a temporary parting, often preceded by "See you later, alligator." A: "*See you later, alligator.*" B: "*After a while, crocodile.*"

after all 1. In spite of a previous action or situation. Used in this way, it typically emphasizes a change in plans. *Ray's work schedule changed, so he'll be able to visit us after all.* **2.** In consideration of; considering. Used in this way, "after all" appears in conjunction with a reason that the speaker wants to the listener to think about. *Be nice to Jason. He had a hard day at work, after all. You should visit your mother more often—after all, she won't live forever.*

after all is said and done When everything is finished or resolved. *Yes, my sister's attempts to commandeer my party have been maddening, but after all is said and done, we'll reconcile—we always do.*

after hours Beyond the established time that something typically closes or ends. *I had to stay after hours in order to finish that report. My father is friends with the shop owner, so she opened it after hours just for me.*

after meat, mustard A phrase emphasizing that something has come too late to be useful (like mustard after meat has already been eaten). A: "*Here, I finished my project, Mr. Smith!*" B: "*Ah, after meat, mustard. I've already submitted your final grade, and it's too late to change it.*"

after (one's) own heart Sharing similar values, ideas, or interests. *Michelle is very tech-savvy and loves to code—just like me! She's a woman after my own heart.*

after Saturday comes Sunday A translation of a rare Arabic phrase attributed to militant Islamic extremists, meaning that Jews (who celebrate the Sabbath on Saturday) will be killed first, followed by Christians (whose Sabbath is on Sunday). *We weren't sure of the safety of the area, but when we saw the phrase "After Saturday Comes Sunday" graffitied on the wall, we knew we should leave.*

after the dust has settled When things have become more calm or stable; when the consequences (of something) have become known or manageable. *I know things have been really hectic during this project, so let's all take a bit of a break and return to it after the dust settles a bit. Lots of people opposed the gay marriage legislation, but after the dust has settled, I*

hope they'll see that there was no reason to be afraid of it.

after the fact After an event or situation has already happened. *Bob only realized he had been scammed after the fact, when he received a bank statement full of fraudulent charges.*

after the fashion of In a manner or style imitative of someone or something else. *When John F. Kennedy was president, many women dressed after the fashion of his wife, Jacqueline. I think that classical piece is after the fashion of the Baroque masters.*

after the Lord Mayor's show noun An anticlimactic or disappointing end following an otherwise exciting, impressive, or entertaining display. It is used as a distinct phrase, separate from the grammar and syntax of the sentence, and taken from the full proverbial phrase "After the Lord Mayor's show comes the dust-cart" (referring to the street cleaners who follow the annual procession of the Lord Mayor of London to clean up the pageant horses' dung). Primarily heard in UK. *We were expecting a great match after our brilliant win last week, but our team played so poorly that it was a bit of an after the Lord Mayor's show.*

after the party is over Referring to the time when a period of excitement, success, jubilation, or opulence changes to a subsequent period of sobriety, calm, reflection, and/or regret. *That new Olympic stadium looks great now, but after the party is over, I wonder if it will ever be used again. We felt we were invincible back then, when earnings were high and everything seemed possible. These days, long after the party's over, I think we all were a bit foolish with our money.*

after the style of In a manner or style imitative of someone or something else. *When John F. Kennedy was president, many women dressed after the style of his wife, Jacqueline. I think that classical piece is after the style of the Baroque masters.*

after you A set phrase that politely urges another person to do something first. *When they both reached the entrance at the same time, the man held the door open and said, "After you." Oh, you can bowl first—after you.*

after you, my dear Alphonse A phrase typically said when two people try to do the same thing at the same time. It derives from the 1920s comic strip *Happy Hooligan*, which featured two very well-mannered Frenchmen, Alphonse and Gaston. *No, no, you go first—after you, my dear*

Alphonse!

again and again Constantly or repeatedly. *The phone rang again and again until I finally answered it. I've told you again and again to pick your clothes up off the floor, and it's still a mess in here!*

against all odds Despite being very likely to fail. *Against all odds, he was able to survive being stranded in the wilderness for a week with no food.*

against (one's) better judgment In spite of one's apprehension or objections. *Against his better judgment, Joe let his daughter attend her friend's party. I allowed my obnoxious co-worker to accompany me on my work trip, against my better judgment.*

against (one's) principles In opposition or contrary to one's values or beliefs, such as those of religion, ethics, or ideology. *I'm afraid it goes against my principles to vote for a measure that would limit funding for public schools. He told me it's against his principles to drink alcohol.*

against (one's) will Without one's permission or consent. Typically used to describe an action or activity that one has been forced to do. *The attacker forced the woman into his car against her will.*

against the clock In a very limited amount of time; with a shortage of time being the main problem. *We left later than we were supposed to, so it was a race against the clock to get to the airport on time.*

against the collar Difficult, exhausting, or problematic. The phrase originates from the collar on a horse's harness, which tightens on the horse's neck when it travels uphill. Primarily heard in UK. *I was doing fine in the marathon, but it was a bit against the collar for the last couple miles. I don't think I have time to meet you today. Work has been a bit against the collar recently.*

against the current In contradiction to what is popular or expected. *It was difficult to go against the current, but, in the end, I was able to get the team to agree that my proposal is a good idea.*

against the grain 1. In the opposite way or perpendicular to the direction of the fibers of a piece of wood (or meat), i.e. its "grain." *Don't cut that wood against the grain, or it will be rough around the edges. For most cuts of steak, cookbooks recommend cutting against the grain.* 2. By extension, in opposition or contrary to what is generally understood,

assumed, practiced, or accepted. *The artist always tried to go against the grain, ignoring the artistic trends of her day.*

against the law Illegal. *What are you doing, putting that lipstick in your pocket? Shoplifting is against the law!*

against the odds Despite being very likely to fail. *Against the odds, he was able to survive being stranded in the wilderness for a week with no food.*

against the run of play Contrary to the pace or flow of a game or situation, usually in the context of sports. *Brazil dominated the game, but Japan secured a draw with a late goal against the run of play.*

against the stream In opposition or contrary to what is generally understood, assumed, practiced, or accepted. *My idea of adopting more eco-friendly habits was against the stream, but I think it will be worth it for the company in the long run.*

against time In a very limited amount of time; with a shortage of time being the main problem. *The team worked against time to get the project completed before midnight.*

age before beauty A humorous way to tell someone to go ahead of one, meant as a playful insult. *Chuck held the door open for Tim, motioned for him to go ahead, and said, "Age before beauty."*

age of consent The age at which a person is legally able to give consent, as to sexual relations, marriage, or a binding contract. *Some people advocate lowering the age of consent, but some worry it will cause an increase in promiscuity among young people.*

age out To be too old to remain in an age-based classification or receive age-based services. *When you turn 26, you will age out of your parents' health insurance coverage. When these kids turn 10, they'll age out of the after-school program.*

agitate against To provoke or encourage negative feelings or opinions about someone or something; to protest something. *The protesters are agitating against the company's unfair working conditions.*

agitate for To encourage and build support for a cause, especially by actively campaigning for it. *The students have had great success agitating for more social events on campus, but the dean is still opposed to the idea.*

agonize (oneself) over To worry excessively, especially about a decision or past action. *Please stop agonizing yourself over this decision. It won't really matter which one you choose. There's no need to agonize over what you said to him. He probably doesn't even remember.*

agree in principle To accept the general terms and/or conditions of a deal without having completed or agreed upon the specific details. *The government has agreed in principle that it will cover the cost of building a new school, but so far we haven't seen a clear proposal on how this would be accomplished.*

agree to To approve of or consent to something. *I will agree to wash the dishes if you will take out the trash. We refuse to agree to this contract until we are fully satisfied with its terms.*

agree to disagree Of two parties, to mutually accept that they simply do not (and will not) share the same view on a particular issue, in the interest of moving past the issue or avoiding further confrontation. *After their discussion about politics intensified, Fred and Sue had to agree to disagree before it impacted their friendship. I'm sick of arguing with you, so let's just agree to disagree and move on from this issue.*

agree (up)on To accept a proposal or idea in accord with others; to reach a consensus. *The union and the company have finally agreed on the terms of the new contract. Bob and Sheila are both so busy that they can't agree upon a date for the party.*

agree with **1.** To share the same opinion as another person or group. *I agree with the way management is trying to address the problem of employee tardiness. I don't agree with your methods of disciplining your children—I think they're much too harsh.* **2.** To have no ill effects on someone. (Usually used in the negative in reference to food that has made one ill.) *I feel so nauseous right now—I guess that burger I ate for lunch just didn't agree with me.* **3.** To be in accordance with something else. *The scientist's findings agree with the study published by the government's health organization. Can you tally these again? The numbers just don't agree with what's written here.* **4.** To make one happy; to suit one's personality well. *Look at how happy she is! Being on stage certainly agrees with her.*

agreement in principle An agreement in which the general terms and/or conditions of a deal are accepted without the complete details having

been specified or necessarily agreed upon. *There was an agreement in principle that the government would cover the cost of building a new school, but so far we haven't seen a clear proposal on how this would be accomplished.*

aha moment A moment or instance at which a sudden, revelatory idea, realization, or solution to a problem comes to mind. *We'd been working on the problem at the lab for weeks, but the aha moment came to me when I was out gardening!*

ahead of 1. Physically in front of something or someone. *We have special passes that let us go ahead of other people in line for the ride.* **2.** In advance of. *I made sure to have all of my work done ahead of my vacation.* **3.** In control of; in a position to deal with something before it becomes a problem or a burden. *So many requests have been pouring in that I simply can't stay ahead of my emails.*

ahead of (one's/its) time More advanced or innovative than is or was typical in a particular era. *That 19th-century scientist was definitely ahead of his time with his detailed plan of space travel. I can't believe that movie is from the 1950s—it's so progressive and way ahead of its time.*

ahead of schedule Earlier than a given deadline. *Since the contractor and his crew completed the renovations ahead of schedule, we were able to move into the house before winter arrived. Repaying your loan ahead of schedule will save you money in the long term by reducing the amount of interest you'll have to pay.*

ahead of the curve 1. Better than average. *I'm not sure how I did on that exam, but I think I'll end up ahead of the curve.* **2.** At the forefront of or leading in something, such as a developing situation, field of study or business, social development, etc. *The new professor is way ahead of the curve with his research into genetics.*

ahead of the game Gaining or maintaining an advantage in a situation, often by completing a task before its given deadline. *My term paper isn't due until next week, but I want to be ahead of the game and finish it tonight. It's hard to stay ahead of the game in network security when the threat landscape is constantly changing.*

ahead of the pack Having an advantage over or outperforming other competitors. *This computer system is certainly ahead of the pack in terms of*

cost and performance. Susan was able to stay ahead of the pack for most of the race.

ahead of time Earlier than a given deadline. *If we get to the theater ahead of time, we'll have our pick of good seats. My term paper isn't due until next week, but I finished it ahead of time.*

aid and abet To assist someone, usually in a mischievous or illegal activity. *Gary was arrested and charged with aiding and abetting the jewelry thief. I know other kids aided and abetted Paul in egging our house—he's just the only one who got caught.*

aid (someone) in (something) To assist someone in completing an action or activity. *It was nice of Julie to aid me in cleaning my house before the party. Jim aided his son in changing the flat tire on the car.*

an aide-mémoire Notes or pictures that one uses to remember something. *When I was studying for the test, I made an aide-mémoire of all the steps in photosynthesis.*

aim at 1. To point or guide an object, such as a weapon, at a target. *Make sure you aim at the target before you pull the trigger. His water balloon is aimed at you! Run! 2.* To target a particular issue or goal. *The new program is aimed at helping struggling students get the tutoring they need to succeed in class. 3.* To direct something at a specific person or group. *I could tell that his rude remarks were aimed at me even though he did not mention my name. The studio's ad campaign is aiming at teenagers, but I think the movie is too violent for a young audience.*

aim for 1. To point or guide an object, such as a weapon, at a target. *Make sure you aim for the target before you pull the trigger. His water balloon is aimed for you! Run! 2.* To strive to accomplish a particular goal. *After studying all weekend, Amanda is aiming for a perfect score on her history exam.*

aim for the stars Don't limit yourself—aspire to achieve greatness, even if it seems impossible or impractical. *When choosing a career path, don't settle—aim for the stars!*

aim to To strive or plan to do something. *I aim to be the best customer service representative I can be. I'm aiming to win Holly's heart—she is just the prettiest girl in the whole town.*

ain't fittin' to roll with a pig Dirty and/or boorish. *After spending all day doing construction work, Jack ain't fittin' to roll with a pig.*

ain't got a grain of sense Is very foolish or lacking common sense. *Jimmy almost crossed the street without looking up from his cell phone. He ain't got a grain of sense!*

ain't got a lick of sense Is very foolish or lacking common sense. *Jimmy almost crossed the street without looking up from his cell phone. He ain't got a lick of sense!*

ain't got the brains God gave a squirrel Is very foolish or lacking common sense. *Jimmy almost crossed the street without looking up from his cell phone. He ain't got the brains God gave a squirrel!*

ain't got the sense God gave geese Is very foolish or lacking common sense. *Jimmy almost crossed the street without looking up from his cell phone. He ain't got the sense God gave geese!*

ain't it the truth A statement of agreement. ("Ain't" is a nonstandard contraction that is considered very informal.) Sometimes but not always followed by a question mark. *A: "Trying to get teenagers to put down their cell phones is impossible!" B: "Ain't it the truth?" A: "Having grandkids really keeps you young." B: "Ain't it the truth."*

(one) ain't particular One has no opinion or preference about something. ("Ain't" is a nonstandard contraction that is considered very informal.) *A: "Where do you want to go for dinner?" B: "Wherever you want. I ain't particular."*

air of pretension A manner, affectation, appearance, or behavior indicative of pretension or self-importance. *I always really enjoy the film festival, but the air of pretension in the place is so thick you could cut it with a knife. Even though she has written so many award-winning books, she has no air of pretension about her whatsoever.*

air (one's) belly To vomit. *When I had the flu, I spent most of the time airing my belly.*

air (one's) dirty laundry in public To discuss very private, personal matters, especially that which may be embarrassing, in public or with other people. *It always makes me uncomfortable when John starts going into all his personal problems whenever our friends get together. I just wish*

he wouldn't air his dirty laundry in public like that. People have an unnatural fixation on the personal lives of celebrities, but I don't see why they should be expected to air their dirty laundry in public.

air (one's) dirty linen in public To discuss very private, personal matters, especially that which may be embarrassing, in public or with other people. *It always makes me uncomfortable when John starts going into all his personal problems whenever our friends get together. I just wish he wouldn't air his dirty linen in public like that. People have an unnatural fixation on the personal lives of celebrities, but I don't see why they should be expected to air their dirty linen in public.*

air (one's) grievances To express one's dissatisfaction. *The employees used the meeting to air their grievances about their salaries and working conditions.*

air (one's) lungs 1. To use profane language. *Mike always airs his lungs when he's frustrated. Please stop airing your lungs in front of the children! 2.* To chat or gossip. *That group of women gets together at the diner every Saturday night to have coffee and air their lungs.*

air (one's) opinion To make one's argument, beliefs, or ideas on a given topic known, as in a discussion or debate. *If you'll just allow me to air my opinion, you might understand where I stand on the matter.*

air (one's) paunch To vomit. *When I had the flu, I spent most of the time airing my paunch.*

air (one's) pores To be naked. *It feels good to air my pores and take a nice hot bath after a long day at work.*

air out To expose something to fresh air (often to improve its scent). *After I spilled water on the blanket, I put it on the back porch to air out. She opened all of the windows to let her house air out on the first day of spring. You need to air out your goalie pads before the next game—they stink!*

air rage Sudden, unruly, and often violently aggressive behavior of a passenger aboard an airplane, generally while in the air, which puts the safety of other passengers, the crew, or the airplane at risk. The term is modeled on "road rage," which is the equivalent behavior in relation to driving. *Airline crews are trained to diffuse incidents of air rage, which often start as minor disputes between passengers.*

airhead A frivolous, dim-witted, useless, and/or unintelligent person. *I can't believe I got paired with such an airhead for this assignment. He's not going to get any work done at all!*

airs and graces A pretentious manner. *She's always putting on airs and graces because she wants to impress other people. There's no need to put on airs and graces with me. I knew you long before you ever became successful.*

a.k.a. See [also known as](#).

al fresco Outside in the fresh air. "Al fresco" is Italian for "in the fresh (air)." *Kelly planned a wonderful al fresco luncheon for her bridesmaids. Wow, it's so nice outside. Let's dine al fresco tonight.*

an Aladdin's cave A place full of treasures. (In *The Arabian Nights*, Aladdin finds a magic lamp in a cave.) *I know you think your garage is full of junk, but to an antiques collector like me, it's an Aladdin's cave!*

alarm bell A sudden warning or intimation of danger, risk, or ill fortune. (Often pluralized.) *Alarm bells were going off in my head when I saw the panicked expression on her face.*

alarmist tactics The use of fear as a means of convincing people to agree to, act upon, or unite behind something. *The political candidate relied on alarmist tactics to win the election, giving the impression that her opponent would plunge the state into financial ruin.*

alarums and excursions Frantic activity that causes a clamor. Often seen in Elizabethan drama as a stage direction denoting military activity. *What on earth is going on? The alarums and excursions in the living room woke me from a sound sleep—keep it down!*

albatross **1.** A sign or omen of good fortune, specifically in relation to sailing. In this instance, it is a literal albatross that is a symbol of good luck. *We saw an albatross flying overhead as soon as we set out, so I think it's safe to say we're going to have a smooth trip out to sea.* **2.** Something that is considered cursed, an ill omen, or the bringer of bad luck. This metaphorical use of the term is an allusion to the Samuel Taylor Coleridge poem *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, in which the titular narrator kills an albatross (usually an omen of good fortune), bringing a curse upon himself and his ship. *Ever since he gave that disastrous campaign speech, the congressman has been seen as something of an albatross for the fortunes of his party.*

albatross around (one's) neck A heavy burden that prevents one from achieving success. The phrase refers to Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poem *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, in which the narrator kills an albatross—a large white bird deemed an omen of good fortune. This act is thought to curse his ship, so he must then wear the albatross around his neck. *The old property became an albatross around his neck as the costs of repair and renovation began to skyrocket.*

alert the public To bring something to the attention of the public at large, especially as a warning of some kind. *The purpose of her video was to alert the public to the risks of eating too much sugar. We want to alert the public that the business will be moving to a new location at the end of the month.*

Alibi Ike Someone who constantly makes excuses, so as to shirk duty or responsibility. The name was featured in the 1920s short story "Alibi Ike." A: "Sorry, Mom, I can't do the dishes tonight—I have a baseball game and then homework and also a project that's due tomorrow." B: "Listen, Alibi Ike, I think you can squeeze in washing a few dishes."

alienate (one) from 1. To isolate or estrange one from something. *Her status as the teacher's pet alienated Lisa from her peers.* 2. To cause a person or group to reject something. *The candidate alienated many potential voters from his party when he insulted blue-collar workers.*

alight from To get down from, or off of, something (usually a vehicle). *The children alighted from the school bus on the first day of school. We've landed, but we still need to alight from the plane.*

alight (up)on 1. To land or rest upon something. *The large black crow alighted on the telephone wire high above the street. As he walked into the room, his eyes alighted upon a gorgeous woman wearing a red dress.* 2. To arrive at a thought or idea. *The engineer alighted on a mathematical solution to the problem he'd been trying to solve all week.*

align (oneself) with To support, agree with, or form an alliance with a particular person or idea. *As soon as I explained how the plan would benefit the company financially, the CFO aligned himself with the idea. Heather aligned herself with an animal rights group and began promoting veganism.*

alike as peas in a pod See [\(as\) \(a\)like as \(two\) peas in a pod](#).

alive and kicking Active and healthy. A: "How are you doing after your surgery?" B: "I'm alive and kicking!" I thought for sure that old dog wouldn't survive the winter, but he's still alive and kicking!

alive and well **1.** Alive, especially after having been in danger or thought to be in danger. *The search party was overjoyed to find all of the stranded hikers alive and well after enduring the cold for eight days.* **2.** Active and healthy. *I knew Jane's dad was very sick, so I'm thrilled to hear that he's alive and well.* **3.** Of a concept or practice, flourishing despite a perception of decline elsewhere. *I'm glad to see chivalry is alive and well—thank you for holding the door for me. Electronic music is huge now, but guitar-driven rock is still alive and well.*

alive to (something) Alert to, cognizant of, or having familiarity with something. *Trust me, I'm alive to the concerns expressed by my constituents. You need to be alive to the dangers of drunk driving.*

alive with Full of or covered with something. *At night, the field came alive with fireflies. The court was alive with jubilant fans after the basketball team's big win.*

all-a-mort **1.** Struck dumb, insensible, or motionless with fear or confusion. *His speech was full of such fire and anger that I was rendered all-a-mort for a few moments afterward.* **2.** In a dying or half-dead state; depressed or dejected, as in one who feels half dead. Possibly a corruption of "alamort," meaning the same, or a reference to a "mort," the sound from a hunter's horn to signal the death of an animal being hunted. *I'm all-a-mort these past two days; I know not if I shall live beyond the week.*

all able-bodied people Anyone and everyone who is able to help or contribute to a cause in some way. *I'm calling on all able-bodied men and women in the area to lend a hand restoring the local church this weekend.*

all across the board See [all over the board](#).

all across the map See [all over the map](#).

all agog Amazed or impressed. *The audience was all agog as the speaker recounted tales of his experience as a stunt car driver.*

all along The entire time. *Kristen was disappointed to learn that Pete had been lying to her all along.*

all along the line At every step or stage. *Mistakes were made all along the line, and that's why the promising new company went out of business so quickly.*

all and some obsolete Both the individual and the collective whole; altogether; one and all. *The President's speech roused all and some into action.*

all and sundry Everybody. *Jason bought drinks for all and sundry to celebrate his promotion.*

all at once 1. Simultaneously. *Don't answer all at once. One at a time, please.* 2. Suddenly and without warning. *All at once, Henry began feeling sick.*

all at sea Puzzled, perplexed, or completely confused (about a subject or some task at hand). *I tried to do well in this class, but I've been all at sea since we started.*

all bark and no bite Full of talk that is more threatening or impressive than that which one can or will actually do. *He always threatens to call the police if I don't stay off his lawn, but he's all bark and no bite. John talks big about how much money he'll make someday, but he's all bark and no bite.*

(all) beer and skittles Fun and enjoyable. "Skittles" is a British game that is similar to bowling. *You've been working all weekend, so just come out with us for a little while—it'll be beer and skittles, I promise. Just because we get good perks doesn't mean this job is all beer and skittles.*

all bets are off 1. That which seemed certain or foreseeable in the future is now completely unpredictable. *The team seemed poised for a deep playoff run, but now that their star player is injured, all bets are off.* 2. Referring to an agreement that has broken down, been reneged upon, or is no longer valid. *All bets are off on the proposed tax measure, as members in congress have failed to come up with a bipartisan solution.*

all better (now) Fully healed, fixed, or cured. *You'll feel all better after you have some chicken soup. Jenny just got her cast off, so she must be all better now. A: "Were you able to fix the TV?" B: "Yep, it's all better now!"*

all brawn and no brain Having great power or physical strength but lacking mental acuity or intelligence. *He may have been a good football player in high school, but he was all brawn and no brains, so he didn't get*

into any colleges.

all but 1. Everything or everyone, with the exclusion of. *All but the freshmen were invited to the party. We sold all but the curtains in that estate sale.* 2. Nearly. *Public pay phones have all but disappeared in most major cities.*

all by (one's) lonesome Completely alone. *My roommate left town for the weekend, so I'm here all by my lonesome.*

all cats are gray in the dark In the dark of night, appearances do not matter (because it is so difficult to see anything). A: *"I can't believe you're going on a date with someone you've never met before! What if you don't think he's attractive?"* B: *"Ah, all cats are gray in the dark, so it will be fine."*

all cats are grey at night In the dark of night, appearances do not matter (because it is so difficult to see anything). A: *"I can't believe you're going on a date with someone you've never met before! What if you don't think he's attractive?"* B: *"Ah, all cats are grey at night, so it will be fine."*

all cats are grey by night In the dark of night, appearances do not matter (because it is so difficult to see anything). A: *"I can't believe you're going on a date with someone you've never met before! What if you don't think he's attractive?"* B: *"Ah, all cats are grey by night, so it will be fine."*

all cry and no wool A great deal of fuss, noise, fanfare, or protestation over something of little or no substance, importance, or relevance. *My opponent has been making outlandish claims about my track record so as to foment distrust in the public, but I assure you, his remarks are all cry and no wool.*

all day long The whole day. *Carol waited all day long for the cable repair man to arrive, but he never did.*

all dressed up and nowhere to go Ready for an event or occasion that has since been canceled. *Jimmy canceled our date tonight, so I'm all dressed up and nowhere to go.* A: *"Why is Jill is all dressed up and nowhere to go?"* B: *"Oh, because the friend she was supposed to meet got sick."*

all duck or no dinner Of a situation, action, or effort resulting in either total success or total failure; all or nothing. *We've got one last chance to secure an investor for the company, so it's all duck or no dinner with this*

meeting!

all ears Ready and eager to hear what one has to say; prepared to listen intently. *Tell me about your first day at the new job—I'm all ears!*

all eggs in one basket See [all \(one's\) eggs in one basket](#).

all else being equal When external circumstances or factors do not or will not affect the outcome or decision of something at hand. *All else being equal, I don't see our relationship continuing for much longer.*

all eyes Watching or ready to watch something intently. *The children were all eyes when the magician started performing.*

all eyes and ears Eagerly giving one's full attention to something. *The journalists were all eyes and ears at the press conference.*

all eyes are on (someone or something) Everyone is paying close attention to someone or something. *All eyes are on the home team's batter at this crucial moment in the game. All eyes were on me as I took the stage during the talent show.*

all for Completely in agreement with, in favor of, or supporting (something). *I'm all for eating healthy foods, but I just can't stand the taste of broccoli. I'm all for seeing a movie this Saturday!*

all fur coat and no knickers Good-looking on the surface but lacking substance underneath. *I thought David and I would really get along well, but we had nothing to talk about at dinner—he's really all fur coat and no knickers. Our new boss sounded like she had a lot of good ideas for the department, but it turns out she's all fur coat and no knickers.*

all geese are swans See [all \(one's\) geese are swans](#).

all gone Used up or done. *There's no more bread left in the pantry—it's all gone. I'm so sore after playing football yesterday. It seems that my days of contact sports are all gone.*

all good things come to an end It is inevitable that good experiences will eventually end. *I was so sad to graduate from college and leave all of my friends, but all good things come to an end.*

all good things must (come to an) end It is inevitable that good experiences will eventually end. *I know you're sad to graduate, but all good things must come to an end. Knowing that all good things must end doesn't*

make it any easier to go home after a vacation!

(all) great minds run in the same channel Wise or intelligent people tend to have the same ideas or think in a similar way. Often used humorously regarding unremarkable thoughts occurring simultaneously between two or more people. *Oh, you wanted to see the same film as me? All great minds run in the same channel, I guess!*

all hands and the cook Everyone available, even people who might not usually be involved. Traditionally, "all hands and the cook on deck" were called to help in the case of emergency on a ship. *We're going to need all hands and the cook to pitch in if we're going to get this project done by the deadline.*

all hands on deck 1. A call for all members of a ship's crew to come to the deck, usually in a time of crisis. (A "hand" is a member of a ship's crew.) *We're under attack! All hands on deck!* **2.** By extension, everyone available to help with a problem, or a call for those people to help. *Your grandmother arrives tomorrow and the house is still a mess—I need all hands on deck to help me clean! All hands on deck! We've got to roll out this tarp before the rain starts. Now let's go!*

all hat and no cattle Full of talk that is more impressive than that which one actually possesses or is able to do. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *He talks as though he knows more than anyone else, but he's all hat and no cattle.*

all hell breaks loose slang Said of a chaotic or disruptive situation, especially one that begins suddenly or unexpectedly. *I'm just walking down the street when all hell breaks loose, and drivers start beeping and screaming at each other for no apparent reason. One guy pushed another at the bar and then all hell broke loose—that's why we left!*

all her life is worth See [all \(one's\) life is worth](#).

all her life's worth See [all \(one's\) life's worth](#).

all holiday Ruined, bankrupt, or without work, as of a person, business, or organization. *I hear that he showed up drunk to the board meeting on Friday. I'd say it's all holiday for him now.*

all hollow obsolete A premeditated or foregone result or circumstance. *Many considered his defeat to be all hollow, as he never had a real chance*

from the outset.

all horns and rattles Furious. Belligerent. An American cowboy expression referring to the horns of cattle and the rattles of snakes. *Joe's been all horns and rattles since the lawsuit. Would you stop yelling and being all horns and rattles? I'm just trying to have a calm conversation with you!*

all hours (of the day and night) **1.** A very late hour of the night or very early hour of the morning. *You can't call her at all hours of the day and night—that's just rude. Johnny keeps taking the car and staying out till all hours, and I just don't know what to do anymore!* **2.** All day and night. *Is that pharmacy open all hours? I know it's 2 AM, but I just got out of the ER and need to fill a prescription.*

all in **1.** Fully committed to a task or endeavor; giving or prepared to give all of one's energy or resources toward something. *Just so you know, I'm all in if you're serious about taking that cross-country trip next week.* **2.** Betting all of one's money in a card game, such as poker. *Once I got my best hand of the night, I went all in.* **3.** Completely exhausted, fatigued, or worn out. *I was all in after only the first mile of the race; I could barely even walk for the rest of it!*

all in a day's work Of a task, normal and ordinary. This phrase is often used humorously to minimize an aspect of one's job that is particularly good or bad. *Oh, solving technological crises is all in a day's work for those of us in IT. I can't believe I had to unclog a toilet today, but all in a day's work, I guess. Dealing with screaming kids is all in a day's work when you're a pediatrician.*

all in all Overall; mostly. This phrase is typically used when one is considering all aspects of something together. *Sure, it rained on our vacation, but all in all we had a great time. All in all, the team has a bright future, even though they didn't make the playoffs this year.*

all in good time Eventually; at a more favorable time in the future. This phrase encourages one to be patient. *I know you wish your house had sold already, but all in good time. A: "I'm 35 years old—why aren't I married already?" B: "Oh, sweetheart, all in good time."*

all in one piece Uninjured or unharmed; fully intact. *We are lucky to have walked away from that car accident all in one piece. I made sure to pack the heirloom carefully so that it would still be all in one piece when it*

reached my daughter.

all in (one's) head Not substantial or real; having been imagined or invented. *I don't know why you think I don't trust you. I can assure you that it's all in your head.*

all in (one's) mind Not substantial or real; having been imagined or invented. *Cindy isn't mad at you, it's all in your mind.*

all is fair in love and war Otherwise questionable actions are acceptable under extenuating circumstances. Often written as "all's fair in love and war." A: *"I can't believe you took credit for my idea just so you would look good to the boss!"* B: *"Come on, all is fair in love and war!"*

all is fair in love and war See [all's fair in love and war](#).

all is fish that comes to his net A phrase that describes one's ability to make use of anything available. *I don't know how Chris fixed his car with the few tools he had with him at the time, but he's so smart like that—all is fish that comes to his net.*

all it's cracked up to be Something lives up to its name or reputation. It is as good as it was said to be. Often but not always used in the negative. *I'm so impressed with my new car—a luxury car really is all it's cracked up to be! Don't get your hopes up—I've heard this roller coaster isn't all it's cracked up to be.*

(all) joking aside In all seriousness; being frank for a moment. *Just flew in from Denver, huh? Your arms must be tired! joking aside, how was your trip out here? I give my brother a hard time for the gangly way he runs, but all joking aside, he's quite a remarkable athlete.*

all kidding aside See [kidding aside](#).

all kidding aside Denoting a serious or sincere comment or reflection during an otherwise facetious or jocular conversation. *I know we all like to poke fun at Dad's forgetfulness, but all kidding aside, I think his memory is really starting to deteriorate. All kidding aside, I really need to focus on finishing this report before tomorrow.*

(all) kidding aside In all seriousness; being frank for a moment. *Just flew in from Denver, huh? Boy, your arms must be tired! Kidding aside, how was your trip out here? I give my brother a hard time for the gangly way he runs, but all kidding aside, he's quite a remarkable athlete.*

all kinds of 1. Many varieties or types of. *You meet all kinds of people when you live in a big city. It's a huge store with all kinds of dresses—I'm sure you'll find one you like.* 2. slang Extremely; very. *Oh, their family is all kinds of dysfunctional! That movie was all kinds of awesome! I can't wait to see it again.*

All Lives Matter A term coined in response to (and criticism of) the Black Lives Matter movement. *A common response to "Black Lives Matter" is "All Lives Matter."*

all manner of Many varieties or types of. *You meet all manner of people when you live in a big city. It's a huge store with all manner of dresses—I'm sure you'll find one you like.*

all mops and brooms Drunk. Likely a reference to the mops and brooms needed to clean up after drunk people who vomit. *I can't stand coming to this bar—it's full of college kids who are all mops and brooms for the first time. I got all mops and brooms at the party last night, and I'm paying for it today, all right. I may never drink again!*

all mouth and no trousers Full of boastful, arrogant, or shallow talk, usually by a male, who then cannot deliver on his claims. A variant of "all mouth and trousers," meaning the same thing. Primarily heard in UK. *He talks a big game, but when it actually comes to asking out a woman, he's all mouth and no trousers.*

all mouth and trousers Full of boastful, arrogant, or shallow talk, usually by a male, who then cannot deliver on his claims. The variant form, "all mouth and no trousers" (meaning the same), is also often used. Primarily heard in UK. *I find that most of the men in the city are all mouth and trousers. They all act like they are God's gift to women, but I've yet to meet one who's at all interesting. The opposition party is all mouth and trousers, for they have no real plan to address the things they are criticizing.*

all my eye (and Betty Martin) Nonsense talk. The origin of this phrase is disputed, but it may have originated with a sailor whose retelling of a beggar's (misheard) words was regarded as nonsense. *Oh please, she's not rich. Any talk of wealth is all my eye and Betty Martin. If he says he's good at tennis, it's all my eye—he's terribly uncoordinated on the court.*

all nations obsolete In a dram shop (a place that sold alcoholic

beverages), the mixture of the remaining portions of distilled alcohol emptied and collected into a single container or vessel. *It's a shame to see the all nations thrown away at the end of day, made up as it is of so many different drinks.*

all night long Continuously throughout the entire night. *I didn't get any sleep last night because my neighbor's dog was barking all night long.*

all-nighter 1. The act of staying up all night to complete an activity, usually some kind of academic project. *I'm going to have to pull an all-nighter if I'm going to get this term paper done in time for school tomorrow.*

2. An establishment that remains open all night. *Kyle and Amanda stopped at an all-nighter for a snack after the concert.* **3.** One who stays awake all night. *Jess is a total all-nighter, so that third-shift job is perfect for her.*

all oak and iron bound In good health. *Yes, I was sick a few weeks ago, but I'm all oak and iron bound now.*

all of a dither In a nervous, confused, or agitated state. *We were all of a dither waiting to meet the president at our school rally. The economy is still all of a dither after news that the country's largest corporation has filed for bankruptcy.*

(all) of a piece Consistent with or similar to something else. *Her views on the economy are all of a piece with her voting record.*

all of a size Said when every item or thing in a group is the same size. *Those puppies are all of a size—it doesn't look like there's a runt in the bunch.*

all of a sudden Unexpectedly and abruptly; suddenly. *I was startled when the fire alarm went off all of a sudden. I thought Laura and I were friends, but all of a sudden, she stopped talking to me.*

all of the above Every item or option previously listed. While this phrase is often said in casual conversation, it is also used as an answer on multiple choice tests. *A: "What happened? Did you get stuck in traffic? Were you late? Was the boss mad?" B: "All of the above! It was a terrible morning."*

all of the tea in China See [all the tea in China](#).

all of y'all See [all y'all](#).

all of y'alls See [all y'all's](#).

all on her own See [on \(one's\) own](#).

all one See [all \(the\) one](#).

all one See [be all \(the\) one \(to someone\)](#).

all (one's) eggs in one basket All of one's hopes/efforts/resources are committed to one area, which is considered a risky strategy. *Stella put all her eggs in one basket by just applying to Harvard, but it's the only school she wants to go to. If I were you, I'd have a backup plan, rather than putting all my eggs in one basket.*

all (one's) geese are swans One is overexaggerating and not in touch with reality. Geese and swans are quite different, so to think they are the same is a stretch of the truth. *I can't listen to another one of Tiffany's stories that cast her as the adored heroine. All her geese are swans if she thinks everyone at work likes her!*

all (one's) life is worth A very risky, dangerous, sober, difficult, or monumental thing to undertake. *It would be all one's life is worth to go out into the streets alone at night. It's all your life is worth to try and find a seat on the train at rush hour.*

all (one's) life's worth A very risky, dangerous, sober, difficult, or monumental thing to undertake. *It would be all one's life's worth to go out into the streets alone at night. It's all your life's worth to try and find a seat on the train at rush hour.*

all or nothing 1. Everything one desires or nothing at all. In this mindset, the only acceptable outcome is everything that a person desires (the perfect option); anything else is rejected. *You need to ditch this all or nothing mentality. Every man you date is going to be flawed in some way! The college application process cannot be all or nothing—you really need to apply to a variety of schools.* 2. The last chance to do something. *Of course that team got into the playoffs at the last possible moment—they play really well when it's all or nothing.*

all-out Taking, requiring, or using all of one's effort or resources toward something; complete, total, or all-encompassing. *I've been stuck in this cubicle for years now. I'm ready for an all-out adventure somewhere! You're going to have to give us an all-out effort in the next game if you want to stay*

on the team.

an all-out effort An attempt made with one's full attention and/or fortitude; one's best effort. *To beat the best team in the league, we need to make an all-out effort tonight, boys. As soon as I got an academic warning, I started an all-out effort to improve my grades.*

all out of steam See [out of steam](#).

all-out war Unrestricted fighting or conflict. This phrase can be used literally or hyperbolically. *I fear that an invasion will lead to all-out war. It is all-out war right now for that empty corner office.*

all over 1. Crowding, covering, or in close proximity to something, especially in a way that is unwanted or unexpected. In this usage, "all over" is followed by a person. *I had barely walked in the door when reporters were all over me for a story.* 2. Scattered in many locations in a particular area or place. *How can anyone sit down when your clothes are all over the room? How did you not know about the show? There were posters all over campus.* 3. Done. Often said when an outcome is no longer possible. *It's all over—there's no way we'll score a goal to tie it in the last seconds. The party's all over now—people started leaving an hour ago. It's all over with me and Diane. We just fought too much.*

all over creation Everywhere; over a great distance or area; all over the place. Primarily heard in US. *I've been looking all over creation trying to find you! Janet: "You guys are two hours late! Where were you?" George: "Lenny here thought he'd take a shortcut, and we ended up driving all over creation!"*

all over Hell and half of Georgia Everywhere; over a great distance or area; all over the place. Primarily heard in US. *I've been looking all over Hell and half of Georgia trying to find you! Janet: "You guys are two hours late! Where were you?" George: "Lenny here thought he'd take a shortcut, and we ended up driving all over Hell and half of Georgia!"*

all over hell's half acre Spread out across a great distance or area; all over the place. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *I missed my turn when I was driving out to meet you, and I was all over hell's half acre before I was able to find the right road again! We'll never find all the papers we dropped, the wind has scattered them all over hell's half acre by now.*

all over (one's) face **1.** Covering several spots or most of one's face. *He's got paint all over his face, so he must have been in the studio today. My toddler loves eating, even though most food ends up all over her face, instead of in her mouth.* **2.** Said of a facial expression that reveals one's true thoughts or feelings. *I know you're guilty—it's all over your face! Hannah said she wasn't upset, but her sadness was all over her face.*

all-over oneself Arrogant, pretentious, or self-satisfied; having an inflated sense of self-importance. *I hate working in this part of the city. The people here are all-over themselves because of how much money they make.*

all over (someone) Crowding, covering, or in close proximity to something, especially in a way that is unwanted or unexpected. *I had barely walked in the door when reporters were all over me for a story.*

all over the board **1.** Spread out or scattered over a great distance. *I think we'll have a great trip across the country; we've got places all over the board we want to visit.* **2.** In or having a great number and variety. *The shop is all over the board as to what you can buy there.* **3.** Unorganized or scattered in thinking, communication, or planning. *Mary is all over the board with her plans for the future. I wish she would just pick something and stick to it!*

all over the earth Everywhere. *Modes of communication may differ, but language is used by people all over the earth.*

all over the map **1.** Spread out or scattered over a great distance. *I love how people from all over the map make their way to this bar for a drink.* **2.** In or having a great number and variety. *Public opinion is all over the map for the governor, so it's hard to know how she'll do in the next election.* **3.** Unorganized or scattered in thinking, communication, or planning. *I tried to get a sense of John's plan for the project, but he seems all over the map with it.*

all over the place **1.** (noun) Everywhere; over a great distance or area. *Now that we've graduated, my college friends are all over that place, and I hardly ever see them. Please clean your room, your clothes are all over the place!* **2.** (adjective) Very scattered or disorganized; ill-conceived. *Boy, that presentation was all over the place. It's like they wrote it five minutes before taking the stage!*

all over with Completely defunct, defeated, closed, finished, or dead; can refer to something imminent or that has just happened *After the opposing team scored that third goal, we knew the game was all over with for us. The cancer proved too aggressive; it's all over with for me now.*

all politics is local Because voters are strongly influenced by the political decisions that impact their everyday lives, politicians must make them a priority, in order to stay in office. A: *"I'm shocked by how many times the candidates have come to our little town."* B: *"Well, they know who votes for them, and all politics is local, after all."*

all present and accounted for All people or things being tallied are present, or their location or status is known or has been considered. While using "or" instead of "and" would make more sense logically, it is not used idiomatically in this way. *"Have you finished checking the inventory?" "Yes sir, all present and accounted for."*

all quiet on the Potomac Nothing is happening right now. The phrase originated during the US Civil War and refers to the Potomac River. A: *"Have you heard back from any of the schools you applied to yet?"* B: *"Nope. All quiet on the Potomac."*

all quiet on the Western Front Nothing is happening right now. The phrase originated during World War I in reference to the major site of trench warfare. A: *"Have you heard back from any of the schools you applied to yet?"* B: *"Nope. All quiet on the Western Front."*

all right 1. A sentence substitute used when one agrees to something or acknowledges something, similar to "OK" or "sure." It can be neutral or it can indicate reluctance. A: *"Hey, can you give me a ride home?"* B: *"All right. Hop in."* *All right, we can have pizza for dinner tonight, just stop whining about it!* A: *"I'm going out, I'll be back tonight."* B: *"All right, see you later."* 2. interjection Great! Indicates one's excitement about something. *All right, I got a perfect score on my test! My package came today? All right!* 3. adjective Fair. Emphasizes that something is not especially good or bad. *That movie was just all right. Don't waste your money seeing it in the theater, but it might be worth a rental. My foot feels all right these days, but I'm not ready to run a marathon or anything.* 4. adjective Safe. Uninjured or unharmed. *Sorry for making such a sharp turn there! Is everyone all right?* 5. adverb For certain. Typically used at the end of a sentence to emphasize that something

is definitely true, perhaps with a note of sarcasm or annoyance. *My boyfriend is late all right—he was supposed to be here an hour ago!*

all right for you An expression typically said by a frustrated child before an act of vengeance. *All right for you! I'm taking my ball and going home!*

all right with (one) Agreeable or acceptable to someone. *I asked, and it's all right with them if we come over after dinner. It's all right with me if you want to watch that movie—I heard it's funny.*

all rights reserved A line usually included alongside original art or content that highlights the ownership of the material and forbids unauthorized reproduction, i.e., all rights and protections afforded by extant copyright law(s) are reserved by the author or owner. *While I don't know if it gives me more legal protection, I feel better having "All Rights Reserved" below everything I write online.*

all righty slang A sentence substitute used when one agrees to something or acknowledges something, similar to "OK" or "sure." The addition of "-y" at the end of "right" is intended to be very informal or humorous. *All righty, let's go to the movies tonight. A: "I'm going out, I'll be back tonight." B: "All righty, see you later."*

all right(y) already Please stop; that's enough. Typically used as an expression of frustration. *All right already! We can have pizza for dinner tonight, just stop whining about it! All righty already! I'm turning off the TV because I can't watch that movie one more time!*

all roads lead to Rome The same outcome can be reached by many methods or ideas. This phrase refers to the road system of the Roman Empire, in which Rome was positioned in the center, with every road attached to it. *All roads lead to Rome, so you can approach the puzzle any way you like, as long as you solve it.*

an all-rounder One who excels in many different areas. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *Her grades are excellent in every subject. She's really an all-rounder.*

all set Prepared, ready, or primed to begin or complete a task at hand. *Once I iron my shirt, I'll be all set for the date tonight.*

all set to go Prepared, ready, or primed to begin or complete a task at

hand. *It has taken months to get everything ready, but I think we're finally all set to go on the merger deal tomorrow.*

all shapes and sizes Many varieties. *These plants come in all shapes and sizes, so I'm sure you'll find one that fits in your little apartment. That modeling company does not discriminate—they're looking for all shapes and sizes.*

all shook up slang Rattled, agitated, or excited, usually after a specific incident or event. *We were all shook up after hearing gunshots so close to our house. He just got a foreclosure notice, so he's all shook up right now. I'm all shook up over this beautiful new girl in my class.*

all show and no go slang Visually appealing but lacking ability or substance. *That Porsche is all show and no go—the previous owner ruined its engine. Patty is beautiful but ditzy, truly all show and no go.*

all-singing, all-dancing Very technologically advanced. *Have you seen the latest all-singing, all-dancing cell phone model?*

all sizzle and no steak Disappointing or anticlimactic. Having an exciting, promising, important, or aggrandizing buildup that proves to be unwarranted. *Everyone is in a panic over the supposed water shortages, but personally I think the whole thing is all sizzle and no steak. The film had a lot of hype before its release, but after seeing it, I think it's all sizzle and no steak.*

all skin and bones Extremely thin. *I know the merger has been stressful, but have you been eating? Because you're all skin and bones these days.*

all smiles Visibly happy or cheerful. *I know Allison had a rough week, but she was all smiles when I saw her today. My sweet little daughter has the best disposition—she's always all smiles!*

all spruced up Neat and clean. Typically said of something that is or was disorganized or in disrepair. *We need to get this house all spruced up before the open house. This place was a wreck the last time I was here. I can't believe you got it all spruced up so quickly!*

all sweetness and light Kind and agreeable. *Susan's all sweetness and light, I'm sure she's not mad at you.*

all systems (are) go Everything is ready, so a certain task can proceed

as planned. The phrase was popularized by the 1960s Space Race, as it was said before rockets were launched. *I just checked with the boss, and all systems are go to make the announcement today. All systems go—you should be getting a call from them any minute now.*

all talk (and no action) Said of one who talks a lot about something that one has not actually done, or will not actually do. *She may brag about donating money to the school, but I know she's all talk and no action. Oh, he's all talk—he's never had to face real danger.*

all talk and no cider All talk and no action. Full of strong words, promises, or intentions, but failing either to act on those words or to achieve results. *He keeps threatening to quit if he doesn't get a raise, but I think he's all talk and no cider, considering how long he's been here.*

all talk and no trousers Full of boastful, arrogant, or shallow talk that never materializes into results. A variant of "all mouth and trousers," meaning the same thing. Primarily heard in UK. *The team's manager keeps promising title after title, but he's seeming like all talk and no trousers at this point.*

all that See [be all that](#).

all that glistens is not gold Things that have an outward appeal are often not as beautiful or valuable as they seem. *I don't know if that necklace from the flea market will have the resale value you're anticipating. All that glistens is not gold, you know. A: "I want to grow up to be a movie star, then I won't have a care in the world!" B: "Just remember that all that glistens is not gold. The pressures of fame can be difficult."*

all that glitters is not gold Things that have an outward appeal are often not as beautiful or valuable as they seem. *I don't know if that necklace from the flea market will have the resale value you're anticipating. All that glitters is not gold, you know. A: "I want to grow up to be a movie star, then I won't have a care in the world!" B: "Just remember that all that glitters is not gold. The pressures of fame can be difficult."*

all the A greater amount or degree of something, usually as a result of, due to, or compared to something else. *All the worse for me, as I have no one to help shoulder the burden now that I am alone. It's too bad that you're allergic to shellfish, but all the more lobster for me!*

all the best A farewell sentiment conveying best wishes or regards; used as either a standalone phrase in one-on-one conversation, or as an imperative phrase meant for someone both parties know. *I'd better be going now, all the best! I'll see you soon, all the best to Mary for me!*

all the better Even better. *Oh, you can't come until Saturday afternoon? Well, all the better for me then—I get to sleep in!*

all the difference in the world The greatest degree of difference that is possible or conceivable. Without the verbs "mean" or "make," it is used to compare two disparate things. *There's all the difference in the world between knowing how to play and actually performing on the field. I was sympathetic at first, but finding out you didn't even study for the test makes all the difference in the world. You're grounded!*

all the feels A range of strong emotions. *Oh man, that video for the animal shelter gave me all the feels. I want to adopt 10 puppies now!*

all the livelong day The whole day. "Livelong" comes from the Middle English phrase "leve longe." *My hands hurt after sewing all the livelong day. I need a break after watching these kids all the livelong day.*

all the marbles All possible prizes or rewards. Typically used in the phrase "for all the marbles," which is said when one is on the verge of victory. *He is currently in first place, so his final putt is for all the marbles!*

all the more reason for A rationale for a particular course of action. *If your crush likes basketball, all the more reason for coming with me to the game tonight!*

all the more reason to A rationale for a particular course of action. *My ex is going to be in town tonight—all the more reason to stay home.*

all (the) one 1. The same as other options. *Voting for a democrat or a republican for president is all one in my opinion; they're both going to lead the country the same way.* 2. Making no difference or of no consequence to someone. *To be honest, I don't care if we buy the blue or the red sofa; it's all the one to me.*

all the one See [be all \(the\) one \(to someone\)](#).

all the rage slang Very popular. *Disco music was all the rage in the 1970s. I can't believe that stupid dance is all the rage right now.*

all the same **1.** Equally desirable or acceptable. Typically said when choosing between multiple options. *If it's all the same to you, I'd rather stay home tonight.* **2.** Very similar or identical. This phrase can be used literally or hyperbolically. *These print-outs are all the same—how am I supposed to collate them? These stupid, poofy prom dresses are all the same! I want something different from the other girls at school.*

all the tea in China A priceless amount or value; something of such great value that it cannot be quantified. *Just a glimpse of your smile is worth all the tea in China to me.*

all the thing That which is currently (and usually temporarily) fashionable or trendy. *Haven't you heard? Wearing knee-high socks is all the thing now!*

all the time **1.** Constantly; habitually. *I hardly ever see my sister anymore because she's with her boyfriend all the time. We go to that coffee shop all the time. Can't we try someplace new?* **2.** Ceaselessly. *We don't feel it, but the Earth is moving all the time.* **3.** During a particular timeframe. *Did you know about my surprise party all the time? I'm so impressed that you kept it a secret for so long!*

all the time in the world No time restrictions whatsoever. *What would you like to do this afternoon? We have all the time in the world. I don't have all the time in the world, so hurry up!*

all the way **1.** Fully; totally. *He's my brother, so I support him all the way. I don't think that meat is all the way cooked yet—it's still pink in the middle.* **2.** The entire distance. *The puppy followed me all the way home.* **3.** With all available condiments and dressings. *I'd like two hamburgers all the way, please.* **4.** slang Sexual intercourse (when used with the verb "go"). *I heard they went all the way last night.*

all the way down the line At every step or stage. *Mistakes were made all the way down the line, and that's why the promising new company went out of business so quickly.*

all the way live Excellent; exceptional. *That party last night was all the way live—I had a great time.*

all the way to Eger and back Of or along an arduous, inconvenient, and/or needlessly long journey or route. Primarily heard in UK.

I've been all the way to Eger and back looking for the video game Sarah wants for her birthday.

(all) the world over Everywhere in the world. *With the enormous success of their second album, the band suddenly became known the world over. People all the world over are joining in protest over the war crimes being perpetrated by the dictatorship.*

all the world's a stage Life is full of acting. The phrase originated in the Shakespeare play *As You Like It*. *I can't look this excited when I leave your office, or they'll all know I got the promotion. Well, all the world's a stage!*

all the worse for wear Shabby or beat-up from use. People sometimes use this phrase to describe themselves after enduring something emotionally or physically taxing. *The books that were in my bag when I got caught in the downpour look all the worse for wear now. I'm afraid they might fall apart altogether! The nights of sleep deprivation with a newborn have left me all the worse for wear—I could fall asleep standing up!*

all their eggs in one basket See [all \(one's\) eggs in one basket](#).

all their geese are swans See [all \(one's\) geese are swans](#).

all their life's worth See [all \(one's\) life's worth](#).

all their lives are worth See [all \(one's\) life is worth](#).

all there Having all of one's wits, intelligence, or mental competence intact, usually used in the negative to question whether or not that is actually the case. *He says he knows where we're going, but I'm not sure he's really all there. My mom likes to act like she's not all there sometimes, but she's actually incredibly witty.*

all things being equal In the event that all aspects of a situation remain the same. *Now, I know there are a lot of risks involved, but, all things being equal, I think we should still move ahead with the deal. Alexis is really nervous about committing to a mortgage, but, all things being equal, it will prove to be a great investment.*

all things come to those who wait Those who are patient see that patience rewarded. *Just try to hold out a little longer before making that purchase, since, you know, all things come to those who wait. I'm trying to keep in mind that all things come to those who wait, but I don't know how*

much longer I can go without calling about my application.

all things considered Having weighed all aspects of a situation. *Yeah, it rained a lot during our vacation, but all things considered, we had a great time. All things considered, she's making a great recovery.*

all things must pass Every situation eventually ends. *I know you've been struggling since you lost your job, but remember: all things must pass.*

all things to all men Liked or appreciated by everyone, usually through overt efforts to please them. The phrase likely originated in the Bible. *I know you want your students to like you, but you have to discipline them when they misbehave. You can't be all things to all men. I don't trust that candidate—he is trying to be all things to all men and still hasn't committed to a clear course of action.*

all things to all people Liked or appreciated by everyone, usually through overt efforts to please them. *I know you want your students to like you, but you have to discipline them when they misbehave. You can't be all things to all people. I don't trust that candidate—he is trying to be all things to all people and still hasn't committed to a clear course of action.*

all thumbs Uncoordinated or clumsy with one's hands. *My mother does beautiful calligraphy, but I'm all thumbs—I can barely hold the pen!*

all to smash Completely destroyed or ruined, either literally or figuratively. *After the accident, my car was all to smash. Their company is all to smash now that the stock market has plummeted.*

all to the good Beneficial or positive (especially when the situation had seemed bad or problematic). *I had to go home and change after spilling coffee on myself, but it was all to the good because I avoided a major traffic jam.*

all told In total. This phrase can be applied to numerical sums or to the collective aspects of something. *I made a lot in tips this week—\$300 all told. Yeah, it rained a lot during our vacation, but all told we had a great time.*

all tore up 1. Very upset or emotional. Both "tore" or "torn" can be used in this phrase. *Sean has been all tore up since his wife left him. A: "Did you hear that Joe died?" B: "I know, I've been all torn up about it."* 2. slang Intoxicated. *Do you remember last night at all? You were all tore up!*

all up Nearly, predictably, or imminently over, finished, complete,

defeated, or dead. *It's all up for me, Billy. Before I die, take this letter to my wife. It think it's safe to say that it's all up for the home team. They fought a good fight, but there's no overcoming their opponent's lead now.*

all very well Acceptable, with room for improvement. *It's all very well to go to the gym, but you need to change your diet too if you want to improve your overall health.*

all vine and no taters Appealing but lacking substance. *Patty is beautiful but ditzy, truly all vine and no taters. I thought this report would be groundbreaking, but it's all vine and no taters.*

all walks of life People of all ethnicities and socioeconomic classes. *I love seeing all walks of life when I travel. As a social worker, I interact with all walks of life every day.*

all wet 1. Literally soaked by a liquid, usually water. *I'm all wet because I got caught in that thunderstorm without an umbrella. The dryer must be broken because my clothes are still all wet.* 2. Totally wrong. *We need to come up with a new ad campaign, because, based on these negative reactions, the old one was all wet.*

all wool and a yard wide 1. Of a person, very honorable. *Of course Paul reported the crime he witnessed—he's all wool and a yard wide.* 2. Of an object, high quality. *That product already broke! It's not all wool and a yard wide, that's for sure.*

all wool and no shoddy 1. Of a person, very honorable. *Of course Paul reported the crime he witnessed—he's all wool and no shoddy.* 2. Of an object, high quality. *That product already broke! It's not all wool and no shoddy, that's for sure.*

all work and no play (makes Jack a dull boy) Working too much can be bad for one's health or can make one boring. *Come out to the pub with us tonight! All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy. All work and no play isn't ideal, but I absolutely must finish this report tonight.*

all wound up Very tense and/or nervous. Jittery. A: *"Why is Don pacing?"* B: *"I think he's all wound up because he's next to get a performance review."*

all y'all Everyone who is present, i.e., "all of you." Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *All right, all y'all need to listen up, I have something important*

to say.

all y'all's Belonging to everyone who is present, i.e., "all of your." *I'm so sick of all y'all's dirty dishes in the sink. All y'all need to start cleaning your own dishes.*

all year round Lasting or happening through the entire year. *Do you have this beautiful foliage all year round? I wish we had warm weather all year round—I hate the winter. My sister is a really good tennis player—she plays all year round.*

allamort See [all-a-mort](#).

alley cat pejorative A person (often a woman) of immoral or promiscuous behavior, especially a prostitute. When speaking of men, "tomcat" (or tom cat; literally, a male cat) is the usual equivalent. *I'd be wary of her. She's known around here as a bit of an alley cat.*

allocate (something) to To give or portion something to a person or organization. *We allocate money to charitable donations every year. Oh, I already allocated that project to Jane.*

allot (something) to To give or portion something to a person or organization. *We allot money to charitable donations every year. Oh, I already allotted that project to Jane.*

allow for 1. To plan for or consider something in advance. *I didn't allow for traffic this morning, and now, I'm going to be late. The flowers haven't bloomed because I didn't allow for such cold weather.* **2.** To have or portion an appropriate amount of something. *I don't have any money to spare because I didn't allow for this sudden influx of bills when I made my monthly budget. I'm afraid we won't have enough food—I didn't allow for so many guests.*

allow me Let me do it. This is a set phrase that typically precedes a polite action or gesture. *"Allow me," my date said before opening my car door. Allow me—I'll open the wine bottle.*

allow nature to take its course To let events develop and conclude naturally, i.e., as they would without outside intervention, help, or interference. The phrase can refer literally to nature or figuratively to manmade situations or events. *Though I know people are eager to help those affected by the earthquake, unfortunately we have to allow nature to take its*

course before anything can be done. We've done as much preparation for the election as we can; we just have to allow nature to take her course tomorrow.

allow (one) free rein To give one complete freedom to do what one wants or chooses. *Can you believe the boss allowed me free rein on this project? Finally, I can present a campaign with my own vision!*

allow (one) up To let someone rise from a prone position. *If you're able to knock down your opponent, don't allow him up!*

allow (someone or something) in(to) To permit entry. *The club allowed me into their meeting. The garage is so crowded that the attendants wouldn't allow my car in.*

allow (something) full play To develop something completely. *That's a good concept, and I think we should allow it full play in our new ad campaign.*

alloy (something) with 1. Literally, to melt different metals together. *Can I alloy this metal with copper? 2.* By extension, to combine two things (typically two aspects or traits of someone or something). *Ellen has been so successful because she alloyed her dedication with her natural talent.*

all's fair in love and war A phrase used to justify behavior that could be considered unsavory, unethical, or unfair. *So I had to flatter the boss in order to get that big promotion. All's fair in love and war, right? I told Jeff that Mary had a boyfriend because I wanted to ask her out first. Say what you will, but all's fair in love and war!*

all's well that ends well A positive ending can overshadow any problems that may have preceded it. Although this phrase is the title of a Shakespeare play, it likely predates it. *Hey, we're not fighting anymore, and that's all that matters. All's well that ends well. All's well that ends well—at least it didn't rain for my entire wedding day.*

allude to 1. To indirectly or vaguely refer to something. *What exactly are you alluding to? Just come right out and say it! 2.* To reference another source. *Shakespeare alludes to the Bible in many of his works.*

ally (oneself) to To join or unite with another person or group. *In order to survive the attack, I allied myself to the invading soldiers. We need to ally ourselves to management if we want to keep our jobs.*

alma mater 1. The school that one attended. One typically only uses the

term after graduating from the school. *I am visiting my alma mater this weekend, and I hope that some of my old professors are still there. Your alma mater did not fare so well in the big game!* **2.** A school's official song. *In high school, we had to memorize the words to our alma mater. They play the alma mater every year at graduation.*

almost doesn't count Nearly doing something is not the same as actually doing it. A: *"Come on Mom, I almost cleaned my whole room!"* B: *"I asked you to clean your room this weekend before company comes, and almost doesn't count!"*

almost lost it Nearly erupted in an intense display of emotion, usually anger or laughter. *I almost lost it on the waitress after she messed up my order for the third time. Paul almost lost it at the airport when he found out that his luggage was missing. Wow, when he slipped on that banana peel, I almost lost it.*

almost never Hardly ever. *I almost never go out on Friday nights anymore—I'm too old for that! We almost never travel, so this vacation is a rare treat for us.*

almost there **1.** Soon to be or nearly at, to, or in a given location. *Don't get so restless, Mary, we're almost there.* **2.** Soon to be or nearly finished with some goal or task. *Almost there, everyone! We just need three more orders filled and we'll be done.*

along about Approximately at the time of. A phrase used to speak vaguely about a certain time frame. *Along about my third cup of coffee, I started feeling too jittery to sit at my desk and actually work. Along about March, I really can't wait anymore for spring.*

along for the ride Attending some event or participating in some activity without playing an active or central role in the proceedings. *John's receiving an award for his work overseas tonight, and I'm just along for the ride. I'm going along for the ride to my friends' book club meeting later to see if I want to become a member.*

along in years Advanced in age; old or becoming old. *I might be a little bit along in years, but I'm no fool when it comes to technology! Your grandfather's along in years, so you may need to speak a bit more loudly around him.*

along the beaten track Following that which is commonly used by or known to most people, as of a course, route, or trend. *I know people say to be adventurous when traveling, but I like to stay along the beaten track in places I don't know very well. I generally stay along the beaten track with books. I'm not fond of reading those that get too weird or are meant for academics.*

along the line During some event or timeframe. *I had known Liz for years, but somewhere along the line in college, we fell in love. Along the line, my son's illness was misdiagnosed, and now he's very sick.*

along the lines Similar (to something else). Usually used in the construction "along the lines of." *For my new car, I'm thinking of something along the lines of a sedan, but I'm open to suggestions.*

along the lines of (something) Roughly similar to something; like something, though not exactly the same. *Well, that's along the lines of what I have in mind for the new kitchen, but there are a few tweaks you need to make before it's right. This movie is along the lines of your old favorites.*

along the way During some event or timeframe. *I had known Liz for years, but somewhere along the way in college, we fell in love. Along the way, my son's illness was misdiagnosed, and now he's very sick.*

along those lines Similar to something else. *I really liked the cake we had at your birthday party; I want to get something along those lines for mine. Did you see the princess's wedding gown? I want a style along those lines for my own wedding.*

along with Together with; accompanied by. *Can I get some vanilla ice cream along with that piece of pie? I can't believe he's bringing his new girlfriend along with him. That emergency dentist appointment, along with my usual bills, means that I have no money left this month.*

alongside of **1.** Next to. *I parked my car alongside of yours. My dog sleeps alongside of me all night.* **2.** Together with. *We've been neighbors for so long that our kids grew up alongside of each other.* **3.** In comparison to. *When you consider these two options alongside of each other, one is clearly superior.*

aloof from Emotionally and/or physically distant from someone. *I've never seen the CEO before—he stays pretty aloof from the rest of us. I don't think Holly is ready to talk about her breakup yet—she's been keeping aloof*

from all of her friends.

alpha and omega The beginning and the end; the entirety of something. (Alpha and omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet.) *In order to do well on the exam, you need to know the alpha and omega of the textbook.*

alphabet soup **1.** Literally, a soup that contains noodles shaped like the letters of the alphabet. *I used to love alphabet soup when I was a kid.* **2.** By extension, an incoherent or disorganized mix (typically of letters or abbreviations). *All of these acronyms in the manual have started to look like alphabet soup.*

alright See [all right](#).

alright already See [all right\(y\) already](#).

alright for you See [all right for you](#).

alright with See [all right with \(one\)](#).

alrighty See [all righty](#).

also known as Known by another name or description. Often abbreviated "AKA" or "a.k.a." both in speech and in writing. *The Affordable Care Act, also known as "Obamacare," came into effect in 2014.*

alt-right The "alternative right," an extremely conservative political movement in the US. (Conservative political groups are traditionally referred to as "the Right," while liberal groups are known as "the Left.") *Many views of the alt-right are considered radical by other Americans.*

alter ego **1.** Another name or identity that one assumes. *He's a clean-cut accountant during the week, but on the weekend he indulges in hedonistic pursuits as his alter ego "Jack."* **2.** A separate or different aspect or element of one's personality, identity, or psyche. *For such a quiet woman, she has a rage and temper at times that is like some alter ego.* **3.** A close, inseparable friend of very similar attitudes and interests. *My girlfriend and I are so similar, we are like each other's alter ego.* **4.** A person who acts as a substitute for or copy of another person; a doppelgänger. *Due to his increasingly failing health, the dictator's son has been running the country for the past month, essentially as his alter ego.*

alternate between To switch between two different people or things.

We are going to alternate between the lead and the understudy at today's rehearsal. The air conditioner alternates between settings, so I don't think it will get too cold in here.

alternate with **1.** To share a role or task with another person. *Because we're co-hosting the talent show together, we're planning to alternate with jokes and introductions.* **2.** To appear repetitively with something else. *That pattern is visually overwhelming; it's just a constant line of circles alternating with squares.*

alternative facts A phrase used by Counselor to the President Kellyanne Conway in defense of seemingly incorrect information presented by the White House press secretary about the size of the crowd attending US President Donald Trump's inauguration. It was quickly popularized in memes that used the phrase to mean statements that are presented as truthful but contradict factual evidence—ostensibly, lies. *An ice cream sundae isn't unhealthy—that's just alternative facts!*

alternative right An extremely conservative political movement in the US. (Conservative political groups are traditionally referred to as "the Right," while liberal groups are known as "the Left.") *Many views of the alternative right are considered radical by other Americans.*

aluminum shower **1.** In aviation, a midair collision between two airplanes, thus resulting in a "shower" of debris from the sky. *With so many more planes in the air these days, it's a wonder there aren't more aluminum showers.* **2.** obsolete An effort to collect household and scrap aluminum so as to aid in wartime production efforts. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *Officials pledged that the town would take part in an aluminum shower to replenish the raw resources that the arms industry so desperately needs.* **3.** obsolete A party, as for a bride-to-be, in which household items and appliances (i.e., those made of aluminum) are given as gifts. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *I was at a lovely aluminum shower for Jane last weekend. Someone even gave her an entire kitchen set!*

always chasing rainbows Constantly pursuing something more appealing than what one currently has—no matter how unrealistic it is. *You can't be always chasing rainbows your whole life—you need to pick a stable career and start being an adult. You won't find a better girlfriend than Tia. Why are you always chasing rainbows?*

always the bridesmaid, never the bride Said of one who is never the most important person in a particular situation or the winner of some particular thing. *When will I get a promotion? I'm so sick of being always the bridesmaid, never the bride. This is the fifth time I've come in second place—always the bridesmaid, never the bride.*

am I right or am I right A phrase to emphasize or promote the idea that what one has said or done is correct. A humorous variation of "Am I right or am I wrong?" *I think you need more rock salt, just like I said last year before you ran out. Am I right or am I right? I just knew you two would be the cutest couple! Am I right or am I right?*

am I right? Do you agree? The phrase implies that the speaker assumes that they are right and is looking for confirmation. *This idea will never work. Am I right? You never drive, and it's because you're afraid you'll get in an accident—am I right?*

amalgamate with To mix or merge with. *I wonder how the two groups of kids will amalgamate with each other. What department is ours being amalgamated with?*

amateur hour A result, activity, task, or situation characterized by unprofessional, talentless, or careless performance(s). The term likely originates from or refers to *The Original Amateur Hour*, a radio and television talent program in the US that ran from the 1930s through the 1970s. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *I expected a better performance from our team today. Was it amateur hour today, or what? The actors were all dreadful in that production. It was a total amateur hour.*

amazeballs slang Excellent or awesome. *Wow, this pasta dish is amazeballs! I'll have to get the recipe from you. Amazeballs! I never expected to hear back from that company, but they want to bring me in for an interview!*

Ambassador of Morocco obsolete A derisive phrase coined by Mary Anne Clarke (1776–1852) referring to a man who made women's shoes, possibly alluding to morocco leather, which is commonly used in the making of such. *Though she is on quite friendly terms when buying shoes from me, in public she insists on addressing me as the Ambassador of Morocco.*

amber gambler slang A driver who speeds through an intersection just

before the traffic light is about to turn red. The middle (yellow) traffic signal is often referred to as being the color amber. Primarily heard in UK. *If you keep being a reckless ambler gambler, you're going to get into a car accident soon enough!*

amber nectar Beer, especially lager. Primarily heard in Australia. *It's been a long day at work, I'm looking for a bit of amber nectar when I finish!*

amble along To walk in a slow or aimless fashion. *We had some extra time before the concert, so we ambled along Main Street. I'm usually late because my kids just amble along, as if we have no time constraints whatsoever.*

ambulance chaser 1. A derogatory term for a person, usually a lawyer, who seeks out the scenes of accidents (where ambulances will respond) in order to profit in some way from those involved, often by encouraging them to engage in a lawsuit. *The first person I met after my accident was an ambulance chaser who wanted to represent me in court. The guys at that towing company are real ambulance chasers.* **2.** By extension, a derogatory term for any lawyer. *I can't believe I have to hire a lawyer. I don't trust any of those ambulance chasers!*

ambulance chasing The practice of following ambulances or seeking out people injured at the scene of an accident. The phrase is typically said of lawyers because some pursue medical cases in the hopes of making money by representing the injured party. *Can you believe that guy's ambulance chasing? I've been in the ER for 10 minutes and already I've got a lawyer barging in on me! Your ambulance chasing has got to stop, Carl! You're taking advantage of those poor, rattled people, and I can't stand it!*

amen Indicating general or emphatic agreement to, with, or about something; an appropriation of the Christian term that concludes and affirms a prayer. *Amen, brother. That's an idea I can get behind. "Let us strive toward a better future together," he said. "Amen," I replied.*

amen corner 1. An area of seats in a church that is occupied by ardent worshippers. *Aunt Mildred goes to church every day, so she sits in the amen corner on Sundays, while we're stuck in the back of the congregation.* **2.** The tireless supporters of a person, group, or cause. *It's a good thing that councilman has his amen corner to rally behind him, because none of the townspeople support his new bill!*

amen curler obsolete An assistant or clerk who carries out the various duties for a parish or chapel. *Few recognize the work of the amen curlers, who make sure the day-to-day tasks of the parish are looked after.*

amen to that An expression of agreement. A: "I'm glad this brutal winter is over." B: "Amen to that!"

American as apple pie Exemplary or indicative of American life, interests, or ideals (often stereotypically so). *Baseball is as American as apple pie.*

the American Dream **1.** The belief that anyone can succeed (often with an emphasis on material gain) through hard work. *The American Dream feels less attainable the more I am crushed by student loans.* **2.** The achievement of wealth and success. *After years of hard work, we finally have a big house and successful careers. We're living the American Dream.*

amirite A comical way of writing "am I right," an interjection used to foster agreement or stimulate further conversation. *He's a fool, amirite? This hotel was a fabulous choice, amirite?*

amount to **1.** To become (successful). Almost always used in the phrases "amount to anything" or "amount to something," which both mean the same thing. *He got arrested so much as a teenager that I never thought he would amount to anything, but look at him now—he's an accomplished musician! When will this play amount to something? It has yet to get one positive review!* **2.** To be equated with or judged the same as something else. *Copying another person's words like this amounts to plagiarism, Susie, and I have to report it to the dean.* **3.** To be a certain total. *My tips this week only amount to \$40.*

amount to a hill of beans To be insignificant; to result in nothing. *The boss is just mad right now—I think all of his new rules will amount to a hill of beans.*

amount to much To be successful or significant. Usually used in the negative. *He got arrested so much as a teenager that I never thought he would amount to much, but look at him now—he's an accomplished musician! The boss is just mad right now—I doubt his new rules will amount to much.*

amount to nothing To result in no tangible or appreciable difference.

Well, all of our efforts amounted to nothing in the end, really: the bank decided to foreclose on us regardless of the money we raised.

amount to the same thing To be essentially the same. The phrase usually implies that the difference between two things has no significant consequence. *I don't care who started the fight, it all amounts to the same thing: you getting suspended from school. These different expenses all amount to the same thing: money coming out of my bank account.*

amour propre Self-worth. *If you're too critical of Sophie, I worry that you'll damage her amour propre.*

amuse (someone or something) with To entertain or distract with something. *Try to amuse the dog with his ball—anything to get him to stop barking! Whenever we go to a restaurant, I bring along a few toys to amuse our young daughter with.*

an/(one's) ivory tower A place or a social circle that is characterized by effete academic intelligence and thus is out of touch with or aloof from the realities of life. *I don't put much weight in the advice of a bunch of economists living in their ivory towers who've never worked a real job in their lives. It seemed easy to solve all the world's problems when I was living in an ivory tower. Now that I'm out of college, I realize things are so much more complex than I'd imagined.*

an/(one's) old flame One's former lover. *How am I supposed to forget about my old flame if I keep seeing her around town? Yeah, Ben is his old flame—they dated last summer.*

an/the olive branch A symbol, expression, or gesture of peace, reconciliation, truce, etc. Used most commonly in the phrase "hold out/offer (someone) an/the olive branch." *The conservatives in Congress seem to be offering the olive branch to Democrats on the issue of raising the debt ceiling. If you find yourself in a spat with a friend, try to be the bigger person and be the one to hold out the olive branch.*

anaconda mortgage A mortgage in which all debts owed by the mortgagor (such as automotive, credit, business, land, etc.) are used to secure the loan, such that an increasing amount of debt is applied to the borrower upon failure to repay. *Be careful not to sign into any kind of anaconda mortgage, or they could take everything you own!*

ancient history slang Something that is very outdated or totally forgotten (often in favor of a more recent development). *Oh, Jack is ancient history, we broke up weeks ago! Her interest in photography is ancient history now that she's started doing yoga.*

and a half An informal intensifier used when something is more or worse than its normal state. This phrase is typically added after the noun it emphasizes, i.e. "a problem and a half." *My little daughter is a handful and a half now that she's walking. You've got a problem and a half with your engine, and I don't think I can fix it.*

and all **1.** Along with other things of the same kind; all the rest; and so forth; et cetera. *To buy my plane ticket around the world, I had to sell everything I owned—house, car, and all!* **2.** Used parenthetically at the end of a statement or remark to create a pause in speech, often carrying a degree of trivialization for that which is being discussed or remarked upon. *If you love me and all, please stop going out every night.* **3.** In addition; too; as well. Used at the end of a clause for emphasis. Primarily heard in UK. *These politicians think we believe them and all, but I wouldn't trust them as far as I can throw them.*

and all that Along with the rest; and so forth; et cetera. *Yes, yes, take care and all that, I'll see you soon.*

and all that jazz And everything else; and many related things. *If we're going to paint this weekend, we need rollers, drop cloths, and all that jazz. My sister is involved in so many extracurricular activities—student council, Model UN, the literary magazine, and all that jazz.*

and be done with it An imperative to do or finish something and to cease discussing, debating, delaying, or thinking about it. *Stop procrastinating writing your paper: just do it and be done with it. Look, I don't care what you do with the money, just take it from me and be done with it.*

and change And a little extra. "Change" here is a reference to coins, as in the price of something, but the phrase does not always refer to money. *This healthy lunch only cost me a few bucks and change. He's a tall guy, about 6'3" and change.*

and counting Signifying a continuous increase or decrease beyond that

which has already been counted or measured. *In the area, we have over 5,000 supporters and counting. Ten minutes and counting before the match begins!*

and crap Other similar things in addition to that which has been mentioned, usually (but not always) implying a negative sentiment toward them. *I've got all these forms and crap to fill out before I can even technically apply for the job.*

and hang the cost With no regard for the price. *We have to get the roof fixed before the next storm, so call the contractor and hang the cost.*

and his mother A phrase used hyperbolically to express a large number or a majority of people. It usually appears in the construction "everyone/everybody and his mother." *I just wanted to have a small dinner party, and now you've invited everyone and his mother! What are we going to feed all these people? I think Shelly is nervous because she gets spooked in big crowds, and everybody and his mother will be at the parade.*

and how 1. A phrase of agreement. A: "Roberta's photography is so beautiful." B: "And how. I could admire at it all day." **2.** A phrase used to emphasize a statement as true. *She's a great writer, and how! Her latest short story is wildly inventive.*

and monkeys might fly out of my butt See [monkeys might fly out of my butt](#).

and no messing slang Promptly, as instructed. Primarily heard in UK. *You need to sit down and finish your homework right now, and no messing!*

and one (more) for luck Said when one additional thing is added or done for no apparent reason. *Well, little brother, there's your 12 birthday punches—oh, and one more for luck! I was so exhausted after running all those laps that I nearly collapsed when the coach said "and one for luck!"*

and shit rude slang A phrase used to emphasize whatever has preceded it, conveying the sense of "and everything that comes with" whatever has just been named. *She's all gorgeous and shit, I can't stand her! My own parents won't come see me play, but since you're the star, I bet you've got scouts and shit here watching you!*

and so forth And or along with other such similar things. *I find these parties dreadfully boring. Everyone only talks about how much money they make, how large their vacation homes are, and so forth.*

and so on And or along with other such similar things or people. *I find these parties dreadfully boring. The only thing anyone talks about is how much money they make, how large their vacation homes are, and so on.*

and so on Along with other things of a similar kind; all the rest; and so forth; et cetera. *I like outdoor activities like running, hiking, cycling, and so on. Nothing much in the mail today, just some bills, advertisements, and so on.*

and so on and so forth And or along with other such similar things or people. *I find these parties dreadfully boring. The only thing anyone talks about is how much money they make, how large their vacation homes are, and so on and so forth.*

and (something) to spare With something extra or left over. A: "Did you really buy all of your Christmas gifts already?" B: "Yes, and money to spare!"

and that's a fact Used to emphasize a statement as true, or the speaker's belief that a statement is true. A: "That guy ripped me off, and that's a fact!" B: "Yeah, sure, Joe. You say that about everyone." I can't wait to have this baby, and that's a fact. I'm more than a week overdue!

and the like Along with other things of a similar kind; all the rest; and so forth; et cetera. *I try to be healthy, eating lots of fruit, veggies, and the like.*

and then some And more than has already been stated. *The incumbent is so popular that you're going to have to campaign and then some in order to beat her. You will have to train and then some if you want to make the basketball team—there are so many good players this year.* A: "This dessert is very rich." B: "And then some! I don't think I can finish it."

and there you have it That is how this thing is done or works. *Do you understand? You just have to insert the installation disc into your computer, and there you have it! The program installs itself in a matter of minutes.*

and this and that And other assorted things. *I stopped at the store and got bread, milk, eggs, and this and that. My phone still doesn't work, even after I restarted it, closed some programs, and this and that.*

and those informal And other people, collectively. *Did you invite Sadie and those to our barbeque on Sunday?*

and whatnot Along with other things of a similar kind; all the rest; and so forth; et cetera. *I'm just popping down to the shop for a few basics: bread, milk, and whatnot. I mean, I enjoy listening to music and whatnot, but I'm not an aficionado or anything.*

angel's advocate One who looks for and argues in support of the positive aspects and benefits of a certain argument, whether or not they believe them to be true. It is the opposite of a "devil's advocate," who argues against something for the sake of argument, not due to a personal opinion. *I know a lot of people oppose the building of a new railway, but let me play angel's advocate for a second and tell you about all the ways it will improve our city!*

angle **1.** noun An agenda or aim. In this usage, "angle" is preceded by a noun, pronoun, or article. *You never used to have any interest in the family business. What's your angle here? Todd seems very disingenuous to me, so I always assume that he's got an angle.* **2.** noun An understanding or interpretation of something. In this usage, "angle" is preceded by a noun, pronoun, or article. *That author has a really interesting angle on World War II. Carly actually witnessed the accident, so you should get her angle on it.* **3.** verb To fish with a line and hook. (A fishing hook was previously called an "angle.") *My father is out angling on the lake today.* **4.** verb To pursue an agenda or aim, usually subtly or deceptively. *What exactly are you angling at? Just say it! With all the late nights he's spent at the office recently, I think Bruce is angling for a promotion* **5.** verb To put forth a particular (often biased) view or interpretation of something. *Don't listen to my mother, she always angles her stories in a way that makes me the villain.*

angle at (something) To plan or scheme to get or achieve something; to try to get something in an indirect or roundabout way. (Usually used in the continuous tense.) *We've been angling at securing a contract with a major development company from the Middle East for the last few months. What exactly are you angling at? If it's a pay raise, you can just forget about it.*

angle for farthings obsolete To beg out of a prison window with a receptacle of some kind, such as a box or cup on a string, like an angler trying to catch fish. Primarily heard in UK. *Imagine the days when prisons looked out onto public streets, with the prisoners shouting down at you or angling for farthings.*

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angle of attack The position of an airplane as it moves through the air. *What is our angle of attack, Captain? Are we going to be able to land this plane as planned?*

angle off To move at a particular angle, rather than in a straight line. *You need to angle off to the left, to avoid hitting those rocks.*

annex (something) to To legally join tracts of land. *In order to make such drastic renovations to your home, you'll need to annex more land to your lot.*

Annie Oakley A free ticket to an event. Alludes to US markswoman Annie Oakley's penchant for filling targets with bullet holes, likened to the holes punched in free tickets to prevent resale or reuse. *Hey, my work gave me two Annie Oakleys to tonight's show—want to go with me? The seats aren't great, but hey, they're free!*

announce for To show one's political support for someone or something. *If the incumbent president announces for me, it will be a huge boost to my campaign.*

announce (something) to To make a public declaration about something. *We haven't announced our pregnancy to anyone yet—you're the first to know! The boss hasn't announced his decision to the office yet, so we still don't know who got the promotion.*

anoint (someone/oneself) with To touch someone or oneself with a liquid (such as oil or water). The phrase often retains its religious connotations. *They will anoint my baby with chrism during her baptism today. To alleviate the inflammation in my leg, I have to anoint myself with this special cream every day.*

anonymous tip Information about something (typically criminal or illegal activity) that is offered by an anonymous source. *We've received an anonymous tip that there is going to be a major drug deal tonight at the harbor.*

another country heard from Another person or group has voiced an opinion (often one that is unwelcome). A: *"I can't believe you two seriously believe this candidate is the best person for the job."* B: *"Oh boy, another country heard from."*

another county heard from A person (or group of people) who unexpectedly shows up to, gives an opinion on, or contests something. It refers to the counting of ballots on election day, as votes are aggregated by county. *Oh great, Mary's here to voice her opinion on the matter, yet another county heard from.*

another day, another dollar A phrase referring to the uneventful course of one's working routine. A: *"How was work?"* B: *"Not bad. Another day, another dollar."*

another kettle of fish See [be another kettle of fish](#).

another lie nailed to the counter A lie and/or fraud has been discovered and now is used as a warning to the public. The phrase possibly originated with US general store owners, who would nail counterfeit coins to their counters to ward off other counterfeiters. *I can't believe I caught you in the act in front of all of my friends! Wow, another lie nailed to the counter! Oh, and he was cheating on me too. You all should consider this another lie nailed to the counter.*

another matter See [be another matter](#).

another nail in (one's) coffin Another negative event that contributes to one's downfall or to something's failure. *Aw man, our rival's new product just came out to rave reviews. There's another nail in our coffin. If my parents find out that I failed my exam, it will be another nail in my coffin, and they may never let me go out again!*

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another pair of eyes Another person to examine or critique something. *I need another pair of eyes to look at my term paper because I always make a lot of spelling mistakes. I think we should get another pair of eyes on this ad*

campaign before we finalize it.

another string to (one's) bow An additional option, skill, or ability available to one. *Your college degree will be another string to your bow if your professional football career is short-lived.*

another thing See [be another thing](#).

answer back **1.** To respond angrily or rudely at an inappropriate or unwelcome time. *Don't answer back to me, young lady. Your students don't respect you, that's why they always answer back when you try to discipline them.* **2.** To respond to a question or request. *I called them last week, but they haven't answered back yet. If you don't answer back today, I'll assume you don't want to go to the game with me.*

answer for **1.** To accept responsibility for one's misdeeds. *Now that he's been caught, the thief will answer for his crimes.* **2.** To speak on another person's behalf. *My parents used to answer for me, but now I'm old enough to speak for myself. I'm pretty sure Tom is coming tonight, but I can't answer for Abby.* **3.** To endorse another person. *With popular political figures answering for our candidate, I think she has a much better chance at success.*

answer on a postcard **1.** A brief, concise answer, reply, or opinion, especially one meant as a quick response to a general question. *I'd like to get people's opinions on where to go for a summer vacation. Answers on a postcard, please!* **2.** An answer that is considered obvious or self-evident. *We'd like to get into more complex reasons for inequality, so please avoid just giving answers on a postcard.*

answer (one's) purpose To be useful for a particular task. *If that's the only paintbrush we have, I think it will answer my purpose.*

answer the bell To meet a challenge with success. The phrase alludes to boxing, as boxers come out of their respective corners to "answer the bell" that signals the start of each round. *This project has been a massive undertaking, but I've answered the bell by staying late every night this week, and things are progressing nicely. Stacy, you really answered the bell this semester and did some excellent research for us.*

answer the call To die. A: *"Did you hear that Joe answered the call?"*
B: *"I know, it's so sad."*

answer the call of nature informal To urinate or defecate. *Jim is off*

answering the call of nature. Wait a minute, I have to go answer the call of nature.

answer the door To open a door after someone has knocked on it or pressed a doorbell. *Can you answer the door? I'm a little busy right now. I did knock, but no one answered the door.*

answer to 1. verb To report to a superior. *Now that I'm your boss, you answer to me in all matters.* **2.** verb To respond to a name. *My daughter Margaret has decided that she only answers to "Calliope" now.* **3.** verb To explain one's actions, decisions, or misdeeds to a person in authority who may consider punishment. *If you continue to neglect your schoolwork, you'll have to answer to the headmaster.* **4.** noun A person or thing that is intended to be the equivalent of something else. *That style of dress is the American answer to French fashion.*

answer to the description (of) To match a description of physical appearance. *We had to release that suspect—he didn't answer to the description the witnesses gave us. She answers to the description of the missing girl.*

answer to the name (of) To respond to a specific name. *My daughter Margaret has now decided that she only answers to the name Calliope. James only answers to the name of Jim these days.*

ante up 1. Said as an imperative at the start of a round of poker when each player contributes money to the total that the winner will receive. *Ante up, so we can start playing.* **2.** To pay money for something, often begrudgingly. *I can't believe we have to ante up \$25 a piece just to see a movie. You lost the bet, so ante up!* **3.** To fund a particular project or goal. *So many donors anted up for our fundraiser that we can repair the school's heating system and the gymnasium.*

ants in (the/one's) pants Said of one who is unable to sit still, due to anxiety, excess energy, or impatience. The phrase is typically used with the verb "have." *The kids really have ants in the pants today, so I'm going to take them to the playground. A: "Why is Carrie pacing?" B: "She's waiting for her doctor to call, so she's had ants in her pants all day."*

any day No set or specific time or date; any time. *I don't need the report back immediately, any day will do.*

any day now Some day very soon; imminently. *We're expecting a letter from Therese any day now.*

any fool thing A more emphatic or derisive way of saying "anything." *He can't just do any fool thing he wants! He has to consult with the members of the board first. Shopping sprees are fun, but if you just buy any fool thing, you'll quickly run out of money.*

any friend of (someone's) (is a friend of mine) If we share a mutual friend, then we can be friends too. *Oh, you know Henry too? Well, any friend of Henry's is a friend of mine! Oh sure, you can bring Ellen to the party. Any friend of yours.*

any longer 1. Longer in length. *If this gown were any longer, I'd trip over it. If this drive were any longer, I'd have to stop at a hotel for the night.* 2. Any more. *I can't handle this tension any longer—can you two please reconcile? Oh, the Smiths don't live there any longer, they moved last year.*

any minute Sometime very soon; imminently. *Frank will be home any minute.*

any minute now Sometime very soon; imminently. *The train should be leaving any minute now.*

any moment Sometime very soon; imminently. *The mail should arrive any moment.*

any moment now Sometime very soon; imminently. *Just wait and see, any moment now he's going to come walking in that door.*

any number of A large, non-specific amount of something. *You can talk to any number of doctors, but they will all give you the same prognosis.*

any old Any kind (of a thing) in general. *You don't need to buy the expensive stuff, any old laundry detergent works just fine.*

any (old) nook or cranny Any part or section of a given place, especially those that are hard to see or reach. *I don't know where you put your keys, they could be in any nook or cranny. There are so many books in the library that you can find all sorts of interesting things in any old nook or cranny there.*

any old thing Any thing at all. *You can wear any old thing tonight, it's not a fancy event. It's not just any old thing—it's my grandfather's*

pocketwatch. We need to find it!

any (one) worth (one's) salt A person who warrants respect in a certain field or area. "Any" is typically followed by a particular profession or title. *Any teacher worth his salt is able to inspire his students. Any doctor worth her salt is able to diagnose conditions accurately.*

any port in a storm Any solution, however unappealing, is acceptable in times of trouble. This originated as a nautical phrase. *I don't really like Meg, but I had to ask her for help because she was the only one still in the office last night when my computer crashed. Any port in a storm, I guess.*

any press is good press A phrase asserting that any publicity is beneficial to its subject, since at least one is garnering attention. It is often used to spin negative press as something positive. *Sure, I'm a little frustrated that they portrayed the company that way in their article, but any press is good press—at least people know our name now!*

any second Sometime very soon; imminently. *It looks like it could rain any second.*

any second now Sometime very soon; imminently. *They're going to announce the winning lottery numbers any second now!*

any Tom, Dick, or Harry Any common, undistinguished person; anyone at all, indiscriminately. *You don't want any Tom, Dick, or Harry coming to your performance, but then you don't want to limit the amount of business you might bring in, either. Kate's being very selective as to who gets invited to the wedding, as she doesn't want just any Tom, Dick, or Harry turning up.*

any way you slice it No matter how you consider it. Often emphasizes the speaker's opinion. *Any way you slice it, Mr. Smith is guilty. I forgot my textbook in my locker last night so, any way you slice it, I'm going to fail this test!*

any which way Any way possible. *We can make the chicken any which way you like: in the oven, on the grill, on the stove... just let me know your preference! Any which way you look at it, this was a terrible deal for us—and I'm not just being pessimistic.*

anybody who is anybody Anyone of fame or high social status. *If we want to find a financial backer, we have to go to the gala tonight—anybody*

who is anybody will be there.

anyone I know? Who? The phrase can be an innocent question or have a suggestive or coy undertone. A: *"Some guys from class will be at the party tonight."* B: *"Oh really? Anyone I know?"* A: *"I hear you've begun dating again. Anyone I know?"* B: *"You know Stan and I are back together, stop pretending you don't."*

anyone in their right mind Anyone of a sound, rational mind. Usually used to set up a context in which any sane person would or could do, say, or think a certain thing. *Anyone in their right mind can see that poverty affects the entire world.*

anyone who is anybody All the most famous or important people in society. Usually used to indicate something as being glamorous, trendy, or chic, which all such famous people have, do, or are attending. *I hear that the gala in New York City is going to be a star-studded event. Anyone who is anybody will be there!*

anything but Not at all. *I thought the play would be great, but it was anything but. In fact, I left early! My vacation was anything but relaxing because my hotel was under construction.*

anything else See [\(will there be\) anything else?](#)

anything goes All things are accepted or acceptable; nothing is off-limits. *Street fights are especially dangerous because there are no rules to protect your safety—anything goes.*

anything going on See [\(is\) anything going on?](#)

anything is possible Any outcome could occur. *No one expects the team to advance beyond the first round of the tournament, but, then again, anything is possible. The election is neck and neck. Anything's possible at this point.*

anything like Similar in any degree or to any extent. *The real world isn't anything like life during college.*

anything new down your way? Is anything interesting happening where you live? *How have you been? Anything new down your way?*

anything of the kind Anything that is similar, close to, or like what was said or is in question. (Usually used in a negative formation.) *I don't*

know why you think I agreed to pay you a hundred dollars—I didn't say anything of the kind. I believe you about what you saw, but I honestly don't recall anything of the kind ever occurring here!

anything you say 1. Yes, of course. A: "I'll be getting home late tonight, so I need you to help me make dinner." B: "Sure, anything you say."

2. A phrase said, often sarcastically, when one is skeptical of what another person is saying. *Your political party has no shortcomings at all. OK, anything you say.*

anytime you're ready A phrase that encourages the listener to take or start a course of action. A: "Can I start the meeting now?" B: "Sure, anytime you're ready."

apart from Except for; excluding. *Apart from math, my grades are very good this semester. I love this car—apart from the price tag, of course.*

ape leader obsolete A pejorative term for an older single woman; a spinster or old maid. From an old proverb that women who die unmarried are fated to lead apes—considered at the time to be unproductive animals—in hell. *At the risk of being labeled an ape leader by ignorant people, I have chosen a life without marriage, and I am perfectly happy to do so.*

ape (someone's) behavior To mimic the behavior of someone, generally in a mocking or derisive manner. *It is pretty standard now for comedians to ape the president's behavior and manner of speech.*

apologize for To express regret or remorse for something. *If you would just apologize for lying, we can all move on and forget about it. I will never apologize for my religious beliefs.*

apothecary's Latin obsolete Latin that has been badly mangled or jumbled, either unintentionally through bad translation or intentionally for the sake of humor. Also known as Law Latin, Dog Latin, or Bog Latin. *He only spent a year learning Latin, so now he just mutters apothecary's Latin to sound more learned than he is.*

appeal against To attempt to change a legal decision. *Don't worry, we will appeal against the judge's sentence.*

appeal to 1. To ask for something, usually in an urgent or pleading manner *Appeal to your congressmen if you really want lower taxes.* 2. To spark one's interest or appreciation. *Tall, dark-haired guys always appeal to*

me. That style of architecture just doesn't appeal to me. 3. To resonate with one's specific interests or feelings. The beauty of her prose appeals to my poetic sensibilities. The idea of stronger laws for criminals appeals to me as a mother.

appear as **1.** To have certain characteristics, often ones that are similar to something else. *Cancerous cysts can sometimes appear as normal ones at first, so we have to do further testing. 2.* To act, as in a play or movie. *My agent has been getting a lot of calls about me ever since I appeared as Elphaba in Wicked.*

appear at To arrive at or be in a particular location at a certain time. *My sister's favorite singer is appearing at the mall today. I'm stuck in traffic, so I won't appear at the party for a while.*

appear before **1.** To participate in legal proceedings. *I'm so nervous to appear before the judge today. 2.* To suddenly become visible to one. *I had to slam on my brakes when that pedestrian just appeared before me. 3.* To arrive early for something. *I am locking that door at exactly 10:01, so I suggest you appear before the exam starts.*

appear for To stand in or act as a proxy for another person. *I am appearing for my daughter, who was too upset to come to the funeral. Because Professor Jones can't attend the meeting tomorrow, he has asked his teaching assistant to appear for him.*

appear in **1.** To wear a particular outfit or accessory in public. *I don't want to appear in a gown if all of the other women are in cocktail dresses. 2.* To act, as in a play or movie. *My agent has been getting a lot of calls about me ever since I appeared in Wicked.*

appear in court To participate in legal proceedings. *My lawyer and I have to appear in court today.*

appear on **1.** To suddenly become visible on something. *That cat just appeared on my porch! Is he yours? The rash first appeared on my daughter last night, doctor. 2.* To act, typically on television or in a play. *Early in her acting career, she appeared on many TV shows. That actress hasn't appeared on stage in years.*

appear to **1.** To seem like. *It appears to me that she isn't interested in this project, as she hasn't attended one meeting. I left early because it appeared*

to me that you weren't coming. *It appears to be genuine, but we'll have to get an expert to examine it.* **2.** To become visible to someone. *I'm telling you, the Virgin Mary appeared to me in a vision last night.*

appear under the name (of) To do something publicly (such as acting or writing) using a name other than one's birth name. *A: "I don't see your sister in the playbill." B: "Oh, when she acts, she appears under the name R.A. Smith."*

appearances can be deceiving Appearances do not always convey accurate information. *That house sure looks beautiful on the outside, but appearances can be deceiving. What did the inspector say about the foundation? Sure, she seems nice, but appearances can be deceiving.*

append (something) (on)to To add or attach something on to something else. *Please append this footnote to your article. Mother, can you append a fur collar onto my winter coat?*

appertain to To apply or pertain to someone. *What rights appertain to me as a naturalized citizen?*

apple a day A truncation of the proverb "an apple a day keeps the doctor away," meaning small, healthful everyday habits will help prevent medical problems in the future. *People consider me eccentric for my insistence on going for a walk at dawn each morning, but an apple a day, as they say!*

an apple a day keeps the doctor away Eating healthy foods will keep one from getting sick (and needing to see a doctor). Primarily heard in US. *Have an apple for a snack, instead of those chips. An apple a day keeps the doctor away, after all.*

apple does not fall far from the tree Said when someone is displaying traits or behaving in the same way as their relatives (especially parents). *Did you hear that Dr. Klein's daughter Molly is majoring in Biology? I guess the apple does not fall far from the tree.*

apple never falls far from the tree Said when someone is displaying traits or behaving in the same way as their relatives (especially parents). *Did you hear that Dr. Klein's daughter Molly is majoring in Biology? I guess the apple never falls far from the tree.*

apple of discord Something that causes unhappiness or trouble. *That stupid prom dress has been their apple of discord—they're been fighting over*

who gets to wear it for days now! Why aren't you talking to Mary Beth? What is the apple of discord here?

the apple of (one's) eye A cherished or favored person. This phrase is thought to be Biblical in origin. *My nephew is just the apple of my eye. He has five kids, but his only daughter is clearly the apple of his eye.*

apple polisher A flatterer. (Apples are a typical gift for teachers.) *That kid is always quick to help the teacher with any little thing—what an apple polisher!*

(one's) appplecart One's plans or goals. *I'm worried that not making the Olympic team after so many years of hard work would totally upset Ben's appplecart. Look, he's not trying to upset her appplecart—he just needs to meet later in the day now, that's all.*

apples and oranges Two unlike things or people. *Oh, you can't compare those two companies, they're apples and oranges! My mom and my mother-in-law are just apples and oranges and should not be left alone in the same room for too long.*

apply for Chiltern Hundreds To leave one's job/office/post. If members of the British House of Parliament wish to resign from office before the end of their term, they must apply to the honorary post of the "Chiltern Hundreds" (an obsolete administrative district in south-central England). Primarily heard in UK. *I can't stand this job's stressful clients and erratic schedule any longer—it's time for me to apply for the Chiltern Hundreds. You better give Mark a raise or something. Otherwise, I think he's going to apply for the Chiltern Hundreds, and then you'll have to fill his position all over again!*

apply oneself To try hard or concentrate one's abilities (toward something). Without the preposition "to," it refers to a concentrated effort in general. *I know you think you won't be able to understand this level of math, but you just need to apply yourself, and you'll find success. If we apply ourselves to the problem, we'll find a solution eventually.*

apply to 1. To use for a specific reason or goal. In this usage, a noun appears between "apply" and "to." *I want to live debt-free, so I just applied all of my savings to my student loans.* **2.** To take action for a specific outcome. In this usage, a noun appears between "apply" and "to." *If you apply more time to your studies, I'm sure you'll pass your test. Apply more pressure*

to stop the bleeding. **3.** To rub or place something onto another surface. In this usage, a noun appears between "apply" and "to." *Apply the cream to your foot once a day to reduce the inflammation. Have you applied the frosting to the cake yet?* **4.** To submit an application for something, such as a job, school, or program. *I applied to the scholarship program, but I haven't heard anything back yet. Which colleges have you applied to?* **5.** To impact or be pertinent to a person, thing, or group. *The new dress code applies to all employees, regardless of seniority. I'm pretty sure that rule only applies to underclassmen.*

apply within 1. noun A set phrase indicating that one can enter a particular business (such as a store) and submit an application for employment there. It typically appears on a sign posted on the door or window of the business. *The sign outside says "apply within," so here I am! Can I have an application?* **2.** verb To enter a particular business (such as a store) and submit an application for employment there. *If you're interested in working there, you can apply within.*

appoint (one) to To assign one a certain title or role. *I can hardly believe that the trustees have appointed me to the position of chairman.*

apportion out among To distribute portions of something. *We only have so much food to apportion out among the guests that are here today.*

appraise at To be worth (a certain amount of money), as judged by a professional. *My grandmother's necklace appraised at a much higher price than I anticipated. The home did not appraise at the listed sale price. I'm hoping the statue is appraised at \$10,000.*

apprentice (one) to To pair one with an expert in a particular field or trade so that one can learn about it. *I have apprenticed my son to the local blacksmith.*

apprise (one) of To inform one. The phrase can be used with or without a noun between "apprise" and "of." *Has anyone apprised him of the new policy outlined in the meeting? Please keep me apprised of any changes.*

approach (one) about To ask someone something, often in a cautious way. *When is the best time to approach the boss about taking a leave of absence? I can't propose yet, I still have to approach Julie's dad about it. Have the producers approached you about taking the role yet?*

appropriate for 1. adjective Suitable or proper for one, based on certain conditions like one's age or setting. When "appropriate" is used as an adjective, the last syllable is pronounced "it." *Turn that violent cartoon off right now—it's not appropriate for a boy your age! This text is not appropriate for high-schoolers.* 2. verb To seize for oneself, often illegally or without the owner's permission. In this usage, a noun appears between "appropriate" and "for." When "appropriate" is used as a verb, the last syllable is pronounced "ate." *I can't believe you appropriated my video game system for yourself while I was away! I had money in my wallet, but it seems that some other party guests appropriated it for themselves.* 3. To designate for a specific purpose. In this usage, a noun can appear between "appropriate" and "for." When "appropriate" is used as a verb, the last syllable is pronounced "ate." *How much money was appropriated for education initiatives this quarter?*

approve of To agree with or support someone or something. *I don't approve of your behavior right now. My parents have never approved of any of my girlfriends.*

April showers bring May flowers Poor, often rainy weather in April can prove beneficial to blooming plantlife in May. A: *"Ugh, will it ever stop raining?"* B: *"April showers bring may flowers, at least."*

apron string figurative That which binds a woman to her husband or child. The phrase likely alludes to "apron-string tenure," a 17th century law by which a husband could control his wife's property (and her family's) during her lifetime. Often used in the phrase "tied to (one's) apron string(s)." *I can't believe how much Michael is tied to his mother's apron string! That's the only explanation for him still living at home at age 40!*

apron-string hold obsolete A property or estate owned by a woman but controlled by her husband during her life and then by her family after her death. *He has a vast property; it is but an apron-string hold, though, and he shall be dispossessed of it when she passes.*

apron-string tenure obsolete A property or estate owned by a woman but controlled by her husband during her life and then by her family after her death. *He has a vast property; it is but an apron-string tenure, though, and he shall be dispossessed of it when she passes.*

apron strings The extent to which someone controls, influences, or

monitors someone else, especially parents in relation to their children. *Mothers these days are so fussy about their kids, having to know where they are at every second of the day. They would really do well to loosen the apron strings a little, if you ask me! Sending kids to summer camps has been in decline in recent years, as parents have become less and less inclined to loosen the apron strings.*

apropos of Regarding; with respect to; referring to. From the French *à propos*, meaning "to purpose." *Apropos of the decision reached at this morning's board meeting, I think we should move ahead with the staff reduction directly. And then he just punched Jeremy in the face, apropos of nothing!*

arbitrate between To mediate between two (or more) parties in conflict. *We need someone to arbitrate between these two departments before their in-fighting affects the whole company. As a marriage counselor, I specialize in arbitrating between couples who are having difficulty communicating.*

arbitrate in To mediate between two (or more) parties in conflict. *We need someone to arbitrate in this employee dispute before it affects the whole company. As a marriage counselor, I specialize in arbitrating in cases where couples are having difficulty communicating.*

arch cove obsolete The leader of a male band of thieves or gypsies. *The arch cove kept the audience dazzled and distracted while his gang went through and pickpocketed the crowd.*

arch dell obsolete The leader of a female band of thieves or gypsies, who acts as an accomplice to her male counterpart, an "arch cove" or "arch rogue." *The women of the traveling group remain insular and secretive, led by the arch dell in their pursuits.*

arch doxy obsolete The leader of a female band of thieves or gypsies, who acts as an accomplice to her male counterpart, an "arch cove" or "arch rogue." *The beguiling women put on a fantastic show of exotic dance, while their arch doxy secured "donations" from the audience.*

arch over To bend over or form an archway over. This phrase can be applied to people and things, and a noun can be used between "arch" and "over." *Arching yourself over like this helps to stretch the back muscles. We all held flowers and arched them over the graduates during the procession.*

The flowers arched over the happy couple beautifully as they stood before the minister.

arch rogue obsolete The leader of a male band of thieves or gypsies. *While one should be wary of the traveling group, the arch rogue who orchestrates them is especially dangerous.*

ardent admirer One who is a devoted follower or supporter of someone or something. *Although the monarchy is no longer relevant in leading the country, the king still has many ardent admirers.*

Are you a man or a mouse? A phrase of encouragement, typically in situations where courage is required. *You have to confront your co-workers if they're mistreating you. Come on, are you a man or a mouse?*

are you blind An exclamation of dismay when one does not see or react to what the speaker has seen. *Are you blind, ref? He almost took the kid's head off on that hit! You don't know why I'm upset with you? Are you blind?*

are you deaf? Asked rhetorically and sarcastically to someone who appears not to be listening or who is not following instructions. Due to its negative connotation, the phrase is considered offensive to those who are actually hearing-impaired. *Hello? Are you deaf? I asked you when you would have this report finished. I've told you how to do this five times now. Are you deaf?*

Are you having a laugh? An exclamation of disbelief or incredulity, like "Are you being serious?" or "Are you kidding me?" Primarily heard in UK. *John: "The landlord has increased our rent again." Janet: "Are you having a laugh? How are we supposed to afford that?"*

are your ears burning? A rhetorical question addressed to someone who was not present for a conversation of which they were the subject. *Oh, Marty! We were just talking about your new play. Are your ears burning?*

area of influence A realm, domain, or field over which a person, group, or business has direct control, influence, or clout. It refers to a military term for the geographical area in which a commander has direct military influence. *As a literature professor, my primary obligation is to my classes; as head of this department, though, my area of influence extends to all students studying English.*

argue against 1. To state reasons in opposition to something. *My uncle*

is an ardent liberal and argues against my mother's conservative beliefs every time they're together. **2.** To serve as evidence in opposition to something. *Hinton's novel argues against a simplistic understanding of teenage life in the 1960s.*

argue back To respond angrily or rudely at an inappropriate or unwelcome time. *Don't argue back to me, young lady. Your students don't respect you, that's why they always argue back when you try to discipline them.*

argue for **1.** To state reasons in support of someone or something. *My mother has spent her life arguing for women's rights. She's my daughter—I will always argue for her.* **2.** To serve as evidence in support of something. *Hinton's novel argues for an understanding of youth as a complex, traumatic time.*

argue (one) into To convince someone to take a particular action. *Can't you argue the salesman into giving us a better deal on the car? I'm sorry, but you can't argue me into voting for that candidate.*

argue (one's) way out (of) To escape a problem or punishment by a clever or otherwise effective argument or explanation. *How did she argue her way out of yet another speeding ticket? I am absolutely furious with you; there is no way you can just argue your way out this time.*

argue out To discuss opposing views, with the goal of resolving a dispute. A noun is sometimes used between "argue" and "out." *If you two ever hope to reconcile, you need to argue this out now. As a lawyer, I have listened to a lot of couples argue out the terms of their divorce.*

argue (someone/something) down **1.** To successfully sway or influence someone who has an opposing viewpoint. *They opposed this bill for so long that I'm amazed we were finally able to argue them down.* **2.** To successfully sway someone to lower the price of something. *At a flea market, you can always try to argue the prices down. A: "He's asking \$20 for it." B: "Try to argue him down to \$10."*

argue the point To argue or debate a specific side or perspective of an issue at hand, often more for the sake of argument than a genuine attempt to persuade the opposing side. *I know it is generally accepted that the book's story is a metaphor for capitalism, but I'd like to argue the point that the whole work is actually a satire. I'm not going to argue the point with you,*

Alex. *We just don't see eye to eye.*

argue the toss To dispute something. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *Their decision to fire me was unfair, and I will argue the toss until the day I die!*

argue with To debate or exchange opposing viewpoints on a particular topic with another person. *I have been arguing with my brother about this for years—I doubt we will ever reach an agreement. Don't argue with your teacher, just do your homework as assigned.*

arguing for the sake of arguing Continuing a disagreement solely out of obstinacy. *We have a potential compromise, so he's just arguing for the sake of arguing now.*

arise from **1.** To stand up from a seated or prone position. *My teenage son doesn't arise from his bed until one in the afternoon.* **2.** To move in an upward direction. *My heart started beating faster as the helicopter arose from the ground.* **3.** To emerge from a bleak situation. *Thanks to scholarships, I was able to go to a top college and arise from poverty.* **4.** To result from something. *Many issues arose from the passing of that bill.*

ark ruffian obsolete A criminal who boards and plunders waterborne ships (i.e., arks), usually with the aid of one or more of its crew, sometimes resulting in the murder of its passengers. *Aye, but the waters are treacherous these days, and the ark ruffians make even the most placid trip a journey to be wary of.*

an arm and a leg slang A lot of money. *College tuitions cost an arm and leg nowadays. I'm sick of paying an arm and a leg for rent in this town.*

arm candy An especially attractive person who acts as a romantic escort or date to social events, but who is not romantically attached to or involved with the person they are accompanying. *Did you see the date she had with her at the movie premiere? I doubt they're actually dating, but he was a nice piece of arm candy all the same.*

arm in arm Of two people, having linked arms, typically at the elbows, as a romantic gesture or one of friendship. *Dana and her new boyfriend were arm in arm as they walked toward us. My daughter and her best friend are always walking around arm in arm.*

arm to the teeth Prepare thoroughly. Often used in a military setting

(since "arm" means "to equip with weapons"). *Before we storm the city, we better arm to the teeth against the insurgents. You better arm to the teeth before you tackle this project—I don't want anything to go wrong!*

arm up To provide, accumulate, or take up weapons, as in preparation for war or fighting. *All citizens must be prepared to arm up in the face of a foreign invasion. The king decided to arm up his soldiers in anticipation of an attack from the neighboring country.*

armchair general One who speaks authoritatively on topics one actually knows little to nothing about. *My uncle is such an armchair general about the classes I'm taking—the fact that he never went to college doesn't stop him from weighing in! Stop being an armchair general and let me fix my car, since I actually know what I'm doing here!*

armed and dangerous Possessing a weapon and likely to use it. Typically said of criminals, especially fugitives. *The most wanted fugitives on this list are all considered armed and dangerous.*

armed to the teeth Possessing many weapons. *They thought the criminal only had a knife, but he was actually armed to the teeth. A lot of these preppers are armed to the teeth to protect their stockpiles of food.*

armpit of the universe A very dirty, foul, or extremely unappealing place. *You definitely live in the armpit of the universe—all you can see from your apartment are oil tankers and smoke stacks! I'm sorry, but if the roach problem at his apartment is that bad, he's living in the armpit of the universe.*

armpit of the world A very dirty, foul, or extremely unappealing place. *You definitely live in the armpit of the world—all you can see from your apartment are oil tankers and smoke stacks! I'm sorry, but if the roach problem at his apartment is that bad, he's living in the armpit of the world.*

arm's length A distance intentionally kept from something or between something, equal (literally or figuratively) to an arm's span. Typically used in the phrase "keep at an arm's length." *Nancy has been keeping me at an arm's length ever since she found out I was gossiping about her. You're filthy from that game, please stay an arm's length away from me! You can watch me cook, but stay at arm's length in case any hot oil spurts out of the pan.*

an army marches on its stomach A well-fed army is most effective. *The cook may be the most important person in the unit because an*

army marches on its stomach.

army volunteer To select, nominate, or assign someone to carry out a task or duty that they are unwilling or unprepared to undertake. *My boss always army volunteers me to pick up lunch for the office.*

around and around 1. Literally, in a circle. *I've been walking around and around the parking lot, and I still can't find my car. Look at the ballerina twirling around and around!* **2.** In a circuitous, indirect fashion, without an end or satisfactory result. *We've gone around and around with the insurance company, and they still haven't paid our claim.*

around Robin Hood's barn A long, indirect route. A: "What took you guys so long to get here?" B: "Well, rather than just going through town, our esteemed driver took us all around Robin Hood's barn instead!"

around the bend See [\(a\)round the bend](#).

around the clock See [\(a\)round the clock](#).

around the corner See [\(a\)round the corner](#).

around the horn 1. In baseball, throwing the ball from third base to second base to first base, either as part of a double play or as a tradition following a strikeout. Taken from the nautical term "around the Horn," referring to Cape Horn of South America, the long way to navigate around the continent since the creation of the Panama Canal. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *The players always toss the ball around the horn after the batter strikes out as a way to keep their arms limber.* **2.** A difficult route chosen despite a simpler alternative. This meaning is also taken from the nautical term. *If traffic on the highway is too bad, we might have to go around the horn instead.*

arouse (one) from To wake someone. *Can someone arouse Todd from his sleep? It's one in the afternoon!*

arrange for 1. To organize or plan something. A noun is sometimes used between "arrange" and "for," and a specific time is often given after "for." *I will arrange for you two to meet this week. I need you to arrange a luncheon for the whole department. Carrie asked me to arrange a conference call for 10 AM.* **2.** To adapt a piece of music so that it can be played on different instruments or in a different style than is customary. A noun can be used between "arrange" and "for." *I would really like that piece to be played at our*

wedding—can you arrange it for strings? That song was arranged for the piano by our musical director.

arrange (something) with 1. To organize or plan something with another person. *Did you arrange the luncheon with my mother? I know she really wanted to help plan it.* **2.** To organize or plan something to include a particular thing. *My daughter loves horses, so we arranged her birthday party with pony rides.*

arrive at 1. Literally, to reach a destination after traveling. *What time are we supposed to arrive at Paul's? Because we got stuck in traffic, we arrived at the party late.* **2.** To reach a particular decision or understanding. *I'm thrilled to announced that the committee has finally arrived at a consensus. Have the doctors arrived at a decision yet?*

arrive (somewhere) (up)on the stroke of To reach a destination at a specific time. ("Of" is followed by that time.) *You must arrive home upon the stroke of 11, young lady. We arrived at the store on the stroke of nine, but the doors were already locked.*

arrive (up)on the scene 1. To reach a destination, usually as something is happening there. *When did the police arrive on the scene? By the time I arrived upon the scene, Kate and Jen were already arguing.* **2.** slang To come into existence or to be born. *Funk music arrived on the scene in the 1960s. We are overjoyed to announced that our baby daughter arrived on the scene at 11:37 last night.*

arse about 1. adjective Backwards; incorrect; contrary to what is expected or desired. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *Well, no wonder the computer isn't working. You've got the plugs all in arse about.* **2.** verb To behave in a silly or unproductive manner. Primarily heard in UK. *Quit arsing about, we've got some serious work we need finished!*

arse about face slang Reversed; not as it should be. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *Is that dress on backwards? It looks arse about face.*

arse around To behave in a silly or unproductive manner. Primarily heard in UK. *The problem with hiring such young people for manual labor is that they always want to arse around instead of doing their work.*

arse end of nowhere A location that is extremely remote or out of the way, hyperbolically and sarcastically identified as the farthest point away

from anything. Primarily heard in UK. *She lives out in the arse end of nowhere, so it's a major hassle to go and visit her.*

arse over tip slang Upside down (as if one's feet have gone over one's head). Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *She slipped on the ice and went arse over tip.*

arse over tit vulgar slang Flipped upside down; head over heels. Used both literally and figuratively. *My poor sister just went arse over tit on the ice out there! I hope she isn't hurt! Finding out Bill is selling the company has turned my whole world arse over tit—I can't believe I'm going to have to find a new job after 25 years!*

arsy-varsy 1. adjective Backwards; incorrect or mixed up; contrary to what is expected or desired. Likely a play on the Latin *vice versa*. Primarily heard in UK. *This play is all arsy-varsy. I can't tell where it began or where it will end.* 2. adverb Done in a backwards, incorrect, or mixed up fashion. Likely a play on the Latin *vice versa*. Primarily heard in UK. *Oh, darn. I've gone and put my clothes on all arsy-varsy.*

arsy-versy Backwards; incorrect or mixed up; contrary to what is expected or desired. A play on the Latin *vice versa*. Primarily heard in UK. *The electrician wired the whole building arsy-versy, so now we have to get someone else in to set things right.*

art is long and life is short A phrase that emphasizes the permanence of art and the fleeting nature of human life. *As I've gotten older, I've been painting more because I know that art is long and life is short.*

artful dodger A rogue or miscreant who avoids getting in trouble for their crimes, mischief, or bad behavior through crafty or ingenious means. Taken from the name of a clever pickpocket in *Oliver Twist* by Charles Dickens. *She's always causing mischief, but she's such an artful dodger that she always finds a way to get out of trouble.*

an article of faith Something that one believes strongly, whether or not it is actually true. *My mother takes it as an article of faith that the government is always right and should never be questioned. In prep school, it is taken as an article of faith that everyone must go on to college.*

artificial language A language devised for a specific purpose, such as computer programming. *We need to develop an artificial language for this*

coding project.

(the/an/one's) artistic style The distinctive qualities of a particular artist or artistic movement. *How would you describe Reubens' artistic style? That painting is clearly in the artistic style of the impressionists.*

as a dog returns to his vomit, so a fool repeats his folly Foolish people are apt to repeat their missteps. A: *"I can't believe Sarah is going skiing again, after she broke her leg the last time."* B: *"Well, as a dog returns to his vomit, so a fool repeats his folly."*

as a duck takes to water Easily and smoothly; naturally. *Molly is such an accomplished dancer that she took to the show's choreography as a duck takes to water. My son is very social, so he took to kindergarten as a duck takes to water.*

as a (general) rule Typically; most of the time. *As a general rule, I won't sit in the window seat on an airplane. I get too anxious watching the ground below disappear! My mother always makes extra food for family dinners, as a rule.*

as a last resort As a final option, usually when preferable ones have failed. *We will only pursue suspension as a last resort, so please improve your behavior in class. For now, I'm praying that the weather improves. I'm only going to cancel my flight as a last resort.*

as a matter of course Automatically or as part of a routine or policy. *As a matter of course, you must complete your final project in order to receive a passing grade in this class. I lock my car doors as a matter of course whenever I get out of my car—I hardly even notice that I do it anymore.*

as a matter of fact Actually. Often used for emphasis. *As a matter of fact, I did remember to pick up dinner on the way home from work.*

as a pig loves marjoram Very unlikely to happen; improbable. The phrase is usually attributed to the Roman poet Lucretius, who wrote that "swine shun marjoram." *Considering that you haven't handed in a single assignment this semester, you're getting an A in this class as surely as a pig loves marjoram!*

as a result of (something) Due to. *All fights have been canceled as a result of the snowstorm. As a result of budget cuts, the company is not*

hosting a Christmas luncheon this year.

as a side note Parenthetically or incidentally; by the way; in addition to but less important than what was just being discussed. *So we should have the report finished up by this afternoon. Oh, and as a side note, I managed to organize a meeting with the CEO tomorrow.*

as a token of (something) As a gift signifying something (which is usually mentioned after "of"). *Take this bottle of wine as a token of my gratitude. The headmaster gave us each a plaque, as a token of her appreciation.*

as a whole As a complete unit, considering all aspects or components, as opposed to individual parts. *I know she wants to take gymnastics lessons, but they're very expensive, and we need to do what's best for our family as a whole.*

(as) (a)like as (two) peas in a pod Said of two people who are very similar in interests, actions, or appearance. *Betty and Jennifer are as alike as two peas in a pod, so it's no wonder people sometimes mistake them for sisters.*

as all get out To the highest or furthest possible degree; as much as one can imagine. *Summers in Texas can be hot as all get-out.*

as American as apple pie See [American as apple pie](#).

as an aside 1. A phrase that prefaces a comment indirectly related to the topic being discussed. *Today we will be discussing the electoral college, but, as an aside, did anyone see the debate last night?* 2. Said quietly to certain people, not an entire group. *"Wow, the lead sure needs acting lessons," my mother muttered as an aside when intermission began.*

as as they come See [as \(something\) as they come](#).

(as) awkward as a cow on a crutch Very clumsy or uncoordinated. *When my toddler was first learning to walk, she was awkward as a cow on a crutch. He'll never make the basketball team—he's as awkward as a cow on a crutch.*

as bad as all that As bad as one fears. *Oh honey, it can't be as bad as all that. I'm sure your teacher will be understanding—you're not the first person who ever forgot to do her homework. I doubt the storm will be as bad as all that.*

as bald as a coot See [bald as a coot](#).

(as) baleful as death Dangerous and dire. *The storm has made the waves baleful as death—I'm not sure we'll reach the shore alive.*

as best (one) can To the best of one's abilities or by whatever means are available or possible. *He's helping as best he can—you don't need to criticize him so much. I'm doing as best I can with these centerpieces, but I'm afraid they still won't be done in time.*

as big around as a molasses barrel See [big around as a molasses barrel](#).

as big as all outdoors Very large. This phrase is typically used to describe expansive indoor spaces. *After living in a studio apartment, my new place feels as big as all outdoors!*

as big as life Present before someone, often surprisingly so. *I can't believe I saw the first lady today. I turned the corner at the grocery store, and there she was, as big as life!*

(as) black as a raven 1. dated Completely black; totally without light or color. *The basement gives me the creeps, it's as black as a raven down there!* 2. dated Of a thoroughly evil, mean-spirited, or ungenerous mindset or disposition. *She narrowed her eyes, and I could tell her thoughts had turned as black as a raven.*

(as) black as a raven's feather 1. dated Completely black; totally without light or color. *The basement gives me the creeps, it's as black as a raven's feather down there!* 2. dated Of a thoroughly evil, mean-spirited, or ungenerous mindset or disposition. *She narrowed her eyes, and I could tell her thoughts had turned as black as a raven's feather.*

(as) black as a raven's wing 1. dated Completely black; totally without light or color. *The basement gives me the creeps, it's as black as a raven's wing down there!* 2. dated Of a thoroughly evil, mean-spirited, or ungenerous mindset or disposition. *She narrowed her eyes, and I could tell her thoughts had turned as black as a raven's wing.*

(as) black as a skillet Completely black; totally without light or color. *The basement gives me the creeps, it's as black as a skillet down there!*

(as) black as ink 1. Completely black; totally without light or color. *The*

basement gives me the creeps, it's as black as ink down there! **2.** Of a thoroughly evil, mean-spirited, or ungenerous mindset or disposition. *She narrowed her eyes, and I could tell her thoughts had turned as black as ink.*

(as) black as Newgate's knocker dated Completely black; totally without light or color. Refers to the black iron knocker on the door of Newgate Prison in London. Primarily heard in UK. *The basement gives me the creeps, it's as black as Newgate's knocker down there!*

(as) black as (one) is painted As evil, malicious, or malignant as one is described or believed to be. *I wasn't sure why everyone is afraid of the old hermit who lives on the edge of town, but after having a few conversations with him, I found that he is as black as he's painted! The biker gang plays up its tough demeanor and hellish reputation, but they're really just a bunch of regular guys and not as black as they're painted.*

(as) black as (one's) hat dated Completely black; totally without light or color. *The basement gives me the creeps, it's as black as my hat down there!*

(as) black as the ace of spades Completely black; totally without light or color. ("Spades" is a black suit in a deck of cards.) *The basement gives me the creeps, it's as black as the ace of spades down there!*

(as) black as the devil **1.** dated Completely black; totally without light or color. *The basement gives me the creeps, it's as black as the devil down there!* **2.** dated Of a thoroughly evil, mean-spirited, or ungenerous mindset or disposition. *Looking into his eyes, I saw his heart was as black as the devil.*

(as) black as the minister's coat dated Completely black; totally without light or color. *The basement gives me the creeps, it's as black as the minister's coat down there!*

(as) black as thunder Full of rage or hostility, likened to the black clouds that accompany thunderstorms. *When I looked up, his face was as black as thunder, and I knew that I was in trouble.*

(as) blind as a bat **1.** slang Unable to see at all. *After neglecting his vision for years, my grandfather became blind as a bat, unable to even see shadows.* **2.** slang Having poor vision. *I've worn glasses for 20 years, so I'm as blind as a bat now.* **3.** slang Oblivious to something. *Are you blind as a bat? Those two have been flirting all afternoon!*

as bold as Beauchamp Brave. The phrase might refer to the 1346 feat of Thomas Beauchamp, who defeated 100 Normans with very little military support. *Wow, you really ran into a burning building and saved all those people? You're as bold as Beauchamp!*

as bold as brass In a brash, arrogant, or pushy manner. *Can you believe that new hire went to the boss, as bold as brass, and asked for time off on his first day? That girl walked up, as bold as brass, and pushed her way to the front of the line!*

(as) bright as a button Intelligent and quick thinking. *Ted's as bright as a button, so he'll find a solution to this problem. Of course Ellen is our valedictorian—she's bright as a button.*

(as) bright as a new pin Tidy; clean and shiny; in good or neat order. *I expected Danny's student apartment to be a total mess, but it was bright as a new pin!*

(as) broad as a barn door Very wide. *Your mattress is as broad as a barn door—there's no way you'll fit it in that room!*

(as) brown as a berry Having tanned skin due to sun exposure. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *She was as brown as a berry when she returned from her tropical vacation.*

(as) busy as a beaver (building a new dam) Very busy, assiduous, or hardworking. The phrase refers to beavers' reputation for being extremely industrious. *Between working two part-time jobs, volunteering on the weekends, and looking after his little brother, Sam's been busy as a beaver this summer. I've been as busy as a beaver building a new dam this year. I've had almost no free time!*

(as) busy as a hibernating bear Not busy at all; inactive. *He says he has no time to help our charity, but I know that he's off from school right now and busy as a hibernating bear!*

(as) certain as death and taxes Certain to happen; inevitable and unavoidable. A variation of the proverbial phrase, "Nothing is certain but death and taxes." *They just aren't right for each other; they're certain as death and taxes to break up eventually. The two brothers will be forever at each other's throats, as certain as death and taxes.*

(as) clean as a hound's tooth 1. Very clean; spotless. *This house*

needs to be clean as a hound's tooth before Pop comes to visit. 2. Reputable and honest; free of wrongdoing. Oh, Donny is very trustworthy—his behavior has always been as clean as a hound's tooth.

(as) clear as a bell 1. Very crisply audible; very easy to hear. *Unfortunately, our next-door neighbors fight a lot, and we can hear them clear as a bell—even at 3 AM! With these new headphones, you'll be able to hear music as clear as a bell.* 2. Easy to understand; very clear. *These directions are as clear as a bell, so you shouldn't have any questions.*

as clear as black and white Of the utmost clarity; clearly defined or differentiated; without any room for confusion, ambiguity, or discrepancy. *Love isn't always as clear as black and white, you know. You have to accept that there are many gray areas in relationships. The case made by the government seems as clear as black and white: raise taxes to pay for public amenities.*

(as) clear as crystal Easily visible and/or understandable. *I want the language in these legal contracts to be as clear as crystal so that there is no confusion. The sign is right there on the door—it's as clear as crystal.*

(as) clear as mud Difficult to see or understand; not clear at all. *I guess I need to call a lawyer because these legal contracts are as clear as mud.*

(as) close as two coats of paint Having a very close relationship; inseparable. *I haven't talked to Patty in years, but we were as close as two coats of paint as kids.*

(as) cocky as the king of spades Conceited or haughty. *Don't invite Joe to lunch unless you want to hear him brag about all the important things he's doing in his new job. He's just as cocky as the king of spades lately.*

(as) cold as a welldigger's ass (in January) rude slang Very cold. *I am so sick of being cold as a welldigger's ass all winter long—that's why I'm moving to Florida.*

(as) comfortable as an old shoe Very familiar or comfortable, especially in an agreeably unpretentious or unrestrained manner. *This car may have seen better years, but it's still comfortable as an old shoe to drive around in.*

(as) common as an old shoe Lacking in manners or refinement. *I*

can't believe he just put his elbows on the dinner table—why, he must be as common as an old shoe!

as common as muck Low-class. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *Considering she's wearing an outfit like that in public, she must be as common as muck.*

(as) conceited as a barber's cat Very narcissistic or vain. *Don't invite Joe to lunch unless you want to hear him brag about all the important things he's doing in his new job. He's just as conceited as a barber's cat lately.*

(as) cool as a cucumber slang Calm and composed, especially in times of stress. *I was petrified to take the stage, but Alice was as cool as a cucumber. Practicing meditation has helped me to be as cool as a cucumber in times of trouble.*

(as) crooked as a barrel of fish hooks Very unscrupulous and deceptive. *Paul's never run an honest business in his life—that guy is as crooked as a barrel of fish hooks.*

(as) cross as a bear Exceptionally irritable, annoyed, or grumpy. *John is always cross as a bear first thing in the morning; it's best not to even talk to him until he's had his coffee. Janet was as cross as a bear when she found out she had missed her connecting flight.*

(as) cross as a bear with a sore head Exceptionally irritable, annoyed, or grumpy. *John is always cross as a bear with a sore head first thing in the morning; it's best not to even talk to him until he's had his coffee. Janet was as cross as a bear with a sore head when she found out she had missed her connecting flight.*

as cross as two sticks See [cross as two sticks](#).

as drunk as a lord Very intoxicated. *Do you remember last night at all? You were as drunk as a lord!*

as easy as 1-2-3 See [be \(as\) easy as one-two-three](#).

(as) easy as falling off a log Extremely easy; very intuitive; requiring little skill or effort. *After so many years as an accountant, doing taxes is as easy as falling off a log for me. Boy, that test was easy as falling off a log!*

as easy as falling off of a log See [be \(as\) easy as falling off \(of\) a log](#).

as easy as pie See [be \(as\) easy as pie](#).

as easy as rolling off a log See [be \(as\) easy as rolling off \(of\) a log](#).

as ever trod shoe-leather As ever walked the earth; as ever lived. *You're as talented a baseball player as ever trod shoe-leather!*

as far as To the extent of. *I wouldn't go as far as calling it a riot—I think it was just a bunch of rowdy kids causing trouble.*

as far as I can see Based on my perspective. *As far as I can see, you need to forgive Mike—he did apologize to you.*

as far as it goes As much as something accomplishes, typically with room for improvement. *Your short story is pretty good, as far as it goes. Now here are the revisions I want you to make.*

as far as (one) knows As much as one knows about a certain situation and/or at a particular time. *As far as I know, Scott is coming today. Has anyone else heard from him? Thanksgiving dinner has been pushed to 4:00, as far as we know. But I can call Carol and try to get an update, if that makes you feel better.*

as far as possible To the maximum amount that can be reached or accomplished. *We're driving as far as possible before nightfall. Even though you're home sick right now, you still need to do your schoolwork as far as possible.*

as far as (someone/something) is concerned **1.** Regarding a certain person or situation. *As far as Aunt Elaine is concerned, we still need to get a Christmas gift for her. As far as dinner is concerned, it's been pushed to 8:00, so no need to rush.* **2.** In one's view or opinion. *As far as I'm concerned, I don't feel safe in this neighborhood anymore. Grandma doesn't care if you bring your boyfriend to Thanksgiving dinner. As far as she's concerned, the more, the merrier!*

as far as (something) goes In regard to something (often as opposed to something else). *I'm struggling with French this semester, but as far as math goes, my grades are very good. As far as the weekend goes, I'm totally free.*

as far as the eye can see Extending to the farthest possible point, as of that which one can see in the distance. Sometimes used hyperbolically, humorously, or sarcastically. *I love this part of the country. The green hills stretch out as far as the eye can see. My father was always so proud of his little shop. When I was a boy, he'd take me to the roof and say, "One day all this will be yours, as far as the eye can see."*

(as) fast as lightning Incredibly quickly or speedily. *Did you see that martial arts expert? His threw those kicks as fast as lightning! Fast as lightning, Mary finished her exam and raced out of the classroom.*

(as) flat as a strap **1.** adjective Completely flat or flattened. *I left my soda open overnight and now it's flat as a strap. The roads in this part of the country are as flat as a strap—no hills, no dips, nothing!* **2.** adjective Extremely fast. Primarily heard in Australia. *John's new car is a beauty, and I bet it's flat as a strap.* **3.** adjective Very busy; preoccupied with many different things at once. Primarily heard in Australia. *Sorry I couldn't make it to lunch today, I've been as flat as a strap with the kids all day. I've been flat as a strap at work lately—I barely have time to see my kids anymore.* **4.** adverb At the greatest possible speed, efficiency, or power. Primarily heard in Australia. *We drove that car flat as a strap out of town. The whole team is working as flat as a strap to get this project finished on time.*

as follows As listed next. *The cooking instructions are as follows: heat the oven to 425 and then cook for 20 minutes.*

as for On the topic of; regarding. *As for my sleep, it's been a bit restless lately. Greg is coming tonight. As for Judy, I'm not sure—she never replied to my invitation.*

(as) free as a bird Unencumbered. The phrase means the same as "free," but with more emphasis. *I'm as free as a bird this Friday! Do you want to meet for dinner? She's single now—free as a bird!*

as fuck rude slang A phrase that usually follows an adjective as an intensifier. *Wow, with that leather jacket on, you look cool as fuck! That party was crazy as fuck, man! You should have been there!*

as good as **1.** The same quality as; comparable to. *Just use this toothpaste—it's as good as that fancy brand you usually get.* **2.** Essentially; nearly the same as. *The turkey is as good as finished, so please start setting the table.*

I'm as good as grounded if I don't get home before my curfew.

as good as gone See [be as good as gone](#).

as good as (one's) word Reliable; truthful. Said of one who typically follows through on one's promises. *Tom is as good as his word—if he promised to help you move, then he'll be here.*

as green as a gooseberry See [be \(as\) green as a gooseberry](#).

as he pleases See [as \(one\) pleases](#).

as hell slang To the maximum degree. *When I read that passive-aggressive note from my neighbor, I was mad as hell. Oh man, I haven't slept in days—I'm tired as hell.*

as I expected See [\(just\) as I expected](#).

as I live and breathe Wow! An expression of surprise or amazement. *As I live and breathe! I haven't seen you in years!*

as I see it From my perspective. *As I see it, we need to move by the end of the month, or else we'll lose money. I know you don't like Doug, but as I see it, he's a real asset to the team.*

as I was saying Said when one wants to return to one's previous topic of discussion. *As I was saying before the waiter came over, I'm going to Europe next month! Thank you Alice. Now as I was saying, you'll need to call payroll to get those figures.*

as if 1. Like. *I have such a terrible headache—I feel as if my head is going to explode. I did tell her that I wouldn't be home for dinner tonight. It's as if she doesn't listen to me at all!* **2.** An interjection indicating complete dismissal of what has been said or suggested, implying that it is not the case or would never happen. A: "Tim thinks he's going to go to the prom with you." B: "As if! I'd rather go by myself."

as if (one) owns the place In a supremely confident way. The phrase sometimes indicates that the speaker is annoyed by such confidence. *Ugh, the boss's son always walks through the office as if he owns the place. I want you to walk into that interview as if you own the place—no false modesty.*

as if (one's) life depends on it With maximum, possibly desperate, effort or energy (i.e., as if one is at risk of losing one's life if one fails). *The boxer started the third round throwing punches as if his life depended on it.*

This project could very well determine the future of the company, so start working as if your lives depend on it!

as if that were not enough On top of that; additionally; furthermore. Often used to introduce a further difficulty, problem, or misfortune in addition to that which has already been described. *My poor car was smashed beyond repair in the accident, and as if that weren't enough, I also spilled coffee on my brand new suit! Languages, and English in particular, are a difficult thing to learn. As if that were not enough, idioms make the whole thing that much harder to master.*

as if the sun shines out (someone's) backside As though someone or oneself is better or more important than others. Various slang and vulgar synonyms for "backside" are often substituted. (Note: If thought about oneself, it means that they are arrogant, conceited, or self-absorbed. If someone thinks this of another person, it means that they love or admire that person to such a degree as to be blinded to any of their potential faults.) *Samantha has such an ego and acts as if the sun shines out her backside. He's absolutely head-over-heels in love with Mary. Even though I find her a bit irritating, to him it's as if the sun shines out her backside.*

as if there was/were no tomorrow Very rapidly and eagerly; without restraint or thought (i.e., as if there won't be another opportunity, so one must do something as much or as quickly as possible). *He must have been starving, because Jonathan started wolfing down his food as if there was no tomorrow! Every time Kevin goes out shopping, he starts spending money as if there were no tomorrow.*

as if there's no tomorrow Very rapidly and eagerly; without restraint or thought (i.e., as if there won't be another opportunity, so one must do something as much or as quickly as possible). *He must be starving, because Jonathan is wolfing down his food as if there's no tomorrow! Every time Kevin goes out shopping, he starts spending money as if there's no tomorrow.*

as is The state or condition that something is already in, with no further changes or improvements. When used in the context of a sale or agreement, it implies that there is no guarantee or warranty as to the condition of something after purchase. *I don't have time to add anything more to my term paper; I hope it's good enough as is. I bought the car as is from the seller, so*

I was out of luck when the engine fell apart two days later.

as it comes Said when any method of preparation is fine. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *I'll take a coffee as it comes—I just need some caffeine!*

as it happens Coincidentally; surprisingly; as a matter of fact. Often said of an unlikely or unusual fact, event, or circumstance. *My wife's been offered a new job in London. As it happens, we were already thinking of moving there sometime soon!*

as it is 1. At this point in time; already. *I don't need to be getting sick now. I have enough things to worry about as it is. 2.* As is actually the case; the reality of the situation being. *I really need to focus for this exam. As it is, if I fail this, then I fail out of school all together. The man faced life in prison over the murder charges. As it is, he will serve eight years for manslaughter.*

as it so happens Coincidentally; surprisingly; as a matter of fact. Often said of an unlikely or unusual fact, event, or circumstance. *Do I know any good artists? As it so happens, my neighbor exhibits art around the world!*

as it stands At this time; as it is now. *As it stands now, the doctor's next available appointment is in a month. Do you like this version as it stands, or should I make revisions?*

as it were A qualifier typically used in spoken English to emphasize that something is not exactly as it is being described. *I practically work at home, as it were—the office is within walking distance of my house. She's kind of my girlfriend, as it were, but we're not official or anything.*

as large as life Present before someone, often surprisingly so. *Oh, I saw grandma today. I turned the corner at the grocery store, and there she was, as large as life!*

as like as peas in a pod See [\(as\) \(a\)like as \(two\) peas in a pod](#).

as likely as not Probably; most likely. *During lunch, you'll find Mrs. Smith preparing lessons in her office, as likely as not.*

as long as 1. Considering the fact that; seeing as; because. *Hey, as long as you're going to the shop, would you mind picking me up a gallon of milk? I suppose I might as well do a bit of work on my thesis as long as I've got the apartment to myself. 2.* If it is the case that; provided that. *Hey, as long as you get your homework finished and handed in on time, I don't care what kind of music you listen to. OK, you can have one cookie before dinner as*

long as you don't spoil your appetite! 3. For the amount of time that (is stipulated). Run for as long as you are able, and then we can walk.

as luck may have it As dictated by or owing to chance, luck, or coincidence; luckily. *As luck may have it, the weather should be clear this weekend for the run.*

as luck would have it By good or bad fortune. *I was already late and then, as luck would have it, I couldn't find a parking spot. As luck would have it, the other candidate declined, so the job is mine after all!*

(as) mad as a hornet Enraged; extremely or inconsolably angry. *My dad was mad as a hornet after I crashed his car. You make me as mad as a hornet with the way you carry on sometimes, you know that?*

(as) mad as a wet hen Enraged; extremely or inconsolably angry. *My dad was mad as a wet hen after I crashed his car. You make me as mad as a wet hen with the way you carry on sometimes, you know that?*

(as) mad as hops Enraged; extremely or inconsolably angry. *My dad was mad as hops after I crashed his car. You make me as mad as hops with the way you carry on sometimes, you know that?*

as many The same number or amount (of something). *My exam schedule is really difficult. I have four tests in as many days. I wouldn't discount their army's force: they have 400,000 and as many guns.*

as many as 1. Up to or equal to a certain number or amount. *We have as many as 40 employees working in the office at any hour of the day. 2.* The largest amount that is required, available, or possible. *Don't worry about the cost, just hire as many people as you think is necessary to get the job done. Get as many copies of the book as your car can hold.*

as much Tantamount to that which has been insinuated, implied, or assumed. *It looks like the country is heading for war. The president said as much in his national address last night. I just know Mary is going to break up with me; she implied as much last night.*

as much as Regardless of or despite how much; although. *As much as I'd like to see Paris or Rome someday, I'm pretty content to stay right here in my hometown for the time being. As much as he hated the arrogant young man, Jonathan couldn't allow an innocent person to be arrested for a crime he didn't commit.*

as much as a fish needs a bicycle See [need \(something\) \(about\) as much a fish needs a bicycle](#).

as much as a hole in the head See [need \(something\) \(about\) as much as \(one\) needs a hole in the head](#).

as much as anything (else) With the same importance as any other factor. *When you apply to colleges, you need to consider each school's curriculum as much as anything. Caring for a sick child contributed to their decision to close the business as much as anything else.*

as much as (one's) life is worth A very risky, dangerous, sober, or monumental thing to undertake. *It is as much as one's life is worth to face the freezing cold outside. For all the talk about the democratic process, it feels like it's as much as your life is worth to actually bring about substantial change in politics.*

as neat as a new pin See [neat as a new pin](#).

(as) neat as ninepence Very tidy, neat, and well-organized; in good order. *After my kids made me breakfast in bed, I expected the kitchen to be a mess. But was I ever surprised to find the whole place as neat as ninepence when I came downstairs! James is so meticulous with his office, always keeping it neat as ninepence.*

(as) nice as ninepence Very tidy, neat, and well-organized; in good order. *After my kids made me breakfast in bed, I expected the kitchen to be a mess. But was I ever surprised to find the whole place as nice as ninepence when I came downstairs! James is so meticulous with his office, always keeping it nice as ninepence.*

as of At or on a certain time or date; commencing on or from a certain time or date. *As of Monday, an interim governor will take over duties until an emergency election is held. As of 9 AM, we've learned that as many as five companies are involved in the insider trading scandal.*

as often as not Frequently; more than half the time. The phrase is not always preceded by the adverb "as." *As often as not, I end up disliking coming back to my hometown for a visit. I'll have a drink with dinner often as not.*

(as) often as not In most instances; usually; at least, if not more than, half the time. *As often as not, Jamie's and David's debates end up turning*

into petty arguments. *I find these introductory college courses to be, often as not, a rather boring waste of one's time.*

(as) old as the hills humorous Very old. *Oh, she's old as the hills, she can't hear us. Why don't we ever sing new songs? Those hymns are as old as the hills.*

as one man 1. In unison. *The dancers moved as one man across the stage.* 2. Unanimously. *The committee reached that decision as one man.*

as (one) pleases 1. In whatever way one wishes or which suits one best. *I'm really not concerned with what way you go about researching your report. Do as you please, so long as the report is good! Bill: "I'll not take your dirty money." George: "As you please, it makes no difference to me."* 2. To the utmost degree; as much as is conceivable. Most often heard in the phrase "pretty as you please." *He looks at himself in the mirror any chance he gets; he's as conceited as you please. She simply stared at me all doe-eyed, pretty as you please, while I tried to remonstrate her for crashing the family car.*

as opposed to Instead of; in contrast to. *We're going to Florida for our vacation this year, as opposed to the local beach. As opposed to sitting around watching TV, you could be working on your paper.*

as per In accordance with. *Charlie stood me up tonight, as per usual. Please pay your rent on time, as per the terms of the lease.*

as per usual As typically happens; as is usually the case. *As per usual, my boyfriend didn't call me like he said he would. I'll be eating lunch outside on the picnic table, as per usual.*

as pissed as a fart slang Very intoxicated. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *When I got to the pub, you were as pissed as a fart. Do you remember anything that happened last night?*

(as) quick as a bunny Incredibly quickly or speedily. *Quick as a bunny, Mary finished her exam and raced out of the classroom.*

(as) quick as a flash Incredibly quickly or speedily. *Did you see that martial arts master? His threw those kicks as quick as a flash! Quick as a flash, Mary finished her exam and raced out of the classroom.*

(as) quick as lightning Incredibly quickly or speedily. *Did you see that martial arts expert? He threw those kicks as quick as lightning! Quick as*

lightning, Mary finished her exam and raced out of the classroom.

(as) quiet as the grave Totally silent, especially as produces an ominous or foreboding effect. *I knew something was wrong when I walked into the meeting room and all the members of the board were quiet as the grave. I hate staying in my grandma's house. It gets as quiet as the grave at nighttime, and it really creeps me out.*

(as) rare as hens' teeth Incredibly scarce or rare; extremely difficult or impossible to find. *Support for the president is as rare as hens' teeth in this part of the country.*

(as) rare as rocking horse crap vulgar slang Extremely rare or unlikely; all but, or most likely, impossible or non-existent. Primarily heard in Ireland. *An honest person in politics? Yeah, that's as rare as rocking horse crap. I'm sorry to say, but the part this engine needs is rare as rocking horse crap. They haven't manufactured these in nearly 50 years!*

(as) rare as rocking horse poo vulgar slang Extremely rare or unlikely; all but, or most likely, impossible or non-existent. Primarily heard in Ireland. *An honest person in politics? Yeah, that's as rare as rocking horse poo. I'm sorry to say, but the part this engine needs is rare as rocking horse poo. They haven't manufactured these in nearly 50 years!*

(as) rare as rocking horse shit vulgar slang Extremely rare or unlikely; all but, or most likely, impossible or non-existent. Primarily heard in Ireland. *An honest person in politics? Yeah, that's as rare as rocking horse shit. I'm sorry to say, but the part this engine needs is rare as rocking horse shit. They haven't manufactured these in nearly 50 years!*

as regards On the topic of. *As regards that new initiative, we are working to implement it now. As regards our lunch date, I'm free this Sunday.*

(as) right as a trivet In good health. Primarily heard in UK. *Yes, I was sick last week, but I'm right as a trivet now.*

(as) right as ninepence Very tidy, neat, and well-organized; in good order. *After my kids made me breakfast in bed, I expected the kitchen to be a mess. But was I ever surprised to find the whole place as right as ninepence when I came downstairs! James is so meticulous with his office, always keeping it right as ninepence.*

(as) round as Giotto's O Quickly yet perfectly done. The phrase

refers to the Italian artist Giotto, who is said to have promptly drawn a perfect circle to demonstrate his artistic abilities for Pope Boniface VIII. *Wow, I can't believe you wrote this paper in one night—your writing is round as Giotto's O.*

(as) scarce as hens' teeth Incredibly scarce or rare; extremely difficult or impossible to find. *Support for the candidate is as scarce as hens' teeth in this part of the country.*

(as) sick as a dog slang Very ill. *I haven't been avoiding you, I've just been sick as a dog. I had to go to the doctor on Monday because I was as sick as a dog all weekend.*

as sick as a parrot See [be \(as\) sick as a parrot](#).

(as) sick as a parrot Thoroughly displeased, disappointed, or dejected (about something). Primarily heard in UK. *Tim was as sick as a parrot when he learned that he had been passed over for the promotion. I'm delighted that my children have such wonderful opportunities abroad, but I must say I feel sick as a parrot at the thought of being separated from them for so long.*

(as) silent as the dead Totally silent, especially as produces an ominous or foreboding effect. *I knew something was wrong when I walked into the meeting room and all the members of the board were silent as the dead. I hate staying in my grandma's house. It gets as silent as the dead at nighttime, and it really creeps me out.*

(as) silent as the grave Totally silent, especially as produces an ominous or foreboding effect. *I knew something was wrong when I walked into the meeting room and all the members of the board were silent as the grave. I hate staying in my grandma's house. It gets as silent as the grave at nighttime, and it really creeps me out.*

(as) slow as molasses Exceptionally slow or sluggish; not fast at all. *This old laptop my dad gave me is a piece of junk. It's as slow as molasses! Come on, Becky, you're slow as molasses back there! Pick up the pace and keep up with the group.*

(as) slow as molasses in January Exceptionally slow or sluggish; not fast at all. (The addition of "January," which is among the coldest months in the Northern Hemisphere, serves to intensify the meaning, as molasses is especially viscous in the cold. *This old laptop my dad gave me takes forever*

booting up, and then it's as slow as molasses in January the whole time I use it! Come on, Becky, you're slow as molasses in January back there! Pick up the pace and keep up with the group.

(as) smooth as a baby's bottom Very smooth and soft, with no imperfections. *Have you tried this chocolate mousse? It has an incredible flavor and is smooth as a baby's bottom. I love how your face feels after you shave—it's as smooth as a baby's bottom!*

(as) smooth as silk Very smooth and soft, with no imperfections. *Have you tried this chocolate mousse? It has an incredible flavor and is smooth as silk. I love how your face feels after you shave—it's as smooth as silk!*

as (something) as they come Said of someone or something that displays a trait or characteristic to the utmost degree. *Bryce is as talented as they come. Once you see him on stage, you'll agree. These strawberries are as fresh as they come. They were literally just picked!*

as soon as 1. Once; immediately when. *We'll leave as soon as Jim gets here. As soon as the package arrives, open it. 2.* At the earliest opportunity. *Call your mother as soon as you can—she's very worried about you.*

as soon as possible At the earliest opportunity. *Call your mother as soon as possible—she's very worried about you.*

as straight as a die 1. Very straight. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *I get carsick, so I hope the roads we're taking are as straight as a die. 2.* Truthful and reliable. *Kate would never cheat on an exam—she's as straight as a die. I know Bob's story sounds ridiculous, but I believe him because he's as straight as a die.*

as such 1. In its current manner. *Do you like this version as such, or should I make revisions? 2.* Exactly. *I didn't get an A as such, but I still did really well in that class!*

(as) sure as a gun obsolete With utmost certainty; quite definitely. (That is, as sure as a gun is to fire when its trigger is pressed. This idiom has largely been replaced with the phrase "sure as shooting.") *Lord Henry, sure as a gun it was those two miscreants who have made off with your prized heifer. Come into a great fortune and, as sure as a gun, the number of those who would be your friend increases tenfold.*

(as) sure as death and taxes Certain to happen; inevitable and

unavoidable. A variation of the proverbial phrase, "Nothing is certain but death and taxes." *They just aren't right for each other; they're sure as death and taxes to break up eventually. The two brothers will be forever at each other's throats, as sure as death and taxes.*

(as) sure as shooting With utmost certainty; quite definitely. (That is, as sure as a gun is to fire when its trigger is pressed.) *It had to have been Mike who leaked our plans to the press, sure as shooting! Come into a great fortune and, as sure as shooting, the number of those who would be your friend increases tenfold.*

as the actress said to the bishop A humorous expression used to add a sexual connotation to an innocuous phrase. A: "Oh, I'm sorry, I didn't mean to touch you there." B: "As the actress said to the bishop!"

as the actress said to the pope An aside that is used to create a humorous but lewd sexual innuendo out of something mundane or innocent that someone else has said. (The use of "actress" is because the innuendo always refers to a woman in a sexual situation.) Primarily heard in UK. A: "Wow, that sandwich is huge!" B: "Yeah, I can barely put my hands around it." C: "As the actress said to the pope!"

as the crow flies The measurement of distance in a straight line. (From the notion that crows always fly in a straight line.) *From here to the office, it's about 20 miles as the crow flies, but it's more like 30 miles by car since you have to wind around the mountain.*

as the day is long Absolutely; to the utmost degree; as much as is possible. Usually an intensifier of an adjective, especially honest, happy, or some variation thereof. *Ever since she proposed to me, I've been as happy as the day is long. He's as deceitful as the day is long.*

as the next girl As anyone else. A vague method of comparison. *Sure, I'd love to go to the museum with you—I love art as much as the next girl! I like cheeseburgers as much as the next girl, I just don't want to eat one every day.*

as the next guy As anyone else. A vague method of comparison. *Sure, I'd love to go to the museum with you—I love art as much as the next guy! I like cheeseburgers as much as the next guy, I just don't want to eat one every day.*

as the spirit moves (one) When one feels compelled to do something. *Laura's grades are so bad because she only comes to class as the spirit moves her. I usually stay home on weekends, but I'll go out as the spirit moves me.*

as the twig is bent, so is the tree inclined One's actions as an adult are dictated by behaviors learned in childhood. *I can't believe she still doesn't listen to other people. I guess it's true that as the twig is bent, so is the tree inclined.*

as the wind blows As dictated by or according to fortune, circumstance, or the natural outcome of events. *We'll just have to adapt and change as the wind blows, taking what life gives us as it comes.*

as they please See [as \(one\) pleases](#).

(as) thick as a brick Remarkably stupid, dimwitted, or obtuse. *I smoked a lot of marijuana when I was in high school, so I turned out thick as a brick by the time I finally graduated. Jen's new girlfriend is very nice, but she's as thick as a brick.*

(as) thick as a shit vulgar slang Remarkably stupid, dimwitted, or obtuse. Primarily heard in UK. *I smoked a lot of marijuana when I was in high school, so I turned out thick as a shit by the time I finally graduated. Jen's new girlfriend is very nice, but she's as thick as a shit.*

(as) thick as a short plank Remarkably stupid, dimwitted, or obtuse. *You're thick as a short plank if you think you can swim across that river. I must have been as thick as a short plank when I was younger, because I sure did some stupid things.*

(as) thick as two short planks Remarkably stupid, dimwitted, or obtuse. *I smoked a lot of marijuana when I was in high school, so I turned out thick as two short planks by the time I finally graduated. Jen's new girlfriend is very nice, but she's as thick as two short planks.*

(as) thin as a rail Extremely skinny or slender. Primarily heard in US. *Have you seen Claire lately? She's become as thin as a rail in the last six months! I've always been thin as a rail, even when I try to pack on some muscle.*

(as) thin as a rake Extremely skinny or slender. Primarily heard in UK. *Have you seen Claire lately? She's become as thin as a rake in the last six*

months! *I've always been thin as a rake, even when I tried to gain weight.*

(as) thin as a stick Extremely skinny or slender. *Have you seen Claire lately? She's become as thin as a stick in the last six months! I've always been thin as a stick, even when I tried to gain weight.*

as things stand As a situation is at this time. *As things stand, we'll have 12 people at dinner tonight. Will you please apologize to Dottie? As things stand now, she's really mad at you.*

as though Similar to, likened to, or fashioned after something like it were the truth. *So many bad things happened all at once, it's as though life itself were against me. He acts as though he's some famous author, though really he's only ever published a single short story.*

as to 1. Regarding; with respect to; referring to; apropos of. *As to the matter at hand, we must act firmly and without delay.* **2.** By means of or according to. *Please catalogue the entries as to their size in millimeters.*

as usual As is typical; as often happens. *Sam is ignoring me, as usual. I wonder if he'll ever forgive me. The writers' group is meeting at the coffee shop on Saturday morning, as usual.*

as we speak At this very moment. *Oh, we won't be late after all—Patrick is pulling into the driveway as we speak. Today, as we speak, millions of children around the world are going hungry.*

as well 1. Also; in addition. *Your mother is coming as well, so make sure to include her in the head count. I included all of my receipts as well, in case you need them.* **2.** Used between two ideas that will have the same impact. Typically used in the phrases "might as well" and "just as well." *I'm not excited about it, but I might as well go to the party because my girlfriend will be mad at me if I don't. It's just as well that I didn't get that job—I don't think I would have fit in there.*

as well as 1. Also; in addition. *We're going to Greece, as well as Italy, on our vacation. I invited my entire grade, as well as a few friends that are younger than me.* **2.** Equally well; to the same standard. *I did just as well as my sister, but she gets all the attention!*

as yet At this time; yet. *No one has responded to my email as yet, so I don't have an answer for you.*

as you know As you have already heard or learned. *You read my email,*

right? So, as you know, I'm not coming back here in the fall.

as you make your bed, so you must lie on it You must accept the consequences of your actions. *Of course your friends are mad at you—you lied to them! As you make your bed, so you must lie on it.*

as you sow, so shall you reap Your actions dictate the consequences. The phrase is Biblical in origin. *Of course you're exhausted in class—you stay up too late! As you sow, so shall you reap. Of course you're being investigated for tax fraud—you've spent years trying to avoid paying them. As you sow, so shall you reap.*

ascertain from To find out something from examining or observing something or some situation. A noun can be used between "ascertain" and "from." *I ascertained a lot about my daughter's new boyfriend from our first dinner together. What were you able to ascertain from the article?*

ascribe to To attribute something to a person or source. A noun can be used between "ascribe" and "to." *Unless you want the teacher to think you're plagiarizing, be sure to ascribe all of your quotes to the proper sources. Can you believe this ludicrous statement that's been ascribed to the CEO?*

aside from Except for. *I like all vegetables, aside from string beans. Aside from that one class, Josh is a very good student.*

ask a silly question and you get a silly answer If one asks a strange or nonsensical question, the listener will probably respond with a similarly strange or nonsensical answer. A: *"What the heck are you talking about? All I did was ask if you think I should dress my cat up for Halloween!"* B: *"Well, ask a silly question and you get a silly answer!"*

ask after To inquire about another person's well-being. *Oh, Joan asked after you today. I told her you're doing well.*

ask around To try to find out information about something by asking a lot of different people. *I've been asking around to see if anyone is prepared for our Biology final, and the consensus has been a firm "no."* A: *"Have you seen my book?"* B: *"No, but I'll ask around."*

ask around about To try to find out information about something by asking a lot of different people. *I've been asking around about our Biology final, and the consensus has been utter panic.* A: *"Have you seen my book?"* B: *"No, but I'll ask around about it."*

ask back To invite someone to return to a place. A noun can be used between "ask" and "back." *Because so many people came to my last talk, I've been asked back to the college. If you kids keep misbehaving, they won't ask us back!*

ask down To invite another person to one's home. A noun can be used between "ask" and "down." *I've been asked down to the MacLeods' farm this weekend. Haven't I asked you down to our new house before?*

ask for 1. To request something. *I asked for that report days ago!* **2.** slang To act in a way that warrants the punishment or other repercussions that follow. In this usage, "ask for" is a set phrase, usually followed by "it." *Did you draw on the wall? Oh, you're asking for it now! Mary is a very patient person, so if she dumped Phil, he must have asked for it.*

ask for it slang To act in a way that warrants the punishment or other repercussions that follow. This is a set phrase. *Did you draw on the wall? Oh, you're asking for it now! Mary is a very patient person, so if she dumped Phil, he must have asked for it.*

ask for the moon To make requests or demands that are (or are perceived to be) extraordinary or unreasonable. *I just asked them if we could go to lunch a little earlier, and they're acting like I'm asking for the moon! I'm not taking out all the green jellybeans for him, he's asking for the moon!*

ask for trouble To do something or act in a manner that will very likely result in trouble, difficulty, or danger. (Usually used in the past or present continuous tense.) *Those kids were just asking for trouble when they went trespassing on my property, and now trouble is what they'll get! I know you're annoyed at your boss for making you come in on the weekend, but don't go asking for trouble!*

ask my arse obsolete, vulgar A rude retort meant to dismiss a question or request. Primarily heard in UK, Ireland. A: *"Excuse me, could you tell me which direction to go for the train station?"* B: *"Ask my arse."*

ask no questions and hear no lies Don't question me on that topic because I will probably lie. *I'm not going to tell you what we're planning for your birthday, so ask no questions and hear no lies.*

ask (one) in(to) To invite another person into a place, often one's home. *Haven't I asked you into our new house before? They're Bill's friends, so I*

asked them in.

ask (one) out 1. To ask someone to go on a date. *Bill still hasn't asked me out—maybe he doesn't have romantic feelings for me after all.* **2.** To invite someone to a social event or special occasion. *I'm sorry, we're busy on Friday night—my boss has asked us out to the theater.* **3.** To invite someone to a distant location. *I have asked Hannah out to our new place, but she never wants to drive all the way from the city.*

ask (one) over To invite someone to one's house. *Mom, can I ask some friends over? I already asked Kelly over tonight—do you want to come too?*

ask (someone) around To ask someone to come visit one's house. *I asked Mary around to watch a movie, but she was busy.*

ask (someone) round To ask someone to come visit one's house. *Why don't you ask John round later for a cup of tea?*

ask (something) of To request something of another person. *I hope she doesn't ask that of me—I'm afraid I won't be able to say no. I'm sorry, but I'm not sure. Ask those questions of the boss.*

ask up To invite a visitor to one's house (especially if the visitor must travel north to get there). *My cousins in Pennsylvania have asked me up to their house for the weekend, but that's a long drive from Florida.*

asking price The price a seller seeks in exchange for a particular item. *What's the asking price for that necklace? I think we can get him to lower the asking price for us.*

asleep at the switch Failing to attend to one's responsibilities or duties; not doing or paying attention to that which is important or for which one is responsible. *Johnson was supposed to make sure the paperwork went through before the deadline, but it looks like he was asleep at the switch.*

asleep at the wheel Failing to attend to one's responsibilities or duties; not doing or paying attention to that which is important or for which one is responsible. *Johnson was supposed to make sure the paperwork went through before the deadline, but it looks like he was asleep at the wheel. We would have won if our goalie hadn't fallen asleep at the wheel!*

asphalt jungle An overcrowded, unsafe and/or crime-ridden urban environment or city, characterized by the congestion of large buildings and roads. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *After 10 years living in that*

asphalt jungle, I'm looking forward to being in a place with a bit of grass and friendly neighbors.

aspire to To hope or strive to be or do something. *I aspire to be a successful businesswoman like my sister one day. My parents were so patient with us. As a dad, that's what I aspire to.*

ass-backwards Dysfunctional, regressive, and/or bizarre. *The school board is so ass-backwards! Can you believe they took away our school's art program?*

ass end of nowhere A location that is extremely remote or out of the way, hyperbolically and sarcastically identified as the farthest point away from anything. *I don't know what they were thinking building the stadium in the ass end of nowhere. Who's going to drive this far to see a baseball game?*

ass in a lion's skin A blustering fool. The "ass" here is a donkey, trying to portray itself as a strong and powerful lion. *Can you believe the boss yelled at me because he thought—wrongly—that I'd handed in my budget late? Geez, he's such an ass in a lion's skin!*

ass in a sling vulgar slang A phrase used when one has done something wrong and is now in trouble for it. *When the boss finds out I haven't handed in my budget yet, I'll have my ass in a sling. Aw man, Mrs. Davis really put my ass in a sling. Could you hear the yelling all the way down the hall?*

(one's) ass is on the line informal One's reputation, livelihood, or wellbeing is at stake. *My ass is on the line, so this presentation has to go well! Their ass is on the line out there, so let's give them the air support they need.*

(one's) ass off slang A phrase used to emphasize the preceding verb as having been done to the maximum degree. *I worked my ass off to get where I am today! He laughed his ass off when his little brother came home covered in mud.*

ass over teacup vulgar slang Flipped upside down; head over heels. Primarily heard in US. *My poor sister just went ass over teacup on the ice out there! I hope she isn't hurt! Finding out Bill is selling the company has turned my whole world ass over teacup—I can't believe I'm going to have to find a new job after 25 years!*

ass over teakettle vulgar slang Flipped upside down; head over heels.

My poor sister just went ass over teakettle on the ice out there! I hope she isn't hurt! Finding out Bill is selling the company has turned my whole world ass over teakettle—I can't believe I'm going to have to find a new job after 25 years!

assail with **1.** Literally, to attack someone with a weapon. A person's name or a pronoun can be used between "assail" and "with." *The robber assailed her with a knife. I was assailed with a brick by the carjacker.* **2.** By extension, to overwhelm or irritate someone with something. A person's name or a pronoun can be used between "assail" and "with." *Because finals are approaching, my students are constantly assailing me with questions. I'm always assailed with tasks from my boss.*

assault and battery A violent physical attack. Although "assault and battery" is an official legal charge, the phrase can also be used conversationally to describe any sort of physical attack, however serious. *The thief that attacked my son in the parking lot has been charged with assault and battery. A: "Quit punching me! Help, this is assault and battery!" B: "Ah, you're such a wuss. Go cry to mom."*

assault the ear To be loud and painful to listen to. *I don't know how kids enjoy playing their music so loud—it just assaults the ear!*

assent to To agree to something. *The union has finally assented to the new contract.*

assert (one)self To display self-confidence and strength of conviction, typically in the pursuit of something. *Melanie is always so timid—I'm shocked she was able to assert herself to the boss today. You need to assert yourself and tell her how you really feel!*

assess at To estimate the value of something at a particular price. A noun can be used between "assess" and "at." *What price has the house been assessed at? I'm thrilled that the expert assessed my family heirloom at such a high price.*

assign (something) to To designate someone as responsible for doing something, or as responsible for having done something. *Oh, I already assigned that project to Nicole. Since I was driving when we got into the accident, they assigned the blame to me.*

assimilate (oneself/someone/something) into To blend into; to

merge with. *Can you please help assimilate our new student into the class? I've assimilated your suggestions into the existing curriculum. Do you think Sam will be able to assimilate himself into the group? He can be pretty standoffish.*

assimilate with To blend harmoniously into a group of people. *Do you think he will be able to assimilate with his new class? He can be pretty standoffish. My sister is really outgoing, so she has no trouble assimilating with new people.*

assist in To help with something. A person's name or a pronoun can be used between "assist" and "in." *Who wants to assist me in this endeavor? My boss wants me to assist in this project, so here I am!*

assist (one) at To help another person with something, usually in a medical setting. *Who is going to assist me at the laparotomy this morning?*

assist with To help with something. A person's name or a pronoun can be used between "assist" and "with." *Who wants to assist me with this endeavor? My boss wants me to assist with this project, so here I am!*

associate with 1. To have a relationship with someone. In this usage, a reflexive pronoun can be used between "associate" and "with." *I don't associate with criminals like him. I think he's happy to associate himself with successful people like us. 2.* To connect various people or things in one's mind, usually for a specific reason that is unique to that person. A noun is used between "associate" and "with." *I associate the smell of cinnamon with Christmas because of the cookies my mother used to bake every year. He always associates Liz with me because he met us at the same time.*

assume liability for To take responsible for something, typically a cost or expense. *When you signed the contract, you assumed liability for fees like this.*

assume the mantle To take, inherit, or receive the responsibilities and duties associated with a certain position or job, especially one regarded as important or powerful. *The king led the country for over 60 years; now, his daughter will assume the mantle of the throne.*

assume the position 1. To take over the role and responsibilities of a particular job. *My boss wants me to assume the position of treasurer this year, but I don't know if I want the extra workload. 2.* A command issued by

US law enforcement officers, meaning to stand with one's back to the officer and hold one's arms in a position to be either handcuffed or frisked. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *I knew I was in trouble when they asked me out of the car, but I knew I was going to jail when they told me to assume the position.*

assure (one) of To try to convince one of something or quell one's fears. *The partners are getting nervous—we need to assure them of the deal's favorable terms. Can you please assure the boss of my ability to handle this project?*

astound (one) with To amaze someone with something. *I didn't know she was such a talented singer—she astounded us with her voice. You astounded the committee with your thorough, incisive analysis.*

at 6s and 7s See [at sixes and sevens](#).

at a boy See [ataboy](#).

at a canter Done or accomplished with ease or minimal effort. (A canter is a smooth, steady gait, as of a horse, which is between the pace of a trot and a gallop.) *He was in such better condition than his competitors that he won the race at a canter.*

at a crossroads At a point when a choice must be made; at a point of change. *After earning my degree, I'm at a crossroads. I need to figure out which direction my life should take. As a company, we're at a crossroads. We can continue business as usual, or we can take a risk and try to grow.*

at a dead end At an impasse; at a point where no more progress is possible. The phrase can be literal or figurative. *We're at a dead end. We'll have to turn around and take that side road. My research is at a dead end—every experiment I've tried so far has failed.*

at a disadvantage In an unfavorable position in comparison to others. *They knew for weeks, but I'm just getting all of this information now—I'm at a disadvantage here. You'll be at a disadvantage playing tennis against someone as skilled as Katie.*

at a discount 1. Below the usual commercial price or value. *The prices are so much cheaper over there that I always feel like I'm getting things at a discount.* 2. In low regard as to esteem, value, or worth; worthless or undesirable. *The rebels were at first celebrated for defying the monarchy, but*

they are now at a discount since they began attacking civilian targets. Though he was a pioneer of the field, the views of Sigmund Freud are held at a discount by most modern psychologists.

at a gal See [attagal](#).

at a girl See [attagirl](#).

at a glance **1.** With only a quick look. *I have notes hanging all over my cubicle so that I can answer customers' questions at a glance.* **2.** Used to indicate that something is a brief summary. *Here are our fourth quarter projections at a glance.*

at a good clip Quickly; at a good pace. *That horse is moving at a good clip—I think he might win the race!*

at a loss **1.** Totally perplexed. *I'm at a loss as to how they lost that game after having a five-goal lead. Can anyone decipher what he means? I'm at a loss.* **2.** Below cost or without profiting. *I think the store is going to close soon—it's been selling items at a loss for a long time. Most restaurants operate at a loss for a long time before they start turning a profit.*

at a loss for words Unable to speak or articulate a coherent thought. *I'm so disappointed that I'm actually at a loss for words.*

at a low ebb At a low point, like the receding tide. *Please don't give me any more bad news—I'm already at a low ebb. Interest in the local soccer team is really at a low ebb, thanks to all those losing seasons.*

at a moment's notice With little time to prepare; immediately and at any time. *Firefighters need to be able to spring into action at a moment's notice. I can't give a speech at a moment's notice!*

at a pinch Said of a challenging, but potentially workable, situation. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *Sir, I think we can get you on that flight at a pinch, as long as you don't mind waiting around.*

at a premium **1.** For an expensive price (typically because the item in question is hard to find). *If you don't go Christmas shopping early, you'll only get the most popular toys at a premium later.* **2.** Difficult to obtain. *Quiet moments are at a premium when there's a toddler in the house.*

at a price **1.** For a fee (often an expensive one). *In the big city, you can get anything you want—at a price.* **2.** With negative consequences. *Freedom*

of speech came at a price for those protestors, as the crowd responded to them violently.

at a push With extra effort. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *At a push, we can still make it on time. I think I can have this order done early, at a push.*

at a rate of knots Rapidly. (A boat's speed is measured in knots.) Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *We're going to have to move at a rate of knots to have any hope of getting there on time.*

at a set time At a designated time. *I'm sure the party starts at a set time—where's the invitation? We're all meeting at a set time.*

at a (single) blow All at once, with a single decisive or powerful action. *When the economy crashed, thousands of people lost their jobs, their homes, and their pensions at a single blow. As the two leaders ratified the treaty, 10 years of civil war ended at a blow.*

at a (single) stroke All at once, with a single decisive or powerful action. *When the economy crashed, thousands of people lost their jobs, their homes, and their pensions at a single stroke. As the two leaders ratified the treaty, 10 years of civil war ended at a stroke.*

at a sitting During one period of time devoted to a particular task. *How much work can you get done at a sitting? How many people can the restaurant accommodate at a sitting?*

at a snail's pace Very slowly (as a snail is known to move very slowly). *My research is moving at a snail's pace—every experiment I've tried so far has failed. We'll never get there on time with you driving at a snail's pace!*

at a stand obsolete In a state of confusion, perplexity, uncertainty, or disconcertment; at a loss. *I was at a stand about what to do with my life when I lost my job.*

at a stretch Without a break or interruption. The phrase is usually preceded by a length of time. *I can only drive five hours at a stretch, so you'll have to take over soon.*

at a time During one period of time without pause or interruption. *Why is the change machine only dispensing one coin at a time? It's taking forever! How many boxes can you carry at a time?*

at a word Without hesitation; instantly. *I knew I was in danger and that, at a word from its owner, the dog was ready to attack. Jeff is always ready to help anyone at a word.*

at about Near or close to; approximately; around. Usually refers to a numerical value or point in time. *We're planning to arrive at about noon. He was a huge man, standing at about seven feet tall. The lottery this week is valued at about \$200 million.*

at all 1. In any manner. *Wow, I didn't know she could dance at all, let alone breakdance!* 2. To any degree; in any way. *I don't care about him at all.*

at all costs In any way possible, regardless of risk or expense. *Please, save my husband at all costs—I can't live without him! I hope my foot heals quickly—I try to avoid going to the doctor at all costs.*

at all hours (of the day and night) At any time of the day or night. This phrase is usually said with a note of annoyance because something has happened at an inappropriate time. *Please tell your girlfriend to stop calling our house at all hours of the day and night. I haven't slept in days—my neighbor's dog has been barking at all hours.*

at all times Constantly. *Grandma is pretty unsteady on her feet, so please stay with her at all times.*

at an early date Soon. *The boss wants to meet with you at an early date.*

at an end Finished, typically after a long duration. *My time as an undergrad is at an end. Time to get a job, I guess. The president's tenure is at an end after a turbulent two terms.*

at an impasse At a point or problem that is insurmountable or from which there is no possible exit, progress, or negotiation. *After hours of bitter debate, the two parties were at an impasse, and the discussion was left for the following day.*

at anchor The state a ship is in when it has dropped its anchor. *We're going to stay at anchor for a few days so we can really enjoy the beach. Men, the ship is at anchor, so it's time to move out!*

at any cost In any way possible, regardless of risk or expense. *Please, save my husband at any cost—I can't live without him! I hope my foot heals quickly—I try to avoid going to the doctor at any cost.*

at any price In any way possible, regardless of risk or expense. *Please, save my husband at any price—I can't live without him! I hope my foot heals quickly—I try to avoid going to the doctor at any price.*

at any rate Anyway. *We're going to be late, but, at any rate, we should still be there before 9. I think your mother just tolerates me—at any rate, she certainly doesn't shower me with affection.*

at arm's length At or occupying a distance, either physical or figurative, away from oneself that affords a level of safety or security or that excludes intimacy. *I'm involved in all the board meetings, but I prefer to stay at arm's length if the issues become too contentious. John always keeps his friends at arm's length, so that no one gets close enough to hurt his feelings.*

at around Near or close to; approximately; around. Usually refers to a numerical value or point in time. *We're planning to arrive at around noon. He was a huge man, standing at around seven feet tall. The lottery this week is valued at around \$200 million.*

at bat Having one's turn or chance to do something. Originates from baseball, referring to the player whose turn it is to try to hit the ball. Primarily heard in South Africa. *Okay, we've heard from the editorial and marketing staff. Ms. Smith, you and the financial department are at bat.*

at bay At a safe distance; held back by some action. *That preventative course of antibiotics really kept the illness at bay—I was hardly sick at all! We have a security system to keep burglars at bay.*

at beck and call See [at \(one's\) beck and call](#).

at behest See [at \(someone's\) behest](#).

at best See [at \(one's\) best](#).

at best 1. In the best possible scenario. *At best, Doug will be only an hour late. They're only selling junk at the yard sale, so I think they'll make \$10 at best.* 2. Ideally suited for success. In this usage, a pronoun is used between "at" and "best." *I'm not at my best when I'm tired.*

at bottom Basically; ultimately. *I know John can be annoying, but at bottom he's a good person.*

at close quarters In or occupying a cramped or rather small space with other people; the term "quarters" is a reference to military housing. *I'm glad*

to be done with my student days. Living at close quarters with so many people just to afford rent is something I don't want to do again.

at close range In close proximity to a person or thing. Typically used to describe a nearby target in shooting. *Be careful when firing at close range! At close range, I could see that the scary insect was just a harmless June bug.*

at convenience See [at \(one's\) convenience](#).

at cross purposes In conflict with or in opposition to. *You will never find success if you continue to work at cross purposes with your teammates.*

at death's door Extremely ill or very close to death or total destruction. *A case of untreated rabies left me suddenly at death's door. There are many parts of the environment that are now at death's door due to the effects of pollution.*

at death's doorstep Extremely ill or very close to death or total destruction. *A case of untreated rabies left me suddenly at death's doorstep. There are many parts of the environment that are now on death's doorstep due to the effects of pollution.*

at door step See [at \(one's\) doorstep](#).

at each other's throats Said of two people who are noticeably angry with each other. *Those two are at each other's throats because they can't agree on how to best lead the committee. You can hear their shouting all the way down the hall!*

at earliest convenience See [at \(one's\) earliest convenience](#).

at ease 1. Calm and comfortable with a particular task or in a certain environment. *She seems much more at ease now that she's been doing her new job for a month. Kids are usually at ease once they become accustomed to the routine of kindergarten.* 2. In relaxed posture, as of soldiers in the military. *At ease, gentlemen!*

at ease See [at \(one's\) ease](#).

at elbow See [at \(one's\) elbow](#).

at every turn 1. At every opportunity. *My opponent has tried to discredit me at every turn.* 2. Everywhere. *I've been seeing my old roommate at every turn lately. Just today, I bumped into her at the mall!*

at expense See [at \(one's\) expense](#).

at face value **1.** Based on the way someone or something appears or seems, without being verified or investigated first. *It's important that the current period of economic growth is not taken at face value by the government, as there is still a tremendous amount of work that needs to be done. You can't judge someone like Nicole at face value—she's actually much friendlier than she seems at first.* **2.** In exchange for the official price printed on a ticket (as opposed to a resale price determined by the seller). *I'll even sell you the tickets at face value. Come on, that's a good deal! If we want to see The Rolling Stones, we need to get tickets at face value before they sell out—they'll be way too expensive once people start reselling them.*

at fault Responsible for a problem, mistake, or other incident. *The other driver was definitely at fault—I was just sitting at a red light when he rear-ended me! I know I was at fault, so I will apologize to Sara today.*

at fingertips See [at \(one's\) fingertips](#).

at first Initially. *At first, we planned to go to Florida, but now we're going to visit family in Montana instead. I didn't like Tom at first, but the more time I spent with him, the more I enjoyed his company.*

at first blush Upon first seeing or considering something. *At first blush, I thought the house was great, but the inspector's list of problems changed my opinion. The contract did seem favorable at first blush, but it eventually cost me a lot of money.*

at first glance Upon first seeing or considering something. *At first glance, I thought the house was great, but the inspector's list of problems changed my opinion. The contract did seem favorable at first glance, but I can see now that it would not have been beneficial.*

at first hand Directly. *As a teacher, I've seen at first hand how reading can change children's lives.*

at first light At dawn. *We are leaving tomorrow at first light, so I suggest you guys go to bed early tonight. I woke up at first light this morning, so I'm pretty tired now.*

at first sight The first time one sees another person or thing. *When I met my wife, it was love at first sight. At first sight, I knew that house was perfect for me.*

at full blast To the maximum level. *It's so cold that I had the heat in my*

car going at full blast.

at full speed As fast as possible. *I drove at full speed, and I still got there late. Do you think she has a chance to win the race, if she runs at full speed? They are planning this wedding at full speed. I hope they don't forget any major details.*

at full strength At the maximum strength, capacity, or level of power or ability. *Give her a dose of that painkiller at full strength. It took a while, but I'm finally back at full strength after my injury. Now that the army is at full strength, the smaller opposing side doesn't stand a chance.*

at full stretch Putting forth maximum effort. Primarily heard in UK. *The doctors are working at full stretch to save your husband right now.*

at full throttle As fast as something or someone can go *Once Tom caught the ball, he took off at full throttle toward the end zone. I started feeling nauseous on the way home because Kelly was driving at full throttle on a windy highway.*

at full-tilt boogie See [full-tilt boogie](#).

at grade On the same level. Typically said of streets and railroad tracks. *A: "Is the train station up on the hill? Because I don't know that I can make it all the way up there!" B: "No, don't worry, the station is at grade with the street."*

at great length For a long duration. *When I came home after curfew, my mom interrogated me at great length. He spoke at great length about how he had been inspired by his trip.*

at half-mast Partially raised or lowered. The phrase most often describes a flag that has been lowered to honor a recently-deceased person. *After our former president died, flags were at half-mast all across the country. My daughter came home from the park covered in dirt, her ponytail at half-mast.*

at hand **1.** Nearby; physically within one's reach. *Your mother will need you close at hand to help as she makes Thanksgiving dinner. I always keep a glass of water at hand when I sleep, because I hate waking up thirsty.* **2.** Currently in need of addressing. *I know you all want to chat, but we need to focus on the matter at hand—planning next week's assembly. Stop dabbling in other projects and focus on the task at hand.* **3.** Impending or imminent. *After months of planning, I'm thrilled that the event is finally at hand!*

at hazard At risk. *Once one student got the flu, I knew that everyone in his class was at hazard for illness.*

at heart **1.** In accordance with one's deepest feelings or desires. *He's not interested in this accounting job because he's an artist at heart.* **2.** Fundamentally or intrinsically. *Nicole is a kind person at heart—you just need to spend some more time with her.*

at heels See [at \(one's\) heels](#).

at her beck and call See [at \(one's\) beck and call](#).

at her behest See [at \(someone's\) behest](#).

at her best See [at \(one's\) best](#).

at her best See [at best](#).

at her convenience See [at \(one's\) convenience](#).

at her door step See [at \(one's\) doorstep](#).

at her earliest convenience See [at \(one's\) earliest convenience](#).

at her ease See [at \(one's\) ease](#).

at her elbow See [at \(one's\) elbow](#).

at her expense See [at \(one's\) expense](#).

at her fingertips See [at \(one's\) fingertips](#).

at her knee See [at \(one's\) knee](#).

at her leisure See [at \(one's\) leisure](#).

at her mercy See [at \(someone's\) mercy](#).

at her mother's knee See [at \(one's\) mother's knee](#).

at her own game See [at \(one's\) own game](#).

at her own peril See [at \(one's\) own peril](#).

at her own risk See [at \(one's\) own risk](#).

at her request See [at \(someone's\) request](#).

at her wit's end See [at \(one's\) wit's end](#).

at her worst See [at worst](#).



at home **1.** Literally, in one's place of residence. *I was at home all day and the repairman never came. I'm at home now, so feel free to come over.* **2.** Very comfortable or proficient in a particular area. *My mother is at home in the kitchen and can make just about any dish.* **3.** Matching or suiting a particular environment. *Considering her aesthetic, I think that antique chair would be at home in her store.* **4.** Of a sports team, playing in one's home arena or field, as opposed to one's opponent's facility. *The Yankees have been on the road for a while now. When will they be at home again?*

at home with **1.** Literally, in one's place of residence with someone or something. *I was at home with the kids all day and the repairman never came.* **2.** Very comfortable or proficient with something. *There was an adjustment period, but I'm at home with my new job now.*

at issue **1.** Under discussion. *The topic at issue is whether or not to implement a new detention policy.* **2.** In disagreement. *They are at issue over the best way to lead the committee.*

at it again Repeating a certain action or behavior. *Even though I told Henry to stop playing his video game, I can hear that he's at it again. I can't believe those two are at it again. What are they fighting about this time?*

at its best Of or at the highest standard of quality possible. *You'll love their new album; it's simply jazz at its best.*

at its lowest ebb See [at \(something's\) lowest ebb](#).

at large **1.** Roaming freely, as of a criminal who has not been caught. *The robbery suspect is still at large and is considered very dangerous.* **2.** As a whole; in general. *That change in curriculum has not been accepted by the teachers at large.* **3.** Representative of the whole, rather than smaller groups, as of certain elected offices. *Who has been elected to act for the community at large?*

at latter Lammas obsolete At a point in time that shall never come to pass; never. Refers to Lammas Day (August 1), the feast day of the new harvest in the Northern Hemisphere and a "cross-quarter day" on which rents were due. Thus, to be paid on "latter Lammas" meant to never be paid at all. Primarily heard in UK. *I have my tenants and their dues in good order, but I fear that some are planning to pay at latter Lammas.*

at least **1.** No less than (a certain amount). *I didn't expect so many guests!*

We'll need at least five more seats at the table for dinner. I try to keep at least \$1,000 in my bank account at all times. **2.** Used to emphasize a positive occurrence amid disappointments. *At least it only rained for two days of your trip! OK so Tom didn't come over tonight. At least he still called you.*

at leisure **1.** When one has the time to do something. In this usage, a possessive pronoun is used between "at" and "leisure." *No rush, you can fill out that paperwork at your leisure* **2.** In a relaxed manner. *I like to spend my weekends reading at leisure.* **3.** With free time; unoccupied. *I just graduated from college—can't I spend some time at leisure?*

at length **1.** In great detail. *I studied American modernism in college, so I can speak about Eliot's poetry at length.* **2.** For a long period of time. *My father always lectures me at length about the dangers of living in the city.* **3.** Finally. *At length, the sermon ended.*

at liberty Freely able to do something. *I know you're curious about the case, but I'm not at liberty to talk about it.*

at loggerheads In conflict. A "logger" is a 16th-century term for a block of wood, so a "loggerhead" is a blockhead or fool. *They are at loggerheads over the best way to lead the committee.*

at (long) last Finally. Typically said after a long period. *My husband returns from his trip today at last—I've missed him so much! At long last, I got an A on a math test. All that studying really helped.*

at loose ends Uneasy, typically due to some problem or unresolved issue. *I've been at loose ends since that fight with my mother. I hope he finds a job soon—he's been at loose ends ever since getting laid off.*

at most At the maximum. *The beach really isn't far away—at most, it should take us an hour to get there. I hope you're not disappointed in your dance—I only saw two mistakes at most.*

at my beck and call See [at \(one's\) beck and call](#).

at my behest See [at \(someone's\) behest](#).

at my best See [at \(one's\) best](#).

at my best See [at best](#).

at my convenience See [at \(one's\) convenience](#).

at my door step See [at \(one's\) doorstep](#).

at my earliest convenience See [at \(one's\) earliest convenience](#).

at my ease See [at \(one's\) ease](#).

at my elbow See [at \(one's\) elbow](#).

at my expense See [at \(one's\) expense](#).

at my fingertips See [at \(one's\) fingertips](#).

at my heels See [at \(one's\) heels](#).

at my knee See [at \(one's\) knee](#).

at my leisure See [at leisure](#).

at my leisure See [at \(one's\) leisure](#).

at my mercy See [at \(someone's\) mercy](#).

at my mother's knee See [at \(one's\) mother's knee](#).

at my own game See [at \(one's\) own game](#).

at my own peril See [at \(one's\) own peril](#).

at my own risk See [at \(one's\) own risk](#).

at my request See [at \(someone's\) request](#).

at my wit's end See [at \(one's\) wit's end](#).

at my worst See [at worst](#).

at night During the night. *If I stay out late at night, I'm exhausted for days afterward. Be careful going out in the city at night.*

at no time Never. *At no time did I claim responsibility for the accident—he's lying about that.*

at odds In conflict. *They are at odds over the best way to lead the committee.*

at once 1. Immediately. *I need you to call me at once—we have an urgent matter to discuss. The boss wants you to start working on this report at once.*

2. At the same time. *Don't try to carry more than two boxes at once—they're heavy! I can't understand a word with all of you screaming at once.*

at one In agreement. *They need to be at one when they choose their wedding date.*

at one blow Done or accomplished at once and with a single, decisive move. *The new law reduced crime, poverty, and famine all at one blow.*

at one blow All at once, with a single decisive or powerful action. *When the economy crashed, thousands lost their jobs, their homes, and their pensions at one blow.*

at one fell swoop All at once, with a single decisive or powerful action. *When the economy crashed, thousands lost their jobs, their homes, and their pensions at one fell swoop.*

at one sitting During one uninterrupted period of time. *Our teenage sons can finish a whole turkey at one sitting. How much research can you get done at one sitting?*

at one stroke All at once, with a single decisive or powerful action. *When the economy crashed, thousands lost their jobs, their homes, and their pensions at one stroke.*

at one time **1.** At the same time; in unison. *Don't try to carry more than two boxes at one time—they're heavy! I can't understand a word with all of you screaming at one time.* **2.** In the past. *Yes, I was a teacher at one time, long before I became a fashion designer.*

at one time or another In some non-specific instance. *My allergies usually act up at one time or another in the spring. At one time or another in your life, you'll need a lawyer.*

at (one's) beck and call Completely compliant or obedient to another person; catering to one's every need. The phrase has a negative connotation. *Do you really think I'll do anything you say? I'm not at your beck and call! A: "How can we get to the mall this weekend?" B: "Oh, my sister will take us—she's been at my beck and call ever since I caught her sneaking in past curfew!"*

at one's best See [at best](#).

at (one's) best In one's prime, most positive, or most adept condition or state. *I am not a morning person, and I won't be at my best until at least noon. He was at his best about five years ago, but his performance has really started to decline lately. She was at her best in the new film.*

at (one's) convenience When one has the time to do something. *No*

rush, you can fill out that paperwork at your convenience.

at (one's) doorstep **1.** Literally, outside one's door. *I'm at your doorstep right now—where are you?* **2.** By extension, one's responsibility. *That issue is at the police commissioner's doorstep now. I always hire reputable contractors for my company because I don't want complaints of shoddy construction at my doorstep.*

at (one's) earliest convenience As soon as one is able to do something. *Please fill out that paperwork at your earliest convenience. Dan needs to call me at his earliest convenience.*

at (one's) ease In a relaxed, comfortable, unencumbered, unembarrassed, and/or unanxious position, manner, or situation. *I want you to be at your ease here, so please ask for anything that will make your stay more enjoyable. I'm not under too much pressure; they told me to submit the report at my ease.*

at (one's) elbow Close by; readily available. *Please stay at your mother's elbow, in case she needs your help. I'm not very creative in the kitchen, so I always have a cookbook at my elbow when I prepare a new dish.*

at (one's) expense **1.** One's financial responsibility. *Once I learned that the trip was at my expense, I decided not to go.* **2.** To one's detriment or disadvantage. *I was furious when I heard the other kids telling jokes at my little brother's expense.*

at (one's) fingertips **1.** Physically within one's reach or in one's hand. *I always keep a glass of water at my fingertips when I sleep, because I hate waking up thirsty.* **2.** Easily or conveniently accessed, accomplished, or achieved *With our new 24-hour phone service, you have quality customer care at your fingertips. Because the Internet is so easy to access these days, we have every resource imaginable at our fingertips!*

at (one's) heels **1.** Following close behind someone, often in an annoying way. *I'm a preschool teacher, so I've had toddlers at my heels all day. The interior designer can't get any work done with your puppy at her heels!* **2.** Close to overtaking a fellow competitor. *The leading candidate should be concerned about the underdog at his heels. If she does poorly on this exam, she may lose the title of valedictorian to one of the students at her heels.*

at (one's) knee From an older, wiser person. *I learned how to bake at my*

mother's knee when I was just a girl.

at one's leisure See [at leisure](#).

at (one's) leisure Done according to one's own convenience or comfort. *The tour group always gives us a couple free hours so we can explore each city at our leisure. There is no time limit to the exam, so please complete it at your leisure.*

at (one's) mother's knee From one's mother, typically when one was a child. *I learned how to bake at my mother's knee when I was just a girl.*

at (one's) own game Using another person's strengths, techniques, or tactics against him or her. Typically used in the phrase "beat (one) at (one's) own game." *This team relies on their defense, so let's beat them at their own game and deny them any opportunity to score. I did start that rumor about Tiffany because she's always gossiping about me—it was time to beat her at her own game.*

at (one's) own peril Done with the foreknowledge or forewarning that there is implied danger, especially of loss of life, which one must accept as one's own responsibility. *Those who skydive do so at their own peril.*

at (one's) own risk Done with the foreknowledge or forewarning that there is implied risk or danger which one must accept as one's own responsibility. *When you choose to gamble, you do so at your own risk.*

at (one's) wit's end In a state of distress that is reached when someone has no more patience. *The baby's been crying for hours, and I'm at my wit's end! I'm already at my wit's end, so if this train gets delayed too, I'm going to scream.*

at one's worst See [at worst](#).

at opposite poles At or holding two completely opposite positions, opinions, or viewpoints, as between two people or two groups of people. Refers to the North and South Pole, which lie diametrically opposite each other along the Earth's axis of rotation. *The two parties of the government are at opposite poles on so many issues, it's a wonder anything is accomplished at all! Steve and I are just at opposite poles about the meaning of this poem.*

at pains Striving. Used to describe someone who is putting forth effort towards some goal or end. *Annabelle is at pains to make sure her relatives are comfortable when they come to visit. So far, she's cleaned the whole*

house and set up all the guest rooms.

at pains to Striving. Used to describe someone who is putting forth effort towards some goal or end. *Annabelle is at pains to make sure her relatives are comfortable when they come to visit. So far, she's cleaned the whole house and set up all the guest rooms.*

at peace **1.** Calm and serene. *My daughter was miserable all week, but she's at peace now that her tests are over.* **2.** Not at war. *It is a great relief to know that those two warring factions are at peace.* **3.** Said of one who has died. *Aunt Margaret suffered through a long illness. At least she is at peace now.*

at peace with Calm and comfortable with something, often something that was once displeasing. *I was initially disappointed to give up my career as an actor, but I'm at peace with it now.*

at play **1.** Actively playing or involved in other leisure activities. *The kids love the game you bought them—they've been at play for hours now. What do you like to do when you're at play?* **2.** Active or existing as something to be considered. *It's a complicated matter with several important issues at play.*

at point-blank range In close proximity to a person or thing. Typically used to describe a nearby target in shooting. *Be careful when firing at point-blank range!*

at present Currently. *I'm sorry, we are not accepting applications at present. Mr. Green is not in the office at present. Can I take a message?*

at random With no discernable pattern or reasoning. *We will choose a raffle winner at random.*

at regular intervals At an equal distance apart. *Make sure to position those Christmas lights so that the flashing ones appear at regular intervals.*

at rest **1.** Inactive, either mentally or physically. *I was worried that my mother was mad at me until she called and put my mind at rest. It's finally quiet in here with that machine at rest. I need a few minutes at rest after doing all that work in the garden.* **2.** Said of one who has died. *Aunt Margaret suffered through a long illness. At least she is at rest now.*

at risk **1.** In danger. *Well, when you're involved in a pyramid scheme, you're at risk for losing a lot of money. Because I have poor vision, I'm worried that my daughter is at risk for it too.* **2.** Responsible for a cost or

expense. *If you sign this contract, you'll be at risk for a lot of fees.*

at sea 1. Literally, sailing on the sea in a boat or ship. A: *"Is your mother at sea yet?"* B: *"Yes, her cruise lasts several weeks."* **2.** Puzzled, perplexed, or completely confused (about a subject or some task at hand). *I tried to do well in this class, but I've been at sea since we started.*

at sea level At the same level as the ocean. *A lot of people struggle to breathe when not at sea level.*

at sight 1. At or upon the first instance something is seen or viewed. *Don't trespass in this part of the country, you might be shot at sight! I've heard so much about her that I think I'd know her at sight.* **2.** Upon presentation; immediately; at once. Especially used in the context of commerce. *The idea of having credit at a shop has largely gone by the wayside; nowadays almost everything you buy is payable at sight.*

at sixes and sevens Frazzled or disorganized. The phrase likely originated from a dice game in which rolling a six or a seven was unfavorable. *After caring for three sick kids all week, I'm totally at sixes and sevens. I'm at sixes and sevens now that the whole schedule has been rearranged.*

at (some time) sharp At an exact time, with the emphasis that one must not be late. *We need to leave for the airport at 8 AM sharp tomorrow morning. Please be here at 6:30 sharp.*

at (someone's) behest Done according to the whims or commands of someone else. *Everything is done at our children's behest; it's like they're the bosses of the family! I'm presenting you this subpoena at the behest of the civil court.*

at (someone's) mercy Under the control of or dictated by the actions of someone else, without the ability to defend or liberate oneself. *Please don't report me to the head master. I'm at your mercy! Once the gangsters were able to blackmail Susan, she was at their mercy.*

at (someone's) request Due to having been asked (by someone). *I'm only going to the dinner party at my mother's request. Molly has been invited at the bride's request.*

at (something's) lowest ebb In a state of decline; less or lower than the typical standard or expectation. *The charity struggled to help those in*

need, as outside donations were at their lowest ebb in years.

at stake In jeopardy of being won or lost, or in the process of being determined as a positive or negative outcome. *My presentation needs to go perfectly—the big promotion is at stake. Our dream house is at stake here, so we need write the best possible offer.*

at that 1. Additionally; as well; on top of that. Used at the end of a sentence to emphasize the remark. *The movie was boring, and it was over three hours long at that. Don't be so hard on yourself; you are intelligent, funny, and kind at that!* **2.** Irrespective of what has just been said, implied, or assumed; nonetheless; notwithstanding. Used at the end of a sentence to emphasize the remark. *The defending champion is widely expected to remain undefeated; however, this new challenger might be able to pull out a victory at that. He has a bad reputation, but he's actually very kind at that.*

at that rate In that case. *At that rate, we'll never make it on time! Tanya is busy all month. At that rate, we'll never see her.*

at the appointed time At a specific, designated time. *You need to be in court at the appointed time. I'll never get to my interview at the appointed time with all this traffic!*

at the back of (one's) mind Present in one's thoughts or in one's attention, without ever being fully obscured by any other thoughts or considerations. *Whenever I park in the city, the fear of being towed is always at the back of my mind.*

at the best of times In an ideal situation or conditions. *Even at the best of times, it is hard to support yourself financially as a musician. With an infant in the house, we only get a few hours of sleep at the best of times.*

at the bottom of the food chain At or occupying the position of least importance or influence in a social, corporate, or political hierarchy. *As an intern, you're always at the bottom of the food chain, so be prepared to do whatever anyone else tells you to do.*

at the bottom of the heap In the worst or lowest position in a group. *As far as our government is concerned, kids born into poverty are just at the bottom of the heap, perpetually ignored.*

at the bottom of the hour At or after half-past the hour (such as 12:30, 3:30, etc.). *And we'll bring you that news story at the bottom of the*

hour.

at the bottom of the ladder Occupying the lowest, most basic position in a given group. *Quarks are at the bottom of the ladder in the physical makeup of matter. Tech startups may start on the bottom of the ladder economically, but, given their business model, they have a very high potential for growth.*

at the chalkface In the act of teaching. *Because she's a new teacher, she still gets very nervous while at the chalkface. All of my students failed the test, despite the many hours I spent at the chalkface on that subject.*

at the coalface Actively doing a certain job. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *These reports are just speculation—they didn't consult anyone actually at the coalface. I earned my retirement after 30 years at the coalface.*

at the crack of dawn Very early in the morning, when the sun rises (dawn). *It's a long drive, so we'll have to leave at the crack of dawn if we want to get there on time.*

at the cutting edge At the forefront of technological developments or advancements. *The new company I work for is at the cutting edge of medical science. I think some of their new instruments are going to revolutionize the field of medicine.*

at the dot Right on time. Exactly at the appointed time. Similar to the phrase "on the dot." *I'll be on time, I swear! I'll be there at 9 o'clock at the dot!*

at the double Rapidly. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *Can you please drive at the double? Yes, we'll be there at the double!*

at the drop of a hat 1. With little provocation. *Don't let my mother watch any of those sappy movies—she cries at the drop of a hat.* 2. Freely; immediately. *I don't have any vacation time yet at my new job, so I can't just travel at the drop of a hat. I can always depend on my dad. Any time I need help, he's there at the drop of a hat.*

at the eleventh hour At the last possible moment or opportunity. *I was shocked that they reached an agreement at the eleventh hour after weeks of squabbling.*

at the end of nowhere In a very distant or remote place. *His new*

house is really at the end of nowhere—it will take us hours to get there.

at the end of (one's) fingertips **1.** Physically within one's reach or in one's hand. *I know many people enjoy reading on a mobile device, but I still prefer a real book. I love the feeling of paper at the end of my fingertips. I always keep a glass of water at the end of my fingertips when I sleep, because I hate waking up thirsty.* **2.** Easily or conveniently accessed, accomplished, or achieved. *With our new 24-hour phone service, you have quality customer care at the end of your fingertips. Because the Internet is so easy to access these days, we have every resource imaginable at the end of our fingertips!*

at the end of (one's) rope Completely worn out, exasperated, or exhausted; having no more patience, endurance, or energy left. *Joshua started throwing a tantrum this afternoon, and with all the other things I have to get done, I'm at the end of my rope! Daniel's been at the end of his rope for weeks now—he has seriously got to get a different job!*

at the end of (one's) tether At the end of one's patience and/or energy. *The baby's been crying all morning, and I'm at the end of my tether! I just need some sleep! We're at the end of our tether with this project—it's time to ask Ellen for some help.*

at the end of (one's) tether Completely worn out, exasperated, or exhausted; having no more patience, endurance, or energy left. *Joshua started throwing a tantrum this afternoon, and with all the other things I have to get done, I'm at the end of my tether! Daniel's been at the end of his tether for weeks now—he has seriously got to get a different job!*

at the end of the day Ultimately. *It's a generous offer, but at the end of the day, I have to choose the job that will be most beneficial for my family. That's just how I feel about your girlfriend. At the end of the day, your relationship is your business.*

at the end of the line **1.** At the physical end of a route of travel, usually a bus or train route. *You'll need the most expensive ticket if you're getting off at the end of the line.* **2.** By extension, at the conclusion or final step of something. *We're finally at the end of the line with this project—now, we just have to hand it in and pray for a good grade!*

at the expense of **1.** The financial responsibility of (a particular person or group). *Once I learned that the trip was at the expense of my department, I*

decided to go. 2. To the detriment or disadvantage of (someone). I was furious when I heard the other kids telling jokes at the expense of my little brother.

at the feet of In devotion, homage, honor, tutelage, or worship of (somebody or something). *I studied for years at the feet of all the greatest English authors. I've decided to live my life at the feet of the enlightened.*

at the forefront In a position of highest importance or priority. *The new company I work for is at the forefront of medical innovation. I think some of their new instruments are going to revolutionize the field of medicine. My kids' safety is always a concern at the forefront of my mind.*

at the Greek calends See [the Greek calends](#).

at the hands of Due to the actions of. *At least her first loss came at the hands of a very formidable opponent.*

at the height of At the pinnacle or maximum degree of. *Disco was at the height of its popularity in the 1970s.*

at the helm In charge; acting as the leader of something. The phrase originated as a nautical term, meaning "in the position to steer a ship." *Jack is at the helm, so I know they'll get this project done on time! Nancy has been at the helm of our department for so long that I can't imagine what it will be like once she retires!*

at the high port **1.** In the military, holding one's rifle in a ready position above the head to allow for a run or charge. *Leaping out of the transport, guns held at the high port, we ran across enemy fire to a makeshift shelter. 2.* Of an object, held in a position of readiness or immediate action. *The students held their pens at the high port, waiting for the instructor to signal them to begin the exam. 3.* At an upturned and conspicuous angle or position. *I'm having such a bad hair day, it's been at the high port since I woke up. 4.* Immediately; at a moment's notice; without hesitation. *I like to keep a suitcase packed so I am always ready to travel at the high port.*

at the instance of At one's urging. *I'm doing some charity work now at the instance of my college advisor.*

at the last gasp At the last possible moment or opportunity. *I know they've been squabbling for weeks, but I think they'll reach an agreement at the last gasp. We all thought that Molly wouldn't make it to the meeting, but*

she arrived at the last gasp.

at the last minute At the last possible instant or opportunity. *I know they've been squabbling for weeks, but I think they'll reach an agreement at the last minute. Yeah, Stu made some vacation plans at the last minute, so he is going to be out of the office next week.*

at the latest No later than a certain time. *I need that report by Monday at the latest. Mom told me that she'll make a decision by this weekend at the latest.*

at the least The lowest amount possible; the absolute minimum. Often indicates the belief that a greater amount is likely or should be considered. *I'd say it will take four of us at the least to push this out of the way.*

at the mercy of Subject to the control or actions of a particular person or thing. *When you're a minor, you're totally at the mercy of your parents. When you travel by public transportation, you're always at the mercy of the weather. Her fate is at the mercy of the jury—it's their decision now.*

at the moment Right now. *I'm sorry, but we're not accepting applications at the moment. She's busy at the moment—can she call you back later?*

at the most 1. No more or greater than the amount stated. *I think we should just book the tickets. If we buy them now, they'll only cost us a few hundred dollars at the most.* 2. No greater or more extreme than is stated or suggested. *I wouldn't worry too much about the charges. At the most, they'll make you do some community service or pay a fine.*

at the outset At the beginning. *Honestly, I never expected this play to be so successful at the outset. At the outset, we had a much smaller budget for our renovations.*

at the point of On the verge of doing something. *I'm so sick of digging through paperwork every day that I'm finally at the point of hiring an administrative assistant.*

at the present time Right now. *I'm sorry, but we're not accepting applications at the present time. She's busy at the present time—can she call you back later?*

at the ready Available for use at any time. *My sister could go into labor any day now, so I have my phone constantly at the ready. The volunteers*

descended on the garden, their shovels at the ready.

at the rear of At the back of something. *Can you see my father? He's sitting at the rear of the train car. Those boxes should be at the rear of the attic.*

at the receiving end In the position of getting something (from someone else). Typically, the one "at the receiving end" is the recipient of some behavior or action perceived to be harmful or negative. *Look, I know you're having a tough time at work, but I'm sick of being at the receiving end of your temper every night! I'd hate to be at the receiving end of one of his roundhouse kicks.*

at the right spot at the right time See [be in the right spot at the right time](#).

at the same time 1. Simultaneously. *Don't try to carry more than two boxes at the same time—they're heavy! I can't understand a word with all of you screaming at the same time.* 2. Also; however. *I want to go to the game tonight, but at the same time, I know that I have to get up early tomorrow. She's not my favorite candidate for the job. At the same time, though, I think her experience will benefit our department.*

at the summit of (one's) success At the highest possible degree of success at a given point in time; in the most prosperous, prodigious, or prestigious position that can be achieved. *The actress, who is at the summit of her success at the moment, is hoping to get involved in other fields of interest. The business is at the summit of success, supplying nearly every industrialized country at the moment.*

at the top of (one's) game At one's best or most skillful. *I can't believe I got the hardest question right. I'm really at the top of my game today! I think their quarterback is at the top of his game this year—I doubt he'll be able to replicate these stellar stats next season.*

at the top of (one's) lungs As loudly as one can. *I've hardly slept because my infant has been crying at the top of her lungs all night. Sing at the top of your lungs so that the people in the last row of the auditorium can hear you!*

at the top of (one's) voice As loudly as one can. *I've hardly slept because my infant has been crying at the top of her voice all night. Sing at the*

top of your voice so that the people in the last row of the auditorium can hear you!

at the top of the food chain At or occupying the position of most importance or influence in a social, corporate, or political hierarchy. *Some high school seniors revel in the fact that they are now at the top of the food chain, using their newfound and largely imaginary authority to boss around younger students.*

at the top of the hour At the start of the hour (such as 12:00, 3:00, etc.). *And we'll cover that news story at the top of the hour.*

at the top of the ladder In the highest or most important position in a group or organization. *With her new promotion, Jill is now at the top of the ladder as CEO.*

at the top of (the/one's) agenda Prioritized as the most important thing to discuss or address. *Yes, the new dress code is at the top of my agenda to discuss with the principal. What do you think is at the top of the agenda for today's meeting?*

at the very least 1. At or of the lowest amount possible; at the absolute minimum. Often indicates the belief that a greater amount is likely or should be considered. *I know you don't have much money, but you should pay for your own dinner at the very least. The contractor said the repair work would cost \$900 at the very least. 2. In any event; regardless; despite what else may have happened or is the case. *I know you aren't interested in seeing this play, but at the very least we'll have a nice night out on the town. I know you don't see eye to eye with your father, but he's trying to maintain a relationship with you at the very least.**

at the (very) outside At the most. *The traffic wasn't that bad, so I think I'll only be 15 minutes late at the very outside. What do you think tuition will cost at the outside?*

at the very worst At or of the worst, least favorable, or least desirable outcome possible. Often indicates a belief or insinuation that such an outcome will not be disastrous or that a more positive outcome is as likely. *You should ask him out on a date. At the very worst, he might say no, which really isn't that big a deal! He thought at the very worst he'd get detention for bringing alcohol to school; he wasn't expecting them to expel him.*

at the wheel **1.** Literally, driving a vehicle (and thus sitting at the steering wheel). *Don't worry, Katie's at the wheel, and she is very good at driving in the snow. I'm so excited to finally be at the wheel of my own car!* **2.** By extension, in charge; acting the leader (of something). *Jack is at the wheel, so I know they'll get this project done on time!*

at the worst At or of the worst, least favorable, or least desirable outcome possible. Often indicates a belief or insinuation that such an outcome will not be disastrous or that a more positive outcome is as likely. *Our house wasn't too badly damaged from the flood. We'll have to replace the downstairs carpets at the worst. Although I didn't study for the test, I figured I'd get a B at the worst because the teacher takes his questions right from our homework.*

at the zenith of At the maximum degree of. *Disco was at the zenith of its popularity in the 1970s.*

at this juncture At this time. *They still haven't reached a decision, so I can't comment on anything at this juncture. At this juncture, we're going to my mother's for Thanksgiving dinner, but things could change between now and Thursday.*

at this moment At the present moment; right now; currently. *I have never felt as happy as I do at this moment.*

at this moment in time At the present moment; right now; currently. *At this moment in time, it looks like the business will have to fold.*

at this point At the present moment; right now; currently. *At this point, we are the best ranked football team in the country.*

at this point in time At the present moment; right now; currently. *We don't have all the details, but at this point in time, it seems that the suspect acted alone.*

at this rate **1.** At this pace. *Drive faster! At this rate, we'll never get there on time! It doesn't have to be perfect. At this rate, we'll frost one cupcake every hour!* **2.** If this situation persists. *All of my friends are getting engaged, and I'm still single. At this rate, I'll be a bridesmaid at least 10 times before I get to be a bride.*

at this stage (of the game) At this particular point in a process or situation. *I can't give you an update at this stage of the game—I have some*

more work to do on your car. At this stage, I'm not sure if we're in a serious relationship or not—we haven't been dating for very long.

at times Occasionally. *I love my family, but at times, I just need to take a vacation by myself.*

at top speed As fast as something or someone can go. *Once Tom caught the ball, he took off at top speed toward the end zone. I started feeling nauseous on the way home because Kelly was driving at top speed on a windy highway.*

at variance (with) In disagreement (with someone or something). *We're doing the experiment again because our results are at variance. Our fact-checker found that the witness's story was completely at variance with what the reporter had written.*

at war **1.** Currently engaged in armed combat, as between nations. *The two countries have been at war for nearly 40 years, with many lives lost on both sides.* **2.** Currently engaged in a heated or bitter disagreement between two parties. *I've been at war with my neighbor over where our lawns end since I moved in.* **3.** Engaged in an inner conflict, that is, a conflict within one's mind or conscience. *I've been at war with myself over what to do with money I found. Do I keep it, or do I turn it in to the police?*

at will At one's own choosing; in compliance with one's wishes or desires. *Once you have your own car, you'll be able to go anywhere at will.*

at wit's end See [at \(one's\) wit's end](#).

at work **1.** At one's place of employment. *Mom, I can't help you right now, I'm at work. How much longer will you be at work?* **2.** Engaged in a particular task. *Your father is hard at work in the garage, trying to fix his car. Don't disturb Alice while she's at work on her term paper.*

at worst **1.** In the worst possible scenario. In this usage, "the" can be used between "at" and "worst." *At the worst, Doug will be an hour late. They're selling some nice stuff at the yard sale, so I think they'll make a few hundred bucks at worst.* **2.** In one's least positive, effective, or successful state. In this usage, a pronoun is used between "at" and "worst." *I'm at my worst when I'm tired. The team is at their worst when they're not working together.*

at your beck and call See [at \(one's\) beck and call](#).

at your behest See [at \(someone's\) behest](#).

at your best See [at \(one's\) best](#).

at your best See [at best](#).

at your convenience See [at \(one's\) convenience](#).

at your door step See [at \(one's\) doorstep](#).

at your earliest convenience See [at \(one's\) earliest convenience](#).

at your ease See [at \(one's\) ease](#).

at your elbow See [at \(one's\) elbow](#).

at your expense See [at \(one's\) expense](#).

at your fingertips See [at \(one's\) fingertips](#).

at your heels See [at \(one's\) heels](#).

at your knee See [at \(one's\) knee](#).

at your leisure See [at leisure](#).

at your leisure See [at \(one's\) leisure](#).

at your mercy See [at \(someone's\) mercy](#).

at your mother's knee See [at \(one's\) mother's knee](#).

at your own game See [at \(one's\) own game](#).

at your own peril See [at \(one's\) own peril](#).

at your own risk See [at \(one's\) own risk](#).

at your request See [at \(someone's\) request](#).

at your service **1.** Available to help you with whatever you need. It is a set phrase. *One math tutor, at your service! I'm totally at your service—just tell me what you need me to do.* **2.** Said upon meeting someone for the first time as a polite way of identifying oneself. A: "Is there a John Jones here?" B: "At your service, sir."

at your worst See [at worst](#).

Athanasian wench obsolete A derogatory term for a lascivious woman who readily has sex with any man who asks for it. Taken from the Athanasian Creed, an early Christian statement of belief from at least the 6th century, the opening words of which are *quicumque vult* , or "whosoever wishes." *Sir, how*

dare you. I am not one of your Athanasian wenches, ready to indulge your lust at a moment's notice!

atomic cocktail **1.** In medicine, a liquid solution that contains one or more radioactive elements, which is swallowed orally and used in the diagnosis and/or treatment of disorders, especially cancer and diseases of the thyroid. *We are just going to administer a sort of atomic cocktail to track the disease's progress. That way, we can better gauge what course of action to take.* **2.** An alcoholic drink composed of vodka, brandy, champagne, and sherry. Created in Las Vegas, Nevada, and named after the nuclear tests conducted in the state during the 1950s. *Barkeep, I want something that will knock my socks off. Fix me an atomic cocktail!*

atone for To take responsibility and/or accept punishment for one's mistakes or misdeeds. *I atoned for my sins before I started going to church again. I think she'll forgive you if you just atone for your mistake.*

attaboy An expression of encouragement, support, or approval toward a boy, man, or male animal, used as a standalone interjection before or after a sentence. Largely presumed to be a corruption of the expression "that's the boy"; it is also sometimes spelled "atta boy." *You won the spelling bee? Attaboy!*

attach to **1.** To connect two things. In this usage, an item is mentioned between "attach" and "to." *Can you please attach this button to my sweater? Please be sure to attach a cover page to your report.* **2.** To connect oneself to something. In this usage, a reflexive pronoun is used between "attach" and "to." *Please be sure to attach yourself to your luggage at the airport.* **3.** To involve oneself with another person or group—often in an overbearing way. In this usage, a reflexive pronoun is used between "attach" and "to." *I hope my little cousins don't try to come with us—they're always attaching themselves to me, and it's so annoying.* **4.** To involve oneself with another person or group. In this usage, a reflexive pronoun is used between "attach" and "to." *I heard that Jon has attached himself to a new lady—is that true? Teddy has attached himself to the drama club this semester.* **5.** To have an emotional connection to someone or something. This usage always uses the form "attached." *I really miss my ex-boyfriend at Christmastime—I guess I'm still attached to him after all. I'm pretty attached to the idea of a tropical vacation—I've even been picturing myself on the beach! I tried to give away my daughter's childhood teddy bear, but apparently she's still quite attached*

to it.

attack is the best form of defense Launching an offensive is the best way to protect oneself. *I need to start some rumors about Dean, before he comes after me. I know it sounds harsh, but attack is the best form of defense!*

an attack of A sudden or acute onset of (an illness). *I went to bed early last night after an attack of indigestion.*

attagal An expression of encouragement, support, or approval toward a woman, used as a standalone interjection before or after a sentence. It is a variation of the more common (but also potentially diminutive) "attagirl;" sometimes spelled "atta gal." A: *"I was promoted to executive manager this morning."* B: *"Attagal! You're in the big leagues now!"*

attagirl An expression of encouragement, support, or approval toward a girl, woman, or female animal, used as a standalone interjection before or after a sentence. Largely presumed to be a corruption of the expression "that's the girl"; it is also sometimes spelled "atta girl." *Attagirl! I knew you would ace your exam.*

attend to To focus one's efforts or attention on someone or something. *Your father is doing well, post-surgery—a nurse is attending to him now. Someone needs to attend to this leaky ceiling before the whole floor floods!*

attention whore A derogatory term for someone who seeks attention in desperate, obvious, or inappropriate ways. Although it is gender neutral, it is more often used against women. *Why do you always act that way at parties? It's like you're an attention whore or something.*

attest to To confirm that something is true. *I can attest to her whereabouts on the night of the crime—she was with me the entire time.*

Attic salt A shrewd, cutting, or subtle humor or wit. Also referred to as "Attic wit." *Marianne was known to pepper her conversation with a bit of Attic salt, so she was quite popular at dinner parties.*

Attic wit A shrewd, cutting, or subtle humor or wit. Also referred to as "Attic salt." *He lays on the Attic wit a bit too often for my taste; I can never tell when he's being serious.*

attire (someone/oneself) in To clothe in something. *I attired myself in a beautiful gown for the gala. She attires her newborn in the cutest clothes.*

attract to To entice and thus draw toward. A noun can be used between "attract" and "to." *Watch out, bees are attracted to those flowers! A nice business card can attract a lot of new clients to your company. My sister has always been attracted to fashion.*

attribute to To cite as the source or reason for something. A noun can be used between "attribute" and "to." *I attribute my success to lots of hard work. That famous saying is usually, and incorrectly, attributed to Shakespeare.*

attune to To reach a deep understanding of or an ideal relationship with someone or something. A noun can be used between "attune" and "to." *It took some time, but I think I'm finally attuned to my baby's needs. We need to attune our business plan to the trends of the market.*

au courant 1. Trendy. *Eve's fashion choices are always au courant.* 2. Prepared with the latest information about something. *Please review these reports so that you are au courant with the latest market trends.*

au naturel 1. (of people) Not wearing something, typically clothing or make-up. Note the French spelling of "natural" in this phrase. *We can't go to a nude beach—I don't want to see complete strangers au naturel! Jane always looks like a different person without her make-up, totally au naturel.* 2. (of food) Prepared in a very simple way. Note the French spelling of "natural" in this phrase. *I know you're on a diet right now, so I prepared this au naturel, with no salt or sauces.*

auction off To sell an item to the highest bidder. *We're auctioning off a car at the charity event this year.*

audition for To perform in order to display one's abilities in an attempt to be granted a role in something (typically a role in a play). *Are you auditioning for this year's spring musical? I'm going to sing that song when I audition for the play.*

augur well for To be a sign of good things to come. An "augur" was an oracle in ancient Rome. *This rain does not augur well for our baseball game. Well, that poor performance review does not augur well for a raise.*

Aunt Sally Something or someone set up as the object of criticism, derision, or as an easily defeated opposing opinion (i.e., a straw man). Named after a game where sticks or balls are thrown at a clay or wooden head (the Aunt Sally). Primarily heard in UK. *I hate hanging out with that crowd, they*

always aim their jokes at me like I'm an Aunt Sally. My opponent's representation of me is nothing but an Aunt Sally; he refuses to debate me on my true position and instead attacks a fictitious one from afar!

an auspicious occasion A celebratory or momentous event, situation, or circumstance. (Note that the meaning of auspicious here is slightly altered from its standard definition of favorable or timely.) *We would like to invite you to the auspicious occasion of the marriage of our son, Luke, to his bride-to-be, Sophia. It was an auspicious day in the city, as people poured onto the streets to celebrate the queen's ascent to the throne.*

autem bawler obsolete A member of clergy, such as a priest, preacher, or parson. "Autem" is an obsolete slang word for church, so an "autem bawler" is one who shouts loudly from the church. *That old autem bawler goes on and on about hellfire and damnation, but he's more crooked and corrupt than anyone I know.*

autem cackler obsolete One who dissents from the teachings of any given denomination of the (Christian) church. "Autem" is an obsolete slang word for church, and the obsolete meaning of "cackle" is to reveal secrets. *The church is strong, but those autem cacklers have dissuaded many from the congregation.*

autem cackletub obsolete Any general meeting place of dissenters of a given denomination of the (Christian) church; a conventicle. "Autem" is an obsolete slang word for church, and "cackletub" (a slang term for the pulpit of a church) here refers to a place where those who spill secrets ("cackle") gather. *I entered into the autem cackletub with trepidation, for who knows what sort one may find in a place of unruly dissent.*

autem dipper obsolete One belonging to the Anabaptist faith, in which believers are baptized after infancy. "Autem" is an obsolete slang word for church, so an "autem dipper" is one whose faith is based on baptism (that is, a "dip" in water). *As one has no concept of faith as an infant, the autem dippers believe that baptism should take place when one is old enough to affirm belief in the church.*

autem diver 1. obsolete A thief or pickpocket who steals from people during church services. "Autem" is an obsolete slang word for church, and "diver" in this sense is obsolete slang for a pickpocket. *The autem divers move stealthily among the congregation, lifting the purses and coins from*

those focused on the sermon. **2.** obsolete A lay officer of the church in charge of the poor and needy. "Autem" is an obsolete slang word for church, and "diver" in this sense is slang for one who lives in a cellar (i.e., among the poor). *The autem diver oversees the distribution of bread to the poorest of the parish.*

autem goggler obsolete One who plays the role of a religious soothsayer or prophet as part of a con. "Autem" is an obsolete slang word for church; "goggler" may refer to the verb "goggle," meaning to stare with wide-open or bulging eyes, as at some extraordinary spectacle. *Don't be swindled by those autem goggles; their goods are as useful as naval lint but will cost you a pretty penny.*

autem mort **1.** obsolete A woman who is married. "Autem" is an obsolete slang word for church, and "mort" is obsolete slang for a woman or girl. *Your courtship is wasted, my friend, for she is an autem mort already.* **2.** obsolete A beggar woman who carries about several children and affects to have great devotion to the church or religion, generally as a means of arousing sympathetic charity from others. "Autem" is an obsolete slang word for church, and "mort" is obsolete slang for a woman or girl. *The autem mortis with their wailing children cluster at the steps of the church for alms.*

autem prickear obsolete One who dissents from the teachings of any given denomination of the (Christian) church. "Autem" is an obsolete slang word for church, and "prick-eared" was a slang term often applied to puritans, who dissented from the Church of England. *Ah, let the autem prickears go and form their own church rather than change our own.*

(one's) autumn years The time period near the end of one's life. *Now that you're retired from work, how do you plan to spend your autumn years?*

avail (oneself) of To utilize an available resource. *I was so overwhelmed trying to get my house ready for the party that I availed myself of a local cleaning service. My dear students, I encourage you to avail yourself of the campus library as much as possible.*

avant la lettre Before something (a word, phrase, name, or specific entity, especially that which is anachronistic) was coined or created. From the French meaning "before the letter." *So-called "hipsters" have always existed avant la lettre, but it's only in the last few decades that we've attempted to create a label for them.*

ave her no quarter See [grant \(someone\) no quarter](#).

avenge (oneself) To retaliate against another for a wrong done to oneself; to get revenge. *Tiffany is always gossiping about me, so I avenged myself by starting a rumor about her. How do you plan to avenge yourself for their act of sabotage?*

avenue of escape A way or path out of something. *That beetle doesn't seem to know that his only avenue of escape is the open window. The fire was in the kitchen, so our only avenue of escape was through the front door.*

average bear The average person or thing. It is typically used as a point of comparison in the phrase "than the average bear." Originates from the animated character Yogi Bear, whose catchphrase is that he is "smarter than the average bear." *He's certainly tougher than the average bear. I don't excel at all my subjects, but I still think I'm smarter than the average bear.*

average Jane An average, unexceptional, or ordinary girl or woman. Derived from the more common phrase "average Joe," which generally refers to a boy or man. *What sets me apart from your average Jane, though, is my tenacity and ferocity in business. I'm as much a fan of the show as the average Jane, but I don't watch it religiously.*

average Joe An average, unexceptional, or ordinary person, especially a boy or man. *So many movies try to cater to as many people as possible, watered down for the average Joe. I like to think I'm a bit more intelligent than your average Joe.*

average out (to) **1.** To calculate the median number of a set of figures. In this usage, a noun can be used between "average" and "out." *You need to average out your expenses and make a budget for yourself. I haven't averaged the kids' test scores out yet, but I don't think it will be a very high number, as most of them failed.* **2.** To reach an amount that is indicative of an overall situation (rather than the occasional high or low points). In this usage, "to" is commonly part of the phrase. *I've had both high and low test scores this semester, but I think it will average out to a decent overall grade.*

average up To calculate the median number of a set of figures. In this usage, a noun can be used between "average" and "up." *You need to average up your expenses and make a budget for yourself. I haven't averaged the kids' test scores up yet, but I don't think it will be a very high number, as most of*

them failed.

avert (something) (away) from To distract or divert something from someone or something else. *I will do my best to avert all attention away from you at the party, don't worry. I knew I wasn't meant to be a doctor when I had to avert my eyes from every blood draw.*

avoid (someone or something) like the plague To consciously stay away from someone or something. *I didn't do my homework my last night, so I'm avoiding my teacher like the plague. My dog is terrified of cats and avoids them like the plague.*

avowed intent A solemn public promise or pledge toward some goal or achievement. *The presidential nominee gave her avowed intent to reform the public school system should she be elected.*

awake to 1. To become aware of something. *You need to awake to the serious problems plaguing our country.* **2.** To be roused from one's sleep, due to a noise or other stimulus. *This morning, I awoke to the sound of my neighbor's barking dog.*

awake(n) from To rouse from something (often sleep). *Today, I was awoken from my sleep by my neighbor's barking dog. Awake from your daydreams, class, it's time to talk about the periodic table.*

award to To bestow something upon someone. A noun can be used between "award" and "to." *Our boss awarded the promotion to Joel. The All-Star Game has been awarded to the city of Columbus.*

away from it all Completely removed from a particular place or situation. *I'm so stressed about work that I'm leaving town for a few days—I just need to get away from it all.*

away from (one's) desk Not at one's desk at a particular time. This phrase is typically said in an office environment on another person's behalf (as by a receptionist or assistant). *I'm sorry, Mr. Medina is away from his desk right now. Can I take a message?*

away game In sports and athletics, a game, match, or contest that is held at the opposing team's home location. *I'm not looking forward to our next away game, because we have to drive over five hours to get there!*

away with the fairies A bit crazy. *I can't follow what your mom is talking about—it's like she's away with the fairies all of a sudden.*

awe inspiring Creating, instilling, or demanding a sensation of reverence, admiration, and/or (potentially) fear. *Her writing is absolutely awe inspiring; it stirs emotions in me I didn't think were possible. The destructive power of nature is truly awe inspiring.*

awesome sauce Internet slang Either used as an adjective to describe something as being excellent, great, or exceptionally interesting, or used as an exclamation in affirmation of the same. *I couldn't take him seriously when he described the movie as being awesome sauce. Awesome sauce! I got an A on my midterm!*

awkward as a cow on a crutch See [\(as\) awkward as a cow on a crutch](#).

an awkward customer A troublesome person. *I don't want Joe to join the club, he's just such an awkward customer.*

AWOL acronym Absent without leave. Having gone missing suddenly and without warning. It is originally a military phrase for one who leaves their post or duties without permission but without intention to desert. In colloquial usage, it can be used as an adverb or an adjective. *The printer from the third floor is AWOL, does anyone know where it went? Jerry went AWOL after a few drinks. None of us even knew he had left until half an hour later.*

aye aye An affirmation that a request or order has been understood and will be carried out directly. Originates from the Royal and US Navy, where it is an official reply to a command issued by a superior officer. A: *"Can you be sure to pick up some eggs when you go to the supermarket?"* B: *"Aye aye!"*

aye aye, sir An affirmation that a request or order has been understood and will be carried out directly. Originates from the Royal and U.S. Navy, where it is an official reply to a command issued by a superior officer. A: *"Will you grab a drink for me when you're heading to the bar?"* B: *"Aye aye, sir!"*

B

babbling idiot A person who talks excessively without making sense or saying anything of importance, sarcastically and derogatorily likened to someone with a mental deficiency. *Maurice just rattled on and on like a babbling idiot last night about his schemes to get rich. I must have sounded like a babbling idiot from the way I talked about the new house.*

babe in arms **1.** An infant. (Based on the fact that an infant is typically carried in an adult's arms). *Let me see that precious babe in arms!* **2.** A person who is gullible, naïve, or lacks experience in a specific situation. *Although Jane had always excelled in school, she felt like a babe in arms when she began attending college.*

babe in the woods A person who is gullible, naïve, or lacks experience in a specific situation. *Although Jane had always excelled in school, she felt like a babe in the woods when she began attending college.*

babe magnet **1.** A person, typically male, who is very attractive to women. Often used with a degree of humor or facetiousness. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *John thinks he's such a babe magnet now that he's making so much money, but everyone thinks he's just as foolish as ever.* **2.** Something that attracts women to its owner, who is typically male. Often used with a degree of humor or facetiousness. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *I bought my motorcycle because I thought it would be a great babe magnet.*

baby blues **1.** A usually brief period of sadness, anxiety, and mood swings experienced by a large percentage of women after giving birth. *When I had the baby blues after having my first child, I would find myself crying without knowing why.* **2.** Blue eyes, especially those that are light blue. *I just had to ask for Sean's number after I got a glimpse of his baby blues—I'd never seen such striking eyes before!*

baby boomer An American person born during the "baby boom" following World War II, between the years of 1945 and 1965, during which the population of the United States increased by 40 percent. Typically used to describe members of this generation, who have been associated with

economic prosperity, consumerism, self-indulgence. Primarily heard in US. *Since baby boomers represent such a large percentage of the population, financial experts are concerned about the impact their retirement will have on the economy.*

baby bump The protruding stomach of a woman who is visibly pregnant. Usually said in the early stages of pregnancy, especially after the "bump" has first appeared. *Look at you with your baby bump! You're going to be such a great mom. A: "Does she have a baby bump yet?" B: "No, you can't even tell she's pregnant."*

baby killer **1.** A pejorative term for someone who advocates for, supports, performs, or has had an abortion. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *The mob gathered around the clinic, shouting "Baby killers!" at anyone entering or leaving the building.* **2.** A pejorative term for a soldier returning from war, used by those who oppose said war. Although the phrase was commonly applied to US soldiers returning from the Vietnam War, it has since fallen out of favor. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *She called me a baby killer as I stepped off the plane, which really hurt because I had been enlisted and didn't want to go to war.*

baby up To coddle, pamper, or infantilize someone; to baby someone. *We have a good relationship, but sometimes I feel like he babies me up too much.*

babysit for **1.** To watch another person's child or children. In this usage, the child is listed after "for." *Julia will babysit for the kids on Saturday.* **2.** To help another person by watching their child. In this usage, the person being helped is listed after "for," and a noun can be used between "babysit" and "for." *Can you babysit for us tonight? Dave's company is having a work event that we have to go to. I got one of the neighbors to babysit Charlotte for me so I could come to the party.*

babysitter test **1.** An informal "test" to determine the trustworthiness or integrity of a person by judging whether one would trust that person to take care of one's children. *I don't trust him to take my car across the country; he certainly wouldn't pass the babysitter test.* **2.** A test to determine if a household appliance is easy and intuitive to use, i.e., whether a babysitter would be able to use it with ease. *The new smart television is radically advanced, but it also passes the babysitter test: anyone in the house can learn to use it in just a few minutes!*

bachelor party A party thrown by the male friends of a soon-to-be groom. *Jonathan didn't want a crazy bachelor party, so he and his friends went out for a few quiet drinks.*

bachelorette party A party thrown by the female friends of a bride-to-be. *Diane's bachelorette party lasted all night. I hope she is able to wake up in time for her wedding today!*

back-alley adjective Disreputable, unethical, squalid, and/or surreptitious. It is a modifier always used before a noun. *I know a place that does back-alley dental work for a fraction of the normal cost, though, understandably, their results aren't always the best. The governor was found guilty of partaking in back-alley deals with local developers to secure costs lower than his budget.*

back and edge Fully; wholeheartedly. This phrase refers to both the edge and broad sides of a sword. *I'm working on this project broad and edge, and I think you will be very impressed with the result. Once Ken found out that he was on the verge of failing that class, he started tackling his homework broad and edge.*

back and fill 1. To move a ship's sails in an alternating fashion to accommodate the wind in a narrow channel. *We need to back and fill the sails in order to pass through this channel.* 2. To be indecisive. *You need to make a decision and stick to it—quit backing and filling!*

back and forth 1. adjective In one direction and then another in an alternating fashion. *During the party, I went back and forth to the kitchen to get drinks for the guests. The kids are outside throwing the baseball back and forth. The union and management are still going back and forth in the contract negotiation.* 2. noun An argument or discussion in which two or more people alternate in sharing their perspectives. *They're having a real back and forth up there—can you hear them yelling? I think we should have a little back and forth before we make a final decision.*

back-assward Opposite or contrary to what is expected, completely disordered or disarranged, or that which is done incompetently. A euphemistic rearranging of "ass-backward," meaning the same. *That's the last time I let you fix the electrical work by yourself. You've wired it all back-assward! I must not be completely awake yet, I just put my pants on back-assward!*

back at you An exclamation used to express the same sentiment back to the original speaker; same as "you too" and "same to you." Primarily heard in US, South Africa. A: *"I hope you have a great day!"* B: *"Back at you, buddy!"* A: *"You're a real jerk, you know that?"* B: *"Back at you!"*

back atcha An exclamation used to express the same sentiment back to the original speaker; same as "you too" and "same to you." ("atcha" is a colloquial contraction of "at you.") Primarily heard in US, South Africa. A: *"I hope you have a great day!"* B: *"Back atcha, buddy!"* A: *"You're a real jerk, you know that?"* B: *"Back atcha!"*

back away **1.** To move slowly and carefully away from something or someone. *Kids, back away from the expensive vase! If you encounter a grizzly bear, back away slowly while talking in a normal tone.* **2.** To retreat on a particular idea or course of action. *I think that Marie is backing away from the contract now. Management seems to be backing away from that initiative.*

back-breaking Extremely difficult; exhausting; mentally and/or physically taxing to the point of feeling like one's body or spirit will break. Though usually used in reference to physical labor, it can refer figuratively to any job, activity, or task. *After 10 years of back-breaking labor in construction, I've decided to finally pursue academia. We put in months of back-breaking work to get ready for our exams in May.*

back burner Where low-priority tasks figuratively reside. Typically used in the phrase "put (something) on the back burner." The phrase refers to the back burner of a stove, which is where pots are usually placed to simmer on low heat. *I know you're eager to start on this new project, but I'm afraid it's going on the back burner—we just don't have the budget for it right now. You need to go to a doctor! You can't put your health on the back burner any longer!*

back-cloth star An actor or performer who takes the focus of the audience away from the other actors on stage by positioning him- or herself in such a way that the other actors' backs are to the audience. *Everyone said after the show that his performance was riveting, but to be honest, I think he's just a back-cloth star. He made it so he was the only one we could ever see!*

back-door See [backdoor](#).



back down To retreat from a particular idea or course of action, often in a conflict. *I refuse to back down—this law must be passed, in the interest of public safety. The bully backed down after all of my friends came with me to confront him.*

back East To or in the eastern United States. Although its wording suggests a return, one does not have to have ever been in the eastern US to use this phrase. *We're going back East for Christmas this year to visit my parents. My husband is back East for business right now.*

back forty Sprawling, uncultivated acreage, as would be found on a farm. *I often go to the back forty of my property when I need some quiet time to think.*

back-handed compliment An insulting or negative comment disguised as praise. *She said my new pants really make my legs look much slimmer. What a back-handed compliment!*

back in the day At a time in the past that is remembered with fondness or nostalgia. *Back in the day, I used to spend my summers exploring or playing with friends. Now I'm in the office every day.*

back in the game Resuming something after an absence. Although this phrase uses the word "game," it does not have to refer to sports. *Our best defenseman was out with an injury for a few months, but he's finally back in the game. I needed to take a break for a bit, but now, I'm back in the game. I hope to spend some time with Matt now that he's single again and back in the game.*

back in the saddle Resuming something after an absence. Despite the presence of "saddle," this phrase is rarely used in reference to riding horses. *I needed to take a break for a bit, but now, I'm back in the saddle. You've mourned long enough—it's time to get back in the saddle and date again.*

back into a corner **1.** To force or be forced into a difficult or unpleasant situation that one cannot easily resolve or escape. A noun can be used between "back" and "into." *My boss really backed me into a corner when he asked me to fire the CEO's daughter. Scott has been backed into a corner with this mortgage payment that he cannot afford.* **2.** To put oneself into a difficult or unpleasant situation that one cannot easily resolve or escape. In this usage, a reflexive pronoun is used between "back" and "into."

I really backed myself into a corner when I agreed to go to two events on the same night.

back in(to) circulation **1.** Engaging in social activities, typically after an absence. *Now that my exams are done, I'm excited to get back in circulation and see my friends again. Jill wants to get back into circulation after her hospital stay.* **2.** Dating again after the end of a relationship. *I hope to spend some time with Matt now that he's single again and back in circulation. She has mourned her husband and is ready to get back into circulation.*

back in(to) (the) harness Resuming one's daily work. *I'm not thrilled to get back into the harness on Monday. When do you get back in harness after your trip?*

(one's) back is up One is angry, hostile, defensive, or irritable, often due to a particular cause. *John's back is up now. You shouldn't have brought up the subject of college. It's election season, so my dad's back is up all the time.*

back number Someone or something that is out of date, out of fashion, or no longer relevant. Alludes to an issue of a periodical, magazine, or any serial publication that is now out of date. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *While it created quite a controversy in its time, the movie's love scene is a bit of a back number by today's standard. The singer was a huge star in the 1980s, but she's just a back number now.*

back of (one's) hand A display of rejection, disdain, or contempt (for a person or thing). *She met their accusations with the back of her hand. I give the back of my hand to anyone who says I'm not a good parent.*

back of (the) beyond Very distant or remote. *His new house is really back of beyond—it will take us hours to get there. This private island resort is really back of the beyond.*

back of the black stump In or of an extremely remote, isolated, and/or uncivilized location, usually meaning the Australian outback. "Black stump" is used colloquially as an imaginary marker of the edge of civilized settlement, though the origin of the term is uncertain. Primarily heard in Australia. *There are many people who still live back of the black stump, lacking access to medical care and other basic social services.*

back-of-the-envelope calculation A calculation or mathematical formulation that is approximated in a quick, informal, and rough manner, as might be sketched out on a scrap of paper (such as the back of an envelope). *When it came time to pay the bill, we had to do some back-of-the-envelope calculations to figure out who owed how much.*

back off **1.** noun Go away! Stop bothering me! *Back off! I told you I'm not going to the dance, and that's it! You need to back off, buddy. I've told you I'm not interested.* **2.** verb To retreat on a particular idea or course of action. *Your aggressive approach is starting to annoy people—you need to back off a bit. Management seems to be backing off that initiative, at least for now.* **3.** verb To cause someone to retreat on a particular idea or course of action. In this usage, a noun is used between "back" and "off." *Can you please back your minions off? They're harassing me.* **4.** verb To move backward away from something. *Back off that other runner so you don't collide with her.* **5.** verb To move backward past the edge of something. *If he's not careful, he's going to back off that narrow step.*

back office The section of a business or company that is responsible for managing internal affairs (such as administration, information technology, and so on) and thus generally does not have contact with clients, customers, or the general public. *You should ask one of the people in the back office for help with your computer. I spent so many years as part of the bank's back office that now I'm not sure I know the appropriate way to talk to a customer.*

back on (one's) feet **1.** Literally, standing again after a fall. *I had a hard time getting back on my feet after I slipped on the ice.* **2.** In good health again after a period of injury or illness. *Jill is happy to be back on her feet again after her hospital stay.* **3.** No longer in a precarious financial situation. *Now that I've paid off my credit card debt, I'm finally back on my feet.*

back on track Continuing as planned or expected, typically after a problem or distraction. *I'm sure all of you have very interesting weekend plans, but we need to get this meeting back on track. The train schedule seems to be back on track after all those delays this morning.*

back order **1.** noun An item that is not currently available for sale but can be ordered. *No, that dress is sold out, but we can make it a back order for you.* **2.** verb To order an item that is not currently available for sale. *No, that dress is sold out, but we can back order it for you.*

back out (of something) To withdraw from or renege on something, such as a given commitment, promise, plan, or situation. *She was considered a strong contender to win the local election, but she backed out at the last minute and continued working as CEO of her company. John was so nervous that he decided to back out of the marriage on the morning of his wedding.*

back the wrong horse To support a person or an effort that fails. This expression refers to betting on horse races. *You really backed the wrong horse when you picked that swimmer to win the race—he didn't even medal! Politicians who backed the wrong horse in the election are now trying to curry favor with the winning candidate—without much success.*

back-to-back **1.** adjective Consecutive and in quick succession; one after another. *The team secured back-to-back victories this afternoon, thanks to their fantastic goalkeeper.* **2.** adjective Of houses, built so that the back gardens or terraces of two houses are conjoined and then bisected by a partitioning wall or small alley. Primarily heard in UK. *We were worried that our new back-to-back house wouldn't offer as much privacy, but our terrace is completely our own.* **3.** adverb Done or occurring consecutively and in quick succession. *They're going to show the two films back-to-back this afternoon.* **4.** noun A house with back-to-back gardens or terraces. Primarily heard in UK. *The new housing estate is going to be made up entirely of back-to-backs.*

back-to-back-to-back A phrase used to describe three things that happen in a row, one right after another. *I have back-to-back-to-back doctor's appointments this afternoon—I can't possibly squeeze in a meeting too! The team was labeled a dynasty after winning back-to-back-to-back championships.*

back to basics Returning to the fundamental aspects of something. *Since you're struggling to play chords, let's get back to basics and look at the notes on the scale.*

back to earth Regaining a realistic view of or attitude about something. *Those newlyweds think that marriage is utterly blissful, but they'll come back to earth soon enough.*

back to square one Back to the very first stage of something; returned to an initial starting point. *We'll have to go back to square one if the government pulls our funding on this project. Yet another relationship down*

the tubes. I guess I'm back to square one yet again!

back to the drawing board Revising something (such as a plan) from the beginning, typically after it has failed. *That ad campaign was not as successful as we had hoped. Back to the drawing board. We need to go back to the drawing board on this project. I think it had some fundamental flaws from the start.*

back to the salt mines Resuming one's daily work, often unhappily. (Slaves and prisoners often had the unpleasant task of laboring in the salt mines.) *I'm not excited to get back to the salt mines on Monday. When do you get back to the salt mines after your trip?*

back up **1.** verb To move backwards. This phrase is commonly used to refer to maneuvering a car in reverse. *Back up, you're standing too close to me! If you back up a little, then your car will be completely in that parking space.* **2.** verb To save copies of computer files in another place, in case the original files become inaccessible. *If you didn't back up your files before the computer crashed, they may be lost forever.* **3.** verb To become clogged and impassable. *I'm calling the plumber right now because the toilet is backed up again. Traffic is totally backed up, due to all that construction.* **4.** verb To return to an item previously mentioned. *Whoa, back up—Janet and Jim are getting married?* **5.** verb To support or assist someone. A person's name or a pronoun is used between "back" and "up" in this usage. *You didn't see that meeting on the calendar, either? OK, please back me up on this, so the boss doesn't think I'm an idiot.* **6.** noun An alternate to be used if it becomes necessary for some reason, typically the failure, ineffectiveness, or the absence of the original. The phrase is typically written as one word. *I brought an extra pen as a backup, in case this one runs out of ink during the exam. I hope Tony asks me to the prom, but, if not, I have my best friend Bill as a backup.* **7.** adjective Available for use as an alternate if it becomes necessary for some reason, typically the failure, ineffectiveness, or the absence of the original. The phrase is typically written as one word. *I brought three backup pens, in case this one runs out of ink during the exam. I'm the backup quarterback, but I still have to know all the plays in case I get in the game. I hope Tony asks me to the prom, but, if not, I have my best friend Bill as a backup date.* **8.** adjective Appearing in the background in support of a main act or performer. The phrase is typically written as one word. *She's auditioning backup dancers for her world tour today.*

back us into a corner See [back into a corner](#).

back water To reverse direction suddenly, as on an opinion or stance on some subject. Refers to nautical terminology in which the oars of a ship or boat are reversed in the water so as to halt or change the course of the vessel. *With public pressure mounting, the government is expected to back water on the new legislation.*

backassward See [back-assward](#).

backbreaking See [back-breaking](#).

backcloth star See [back-cloth star](#).

backdoor **1.** adjective Done or achieved in a clandestine, stealthy, illegal and/or illicit way, or by such means. *Such backdoor appointments of its chief members of staff make me worry that nepotism is rife within the company. They were arrested by customs agents for their backdoor import of cheap tobacco into the country.* **2.** verb To use deceitful, duplicitous, or morally questionable means to circumvent someone's authority, influence, or integrity for the sake of one's personal gains. *Government agents tried to backdoor the activist by planting discrediting information about her in newspapers.*

backdoor man A man having an affair with a married woman. *I can't believe you're having an affair with a married woman! That makes you a dirty, rotten backdoor man!*

backed and filled See [back and fill](#).

backed away See [back away](#).

backed down See [back down](#).

backfire on To not proceed as one had planned or hoped. *My plan to convince my parents that I'm responsible enough to have a car promptly backfired on me when I came home after curfew. The invading army's strategy completely backfired on them because they failed to account for the icy mountain terrain.*

backhanded compliment See [back-handed compliment](#).

backing off See [back off](#).

backoffice See [back office](#).

backpedal To quickly and often abruptly reverse or retreat from one's

position or opinion on a given subject. Refers to pedaling backwards on a bicycle (done to apply the brakes on fixed-gear bikes), or to taking quick, backward steps, as in football or boxing. *The actor had to backpedal when he let slip a racist remark during the press conference.*

backroom boy Someone who advises a public figure or maintains a professional role that does not garner public attention. Originally used to describe scientists and technicians who worked without public knowledge or recognition in the United Kingdom during World War II. Primarily heard in UK. *Although he is a skilled political strategist, he lacks the charm and charisma necessary to run for office himself and, therefore, is likely to stay a backroom boy for the rest of his career.*

backseat driver 1. A passenger in a vehicle (not necessarily in the backseat) who attempts to instruct the driver or criticize their driving skills. *John quickly became annoyed at Mary's tendency to become a backseat driver whenever he drove her somewhere, so he just began to let her drive.* **2.** By extension, someone who tries to establish and maintain control over every situation. Primarily heard in US. *Although Mary was capable of completing the project on her own, John couldn't stop himself from being a backseat driver and telling her what to do.*

backseat driver 1. A passenger in a car (though not necessarily sitting in the back seat) who offers unwanted and/or unasked for driving instructions, directions, or criticisms to the driver. *Elizabeth is such an annoying backseat driver. Even on five-minute trips she acts like she's my driving instructor.* **2.** Someone who offers unsolicited instructions, directions, demands, or criticisms toward a project or activity that they are not responsible for or involved in. *Mark is just an intern, but he keeps trying to be a backseat driver in the way we handle customers' claims.*

backslider One who reverts or relapses into bad habits, unethical or immoral behavior, or criminal activity. *We've tried to help her quit smoking, but she's a bit of a backslider. Jimmy's too much of a backslider to stay true to the practices of the church.*

backstabber One who attacks or betrays someone in a deceitful, underhanded, or treacherous way. *He proved to be a backstabber in business, assaulting the character of his competition to get ahead in the game. I thought Mary was my friend, but then she said those mean things behind my*

back. She turned out to be nothing but a backstabber.

backstairs influence Influence from an ignoble source, typically one that is secret. *Where did that idea come from? It's like someone has backstairs influence over you all of sudden!*

backward(s) about coming forward Reticent or unwilling to voice one's opinion; shy. *I've always been a bit backward about coming forward when it comes to my religious beliefs. Mary is in no way backward about coming forward; she'll tell you exactly what is on her mind.*

backward(s) and forward(s) Back and forth; moving in one direction and then the opposite. Can be used literally to refer to something or someone moving in such a way, or figuratively to refer to a situation in which no progress is made (e.g., an argument). *I was pacing backwards and forwards in my room last night, worrying about this morning's exam. The two candidates debated the gun laws backward and forward, but neither could offer a productive solution in the end.*

backwater A place that is extremely remote and/or isolated, such that it is removed from the reach and influence of the outside world and thus is often regarded as socially stagnant or backward. *He grew up in a bit of a backwater, so his manners aren't exactly refined.*

bacon-faced Having a corpulent, clean-shaven face, likened to that of a pig. *These bacon-faced magistrates, puffed up with their own self-importance, grow fat off the hard work of the poor.*

bacon-fed obsolete Overweight and of greasy complexion. Used by the character Falstaff in Shakespeare's *Henry IV*, referring to the "bacon-fed knaves" whom he is about to rob. *Those slovenly, bacon-fed men who feed their faces till near bursting fill me with disgust.*

bad actor A person, animal, or element that is unreliable, unruly, and prone to troublesome or quarrelsome behavior. *The class was full of bad actors, always fighting and causing trouble. The neighbors have quite a bad actor for a dog; it's constantly trying to fight with our dogs.*

a bad apple A person whose own words or actions negatively impacts an entire group of people. Taken from the proverb "a bad apple spoils the bunch." *Jeremy is really a bad apple. After five minutes with my usually well-behaved kids, they're all acting out.*

bad as all that See [as bad as all that](#).

bad-ball hitter In baseball, a batter who tries to hit pitches that are out of the strike zone. *A: "What on earth is he swinging at?" B: "He's a bad-ball hitter, it's just how he plays. He'll hit one eventually."*

bad blood Tension and disdain between two or more people due to past disagreement or transgressions. *Last year's brutal playoff series created some bad blood between these two teams. There's bad blood between Elise and Piper, so don't leave them alone together.*

bad boy **1.** A male, typically a young man, who is or has the image of being a rebel against the established norms of society, and who is often regarded as an icon of sexual attractiveness. *Many of the band's fans say Johnny is their favorite because of his image as a bad boy. James Dean was one of the original bad boys of the movie industry, due to his image and film roles as a misunderstood outcast.* **2.** A task or situation that is tedious, difficult, or undesirable, especially that which is hoped to have a speedy conclusion or resolution. *I don't want to be working on this project all night long, so let's just get this bad boy over and done with now.* **3.** Something that is considered especially impressive, potent, or powerful. *My new motorcycle has some real power in the engine; I can't wait to take this bad boy out on the road.*

bad break **1.** Something that has gone awry or not as one expected, with the implication that it is the product of bad luck. *I can't believe you didn't get that part in the play. What a bad break. Shelly had a bad break this morning when her car wouldn't start.* **2.** A fracture of a bone that is particularly extreme or not conducive to proper healing. *Unfortunately it was a bad break, and your leg will have to be in a cast for six months.*

bad bunch A group of people typified by immoral, illegal, or illicit behavior, which is often seen as being corruptive and/or destructive to others. *My brother was a straight-A student until he started hanging out with a bad bunch; now he's hooked on drugs and has dropped out of school.*

a bad carpenter blames his tools If someone performs a job or task poorly or unsuccessfully, they will usually lay the blame on the quality of their equipment, or other such external factors, rather than take responsibility for their own failure. *The football player blamed the overinflated ball for costing his team the game, but as they say, a bad*

carpenter always blames his tools.

a bad carpenter blames his tools If someone performs a job or task poorly or unsuccessfully, they will usually lay the blame on the quality of their equipment, or other such external factors, rather than take responsibility for their own failure. *After John spent all day assembling his new desk only to discover it was lopsided, he immediately declared that the package must have contained the wrong pieces. His wife replied, "only bad carpenters blame their tools, dear."*

bad check A written order to a bank for a certain amount of funds that has been dishonored, either because such funds are not available or because the given checking account does not exist. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *A lot of bad checks have been circulating in the area lately, claiming to be from the local university; in reality, they are scams trying to swindle people out of money.*

bad company Unsavory people (for one to spend time with). *You are keeping some bad company these days, Bill, and if you get arrested, I am not bailing you out! My mom thinks my new friends are bad company, but I'm having so much fun with them!*

a bad egg A dishonest or ill-behaved person. Primarily heard in US. *We could tell he was a bad egg even at a young age.*

a bad excuse is better than none Offering an excuse, no matter how ridiculous, creates the possibility that others might accept it (as opposed to offering no excuse at all). *They'll be furious with you if you show up late for no reason. A bad excuse is better than none! A: "I can't tell my teacher that the dog ate my homework!" B: "Come on, a bad excuse is better than none."*

bad form Behavior or actions that are considered socially inappropriate, distasteful, or rude. *Many people still consider it bad form to ask a woman her age.*

bad hair day 1. A day when one's hair is unruly and looks unkempt. *I'm wearing a hat because I'm having a bad hair day, OK? Talk about a bad hair day—what am I going to do with this unruly mop?* **2.** A bad day. *I'd avoid the boss if I were you—he must be having a bad hair day because he's screaming at everyone he sees. It's been a real bad hair day—everything has gone wrong.*

bad iron A moment or period of misfortune or bad luck. *I've been having a bit of bad iron so far this morning: I lost my wallet, my keys, and then my phone, all before lunch!*

bad joke An event or situation that is absurd, nonsensical, and/or a complete failure, i.e., like an unfunny joke. *This film is a bad joke: it doesn't make any sense and the actors are absolutely dreadful. His election campaign was a bad joke; not even his mother voted for him!*

bad lot A person or group of people typified by immoral, illegal, or illicit behavior, which is often seen as being corruptive and/or destructive to others. *That George fellow is a bad lot. I heard he was arrested just last year for robbing a convenience store for drug money. I fell in with a bad lot after high school and got in a lot of trouble, but I've cleaned up my act now.*

bad luck 1. Literally, an instance or period of misfortune. *I had bad luck this year, first losing my job and then being divorced by my wife.* 2. Said as an expression of condolences to a person who suffered or is suffering a misfortune. A: *"They decided to hire someone else for the position."* B: *"Aw, I'm sorry to hear that. Bad luck, man."*

bad money drives out good The presence of counterfeit currency keeps genuine money out of circulation. *Bad money drives out good. And that is what will happen if the value of gold keeps dropping.*

bad name A tarnished reputation. Typically used in the phrase "give (something) a bad name." *I can't believe how little you care about your students! Boy, you give teachers a bad name!*

bad news travels fast Bad news circulates quickly (because people are apt to hear it and then share it with others). A: *"How does the whole school already know that I got suspended?"* B: *"Well, bad news travels fast."*

bad off Without enough money to get by; poor. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *I've been bad off for the last few months; it's hard to make ends meet these days.*

bad omen A sign, either real or imagined, of ill fortune or catastrophe in the future. *It was a bad omen when my girlfriend broke up with me the day before my final exams. All of the recent natural disasters are a bad omen for the future of the planet.*

a bad penny A person with no value. Typically used in the proverb "A

bad penny always turns up." A: "I don't think we'll see Todd again now that he's been disgraced at work." B: "You never know—a bad penny always turns up."

a bad penny always turns up A person with no value always returns. *I'm sure we haven't seen the last of your conniving cousin—a bad penny always turns up, after all.*

bad sort An aggressive, mean-spirited, dangerous, or generally unpleasant person. *I wouldn't get involved with him, he's known to be a bad sort.*

bad taste in (one's) mouth A negative impression (based on something that has already happened). *I don't know, man, the fact that he lied to you just leaves a bad taste in my mouth.*

a bad time 1. A time that is inconvenient. *I'm afraid you've called at a bad time. I'm already on my way out the door.* **2.** A situation that is challenging and/or not fun or enjoyable. *If you try to do too much after surgery, you're going to have a bad time. We had a really bad time on our date because we simply don't have anything in common.*

bad time An inopportune or inconvenient moment. *Sorry I can't stay to chat, this is a bit of a bad time. Is this a bad time? I'd really like your advice on something.*

bad times Times of trouble, struggle, or unhappiness. *I've had bad times since losing my job, but I'm trying to stay positive.*

bad to the bone Thoroughly and completely immoral, wicked, dangerous, and/or unlawful. Often used in an ironic, jocular way. *Don't mess with me, I'm bad to the bone! I bet he thinks he's bad to the bone, riding around on that motorcycle.*

bad trip An intense and unpleasant psychological experience, usually resulting from the ingestion of psychedelic drugs such as lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD, or "acid"). *I had a real bad trip last night, I'll never do drugs again.*

bad trot A moment or period of specific misfortune or bad luck. Primarily heard in Australia. *I can feel it! The next horse race will be the end of my bad trot!*

bad word A curse or swear word. *You just said a bad word! I'm telling mom! Please try not to curse around the kids—I don't want them repeating*

any bad words!

bad workers always blame their tools If someone performs a job or task poorly or unsuccessfully, they will usually lay the blame on the quality of their equipment, or other such external factors, rather than take responsibility for their own failure. *The football player blamed the overinflated ball for costing his team the game, but as they say, bad workers always blame their tools.*

a bad workman always blames his tools If someone performs a job or task poorly or unsuccessfully, they will usually lay the blame on the quality of their equipment, or other such external factors, rather than take responsibility for their own failure. *The football player blamed the overinflated ball for costing his team the game, but as they say, a bad workman always blames his tools.*

a bad workman blames his tools If someone performs a job or task poorly or unsuccessfully, they will usually lay the blame on the quality of their equipment, or other such external factors, rather than take responsibility for their own failure. *When Mary blamed the oven for burning the turkey on Thanksgiving, her husband jokingly replied, "a bad workman always blames his tools."*

badassery slang Behavior that is impressive and perhaps brave or defiant. A: "Wow, she just marched into the boss's office, demanded a raise, and got it." B: "I guess he was struck by her badassery."

badge bunny A woman who is exclusively or primarily attracted to those who wear a badge on the job, such as policemen or firemen. *There is one woman who seems to appear whenever I am out on duty; I think she's a bit of a badge bunny.*

badger game An extortion scheme in which the victim, typically a married male, is lured into a compromising situation by (usually) a woman, who, with the aid of a male accomplice in the role of a husband or partner, blackmails the victim for money under the threat of exposure or physical violence. Most likely refers to the blood sport "badger baiting," in which a badger is used as live bait to lure a dog into a pit fight. *He was nearly bankrupted after he fell victim to a badger game.*

badger into To pester or nag someone into doing something. A person's name or a pronoun can be used between "badger" and "into." *Now that I have*

my driver's license, my little sister is constantly trying to badger me into taking her places. Did you get badgered into coming to this boring lecture today?

badger to death To pester or nag someone relentlessly. A person's name or a pronoun can be used between "badger" and "to." *If you don't answer him, he'll just keep badgering you to death. I've been badgered to death by students all day—I need a break.*

badly off Without enough money to get by; poor. *She was laid off from her job last year, and she has been quite badly off since then.*

badly off for (something) Without enough of something that one needs. Primarily heard in UK. *I hope you get paid soon, we are badly off for groceries in the house.*

bae slang One's romantic partner. Often used as a term of endearment. *I don't have any plans tonight—just staying home with bae. Come on, bae, are you ready to go yet?*

bag and baggage With all of one's possessions. *You need to be out of your dorm room, bag and baggage, by Monday morning.*

bag it 1. Literally, to put or take something in a bag, such as groceries or a meal. *I'm completely full but the meal was delicious. Could you bag it for me? I'll take it for lunch tomorrow. 2. To cancel, abandon, or bring something to an end. *After 20 years in the insurance business, I've decided to bag it. I'm going to live my dream as a photographer from now on!**

a bag lady A homeless woman who carries all of her personal belongings with her in bags. *When the young boy noticed a bag lady rifling through the garbage can looking for something to eat, he immediately offered to give her his sandwich.*

bag of bones 1. A person or animal that is emaciated to the point where one can see bones protruding from the skin. *The old, abandoned dog looked like a bag of bones after living on the streets for so long. Poor Dave, he looked like a bag of bones when he was done with his cancer treatment. 2. A disparaging term for a very old person, especially one who has a frail appearance. *That old bag of bones shook her fist at me for walking on her lawn again!**

(one's) bag of tricks 1. The items that one has available for use. The

phrase originally referred to the items a magician would use for magic tricks. *Let's see what I have in my bag of tricks to entertain the baby.* **2.** The skills that one has available for use. *Our new pitcher has a killer fastball in her bag of tricks. She's an ace negotiator, so you know she has a few more surprises in her bag of tricks.*

bag of wind Someone who speaks at too great a length, saying little of value and often with an air of pretentious authority. *Mr. Smith likes to expound at great length on any given topic, but he's just an overblown bag of wind.*

bag on To judge or criticize someone. *Why are you bagging on me? I didn't do anything wrong! If my friends see me with this stupid haircut, they'll bag on me for months!*

bag that! Said when one is not at all interested in doing something. *Getting up early on vacation? Bag that!*

bail (one) out of jail To pay for someone's release from jail. *I have to go bail my brother out of jail again. I wonder what he did this time.*

bail out 1. To pay for someone's release from jail. A person's name or a pronoun can be used between "bail" and "out." *I have to go bail out my brother—the police picked him up again, and he's down at the precinct. Bailing my son out from jail was the low point of the year.* **2.** By extension, to get someone out of trouble or help them with a problem. A person's name or a pronoun can be used between "bail" and "out." *I thought I would get in trouble for staying out too late, but luckily my sister bailed me out and told my mom I'd had car trouble. You can keep getting into these jams, dude. This is the last time I bail you out!* **3.** To remove water from an unwanted place, typically by using a bucket. Although most commonly associated with emptying water from a boat, this phrase can be used in any situation where water has accumulated and must be removed. *After all that rain, my dad and I have been bailing out our basement all day. We'll sink if we don't bail out the boat now!* **4.** To leave or abandon something. *We had been working on this project for months, and then John just bailed out on us.* **5.** To jump from an airplane with a parachute. *How high does the plane go before we bail out? I bailed out at the last second, just before the plane crashed.*

bail up 1. To hold a cow within an enclosure of a stable (called a bail or bale) for the purposes of milking; or, of a cow, to be held in a bail for such a

purpose. Primarily heard in Australia. *Go bail up those cows before you have your breakfast. Make sure them cows are bailed up, we don't want them getting loose!* **2.** To detain someone for the purposes of a robbery. Primarily heard in Australia. *I was bailed up last night on my way home and the guy took my wallet. Bail up these two while I check out the rest of the house.* **3.** To detain someone, as during an unsolicited conversation. Primarily heard in Australia. *I would have been home 40 minutes ago, but I was bailed up by John talking some nonsense about the government again.*

bait and switch 1. A deceptive sales practice in which a store attracts customers by advertising low prices for products that are not available or are of poor quality, so that customers buy more expensive items instead. A: *"Why did you buy such an expensive blender? What happened to the one that was on sale?"* B: *"That one is sold out and won't be available for months—the store pulled a real bait and switch."* **2.** Any deceptive practice in which the information initially presented is found to be untrue. *I thought my favorite band was playing at this club tonight, but it turned out to be a bait and switch—it's just a cover band.*

bake up To bake something. *I decided to bake up a fresh batch of brownies for my daughter's birthday party this afternoon.*

bake up a storm To bake a large amount of something with great vigor and/or enthusiasm. *Sometimes, when I'm really stressed out, I go into the kitchen and bake up a storm to focus my attention on something positive.*

a baker's dozen Thirteen; one more than a usual dozen (12). *When Jacob went to the bakery to buy doughnuts for the office, he made sure to get a baker's dozen so he could sneak one to eat on the way to work.*

baker's half dozen Half of a "baker's dozen" (13 rather than 12), thus, 7 rather than 6. The term "baker's dozen" to mean 13 originates from an 11th-century practice in which bakers would include an extra loaf of bread in a dozen so as to avoid facing penalties for selling underweight bread. *The seven deadly sins are a baker's half dozen of things one should avoid in order to live a moral life.*

balance out To equalize two things, or to neutralize something with something else. *I'm hoping that sleeping in tomorrow will balance out all of my late nights this week. I sent her flowers, hoping that a sweet gesture would balance out our terrible first date.*

balance (something) against (something else) To compare two things, typically one that is positive and one that is negative, often in order to make a decision. *You need to balance the long commute against how much you like the job.*

balance (something) with (something else) To equalize two things, or to neutralize something with something else. *On student council, my attentiveness balances with Kate's relaxed attitude. This recipe balances the sweetness of the strawberries with the tartness of the rhubarb.*

balance the accounts 1. To review the finances of a person or company, making sure that all money is accounted for and that expenditures do not exceed available income. *Susie in payroll is balancing the accounts right now. I need to balance the accounts and determine if I can afford to go on a vacation this summer.* 2. To get revenge for a prior misdeed. *Tiffany is always gossiping about me, so I balanced the accounts by starting a rumor about her.*

balance the books 1. Literally, to ensure that the figures regarding credit and debit are correct and to determine the remaining balance, as in a business or in personal finance. *I had to stay at work for an extra two hours last night balancing the books.* 2. By extension, to try and make up the deficit in a given budget by increasing revenue or income. *The President laid out a new economic plan to try to balance the books by increasing taxes on the wealthy.*

balance wheel A stabilizing component. It is often found in a clock or watch. *If we don't add something to act as a balance wheel, I think this whole structure may collapse. The jeweler told me that my watch needs a new balance wheel.*

a balancing act A situation in which one must accomplish a number of tasks at the same time. *Mary quickly discovered that working full-time while going to school was going to be quite the balancing act.*

bald as a coot Totally bald. *My father had long hair as a teen, but now he's bald as a coot.*

bald-faced liar One who tells blatantly obvious and/or impudent untruths easily and with little or no attempt to disguise the lie. *Everyone knows he is just a bald-faced liar. It's a wonder anyone believes a thing he*

says anymore.

bald-faced lie A blatantly obvious and/or impudent untruth, one in which the liar does not attempt to disguise their mendacity. *Our son tells us nothing but bald-faced lies when we ask him where he goes at night.*

bale up To form or gather into a bale, as of hay. *We need to bale up the rest of the field before sundown.*

baleful as death See [\(as\) baleful as death](#).

balk at To be hesitant about doing something or to refuse to do it. *My dog balked at leaving the park. The young performer balked at taking the stage at the talent show.*

balk at the idea (of something) To indignantly reject or recoil from a given idea, topic, or suggestion. *He balked at the idea of reducing the number of staff to pay for an increase to the executives' pay.*

ball and chain 1. Something, usually a responsibility of some kind, that restricts one's freedom or limits one's possibilities for personal pursuits. *This job is such a ball and chain, I can't wait to quit and start freelancing. As John got older, he felt that his decision to settle down and have a family became a ball and chain that prevented him from pursuing his dream to travel the world.* **2.** A jocular but disparaging term for a person's spouse or significant other who is thought to stifle the person in some way. Almost always applied to a wife or girlfriend. *We could tell Jimmy was joking when he called his wife the old ball and chain, but I think he does feel a bit like he doesn't get out enough.*

a ball-breaker Someone who deliberately gives others a hard time, is very demanding, or is insulting. Can be considered vulgar slang. *John's boss, Mark, is quite the ball-breaker. After completing the project ahead of time and under budget, Mark ordered John to work through the weekend to finish up other meaningless tasks.*

ball her eyes out See [bawl \(one's\) eyes out](#).

ball hog sports A player who monopolizes the ball without including teammates in an attempt to score, move the ball, or maintain possession. Usually used for basketball and football (soccer). *Boy, you're being a real ball hog today! Why don't you pass it to one of your teammates for a change?*

ball of fire An ambitious and enthusiastic person. *I always knew that*

Lauren would grow up to be successful—she was a real ball of fire as a kid.

ball (someone) out A misspelling of "bawl someone out," meaning to scold or reprimand someone with great intensity and/or ferocity. *My parents balled me out after I failed my math exam.*

ball the jack Speed up. Go fast. This phrase came from the American rail industry, in which a train was nicknamed a "jack," while "highball" meant to proceed. A: *"Come on Tom, pick up the pace, ball the jack, let's move!"* B: *"Ugh, I can't run any faster this early in the morning!"*

ball up 1. To muddle, confuse, or ruin something. A noun can be used between "ball" and "up." *Boy, I really balled up the directions—where are we? Here are the items I need from the grocery store—don't ball it up!* **2.** To roll or form into a ball. *I balled up my clothes and threw them in the hamper.*

balled-up 1. Muddled or confused. *I'm usually all balled-up until I have my morning coffee.* **2.** Formed into a ball. *I got hit in the head with a balled-up piece of paper from the back of the room.*

baller 1. noun Literally, an athlete, typically a basketball player. A: *"That guy is so tall, he must be a baller."* B: *"Yep, he plays for the Lakers."* **2.** noun A successful person (usually a man) who has an extravagant lifestyle. *He's a total baller, driving around in his Porsche like it's no big deal.* **3.** adjective Cool and impressive. *Getting us into the VIP section of the club is a baller move, dude.*

ballpark estimate An approximate estimate. *Mary contacted several plumbers to get a ballpark estimate of the cost to fix her leaky toilet.*

ballpark figure An approximate number; an estimate. *Do you have a ballpark figure for the cost of the renovations? That's just a ballpark figure—they don't know exactly how many people will be attending the event.*

balls of (the/one's) feet The bottom part at the front of the feet that the toes connect to. *For this dance move, you'll need to stand on the balls of your feet. When you're running, pay close attention to where the balls of the feet strike the ground.*

balls-out With maximum effort, energy, or speed, and without caution or restraint. The phrase most likely originated as a railroad engineering term, referring to the mechanical governor of steam locomotives, which has two weighted steel balls that extend to the "balls out" position when at maximum

speed. While it does not in fact refer to testicles, it should be used with caution because of this popular association. *If we're going to win this battle, we have to go absolutely balls-out!*

balls to the wall With maximum effort, energy, or speed, and without caution or restraint. The phrase most likely originated as an aviation term, referring to the throttle levers of military aircraft (which have a rounded ball on top) being pushed to their maximum limit (i.e., to the bulkhead, or "wall"). While it does not in fact refer to testicles, it should be used with caution because of this popular association. *Look boys, this air raid needs to be done fast and efficiently; fly in balls to the wall, hit the targets, and get the heck out of there.*

balls up **1.** adjective Horribly awry to the point of complete ruin or disaster. *Mary's Monday morning routine went balls up when she spilled coffee on herself, missed the train, and arrived to work late.* **2.** noun (usually hyphenated) A blunder that causes disastrous results; a mess-up. *The balls-up with the code has put the entire software platform in jeopardy.*

balum rancum obsolete An orgiastic dance in which the participants, female and usually prostitutes, are in the nude. *The balum rancum that goes on in that house at night is something well-bred gentlemen would do best to avoid.*

bamboo ceiling A figurative discriminatory barrier in the workplace that impedes the career progress of Asians and people of Asian descent, preventing them from reaching top leadership positions in a company. Coined by the writer Jane Hyun, it is derived from the term "glass ceiling," which refers to the subtle discriminations that prevent women from advancing to the top positions in business. *Mark was worried that his Chinese heritage might result in a bamboo ceiling if he tried to get a promotion down the line.*

bamboozle To cheat, deceive, or take advantage of someone by elaborate and underhanded means. *I can't believe I let that salesman bamboozle me like that.*

ban from To prohibit someone from ever returning to something or some place. *My rude comments got me banned from that website. My friends and I were banned from that restaurant after we started a food fight there.*

banana oil Superfluous, disingenuous, or nonsensical talk, especially that which is meant to flatter someone or exaggerate something. *Look, I know I*

won't get past the first round of this tournament, so you can stop feeding me banana oil.

banana republic A small country, often led by a corrupt government, whose economy depends upon either one internally-produced commodity or the revenue generated by foreign companies or investors. *The dictator's insistence that the tiny island nation double down on its dominate export has made it even more of a banana republic.*

a banana skin An action that results in an unforeseen and embarrassing mistake or problem. *When Joe applied the latest software update, he had no idea what a banana skin it would be until after his company's entire network crashed.*

Banbury story A story that does not make sense or which rambles circuitously without apparent end. *The old sailor, after several glasses of whiskey too many, began to tell some rambling Banbury story, which none of us were able to decipher.*

Banbury story of a cock and a bull A story that does not make sense or which rambles circuitously without apparent end. *The old sailor, after several glasses of whiskey too many, began to tell some Banbury story of a cock and a bull, which none of us were able to decipher.*

Banbury tale A story that does not make sense or which rambles circuitously without apparent end. *The old sailor, after several glasses of whiskey too many, began to tell some rambling Banbury tale, which none of us were able to decipher.*

Band-Aid A quick and usually ineffective solution to a problem that only addresses the symptom and not the root cause. Refers to the trademark for a brand of adhesive bandages. Primarily heard in US. *Lowering educational standards in schools may increase graduation rates, but it does little more than slap a Band-Aid on a much deeper problem.*

Band-Aid solution A quick and/or temporary solution to a problem that does not address or resolve the underlying cause of said problem. Taken from the Band-Aid brand of adhesive bandages. *While offering free pizza to customers affected by the oil spill is a cute Band-Aid solution, the company has no plan in place to deal with the actual damage that it caused.*

Band-Aid treatment A method of covering up a problem, rather than

solving it or getting to the root of it. Refers to the trademark for a brand of adhesive bandages. *Honestly, I think this is just a Band-Aid treatment—we need to work harder and find a real solution.*

band together To unite with others, often for a particular cause or reason. *We all need to band together if we want to stop that bully. You guys will not beat this team unless you put aside your differences and band together.*

bandage up To cover and/or treat one's wound(s). A noun, person's name, or pronoun can be used between "bandage" and "up." *The trainer is bandaging Danny up right now—he should be back in the game soon. I bandaged up my daughter's knee after she fell at the park. As soon as we bandage it up you'll be good to go.*

bandy about To talk about something in a loose or gossipy manner. A noun can be used between "bandy" and "about." *They are bandying about that story as if it's the truth. Management is just casually bandying about the idea of layoffs. Don't bandy that nonsense about here, we're not buying it.*

bandy with To argue or otherwise exchange views with someone. *You can bandy with him all you want, but I doubt you'll ever reach an agreement.*

bane of (one's) existence The source or cause of one's misfortune, unhappiness, frustration, or anxiety, usually used hyperbolically. *I swear, this project is the bane of my existence. I've been working on it for months and still haven't made any real progress! Jane has been constantly annoying me all week. She's been the bane of my very existence!*

bang around To jostle someone or something; to knock things together. A noun can be used between "bang" and "around." *Be careful with that box—don't bang around my glassware! I got banged around in that car accident. I think that kid will listen to us if we bang him around a bit and scare him.*

bang away To clumsily strike the keys of something, such as a computer or piano. *How much longer will your little sister bang away on the piano tonight? I'm getting a headache from all that racket. I can hear my grandmother banging away on the computer right now.*

bang (away) at 1. To strike something repeatedly. *Quit banging away at the door, I'm coming! I banged away at that nail and still can't get it to go into the wall. 2. To mention or reference something repeatedly. *That film**

really bangs away at the idea of social justice. **3.** To work steadily on a project or assignment. *I'm banging away at this report so that I can finish it tonight.*

bang for (one's/the) buck A lot of value for little cost. *That restaurant is great, and the prices are very reasonable—you get a lot of bang for your buck. If we choose an affordable resort on this beautiful island, I think we'll get a lot of bang for the buck.*

bang goes (something)! A phrase said about a lost opportunity. *That whole wing of the mall is under construction, so bang goes our shopping trip!*

bang her head against a stone wall See [beat \(one's\) head against a stone wall](#).

bang in 1. To strike and dent something. *That rogue shopping cart banged in the passenger side door of my car. 2.* To score a goal. *Their goalie made the initial save, but our trailing defenseman banged in the rebound.*

bang into To hit or smack against something, usually accidentally. A noun can also be used between "bang" and "into." *My car is dented because a shopping cart banged into it last week. Billy has a bruise on head from banging into the low ceiling in our basement. I banged my car into our trash cans while trying to back out of our driveway.*

bang on 1. verb To strike something repeatedly. *Quit banging on the door, I'm coming! How much longer will your little sister bang on the piano tonight? I'm getting a headache from all that racket. 2.* adjective Exactly right. Primarily heard in UK. *I think that is a bang on analysis of Forster's novel. My estimate was bang on. I hope the boss notices!*

bang (one's) head against a brick wall To attempt, continuously and fruitlessly, to accomplish some task or achieve some goal that is or seems ultimately hopeless. *I feel like I've been banging my head against a brick wall trying to understand this math equation. Some people are never going to agree with you on this, so it's no use banging your head against a brick wall trying to convince everyone.*

bang (one's) head against a wall To attempt continuously and fruitlessly to accomplish some task or achieve some goal that is or seems ultimately hopeless. *I feel like I've been banging my head against a wall trying to understand this math equation. Some people are never going to*

agree with you on this, so it's no use banging your head against a wall trying to convince everyone.

bang out 1. To loudly and/or clumsily strike the keys of a piano to play a song. *I think your sister is trying to bang out "Hot Cross Buns" on the piano. Whenever my neighbor is banging out something on his piano, you can hear it all the way down the street.* **2.** To complete a task quickly or hastily. *I totally forgot that paper was due today, so I'm just going to bang out something to give the teacher next period.*

bang (something) against To smack something against another item or surface. *I broke the plate when I accidentally banged it against the countertop. She banged her cup against the table to show her displeasure.*

bang straw obsolete A name for one who threshes grain, which, before the advent of the mechanical thresher, was done by beating (i.e., banging) the grain with a flail on the threshing floor. The phrase eventually came to encompass all servants working on a farm. *Let the bang straws finish early today, for the harvest festival is tonight and they deserve a rest from work.*

bang the drum To voice one's support for something. *Quit banging the drum for that candidate—he is simply not qualified for the job.*

bang to rights With irrefutable proof of wrongdoing or illegal activity, usually used with the verbs "caught" or "have." Primarily heard in UK. *The officer caught the gangster bang to rights, having discovered several kilograms of narcotics hidden in the back of the vehicle. Freeze, creep! I have you bang to rights!*

bang up 1. To strike and damage something. A noun can be used between "bang" and "up." *That accident banged up the passenger side door of my car. Be careful with my phone—don't bang the screen up!* **2.** To hurt someone by striking or otherwise impacting them. *I got really banged up in that car accident.*

bang-up cove obsolete A stylish and well-groomed man who is spendthrift with his money and means. "Bang up" is an obsolete slang word for being extravagant or very fine, and "cove" is a British slang word for a man. *My word, that dashing gentleman is certainly a bang-up cove; he has purchased food and drink for all of the patrons in the tavern.*

a bang up job A compliment used to describe the successful completion

of a task. *Considering his young age and small stature, Billy really did a bang up job building the dog house for his new puppy.*

banged up Hurt. Damaged (often from use or wear). *A: "So you only have a few bruises? That's wonderful!" B: "I know, I'm so lucky to be only a little banged up from the car accident." Oh, the really banged-up copy of To Kill a Mockingbird, the one that looks like it's about to fall apart? It's mine.*

banish from To prohibit someone from a certain place or thing. *My rude comments got me banished from that website. My friends and I were banished from that restaurant after we got into a fight there.*

bank account An account with a bank where one can withdraw or deposit funds. *I have very little money in my bank account right now, so can we go out to dinner another night?*

Bank Night obsolete A lottery event popular in the US during the Great Depression in which a member of a movie theater audience could win a cash prize if their name was called. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *Wouldn't you know it? The one time they call my name for Bank Night and I had to leave early for a dinner party!*

bank on To rely on a future occurrence (even though it might not happen). *I've really been banking on a holiday bonus this year—I don't have enough money to buy presents without it. I don't think you can bank on Tom coming tonight—he's really unreliable.*

bankbook **1.** Literally, a book in which a depositor's financial transactions, such as deposits and withdrawals, are recorded by a bank. *Now make sure you don't lose the bankbook, or the teller won't deposit this check.* **2.** By extension, wealth or finances in general. *I'm a little worried about how I'm going to pay my rent this month because my bankbook is rather thin these days.*

banker's dozen One less than a dozen, i.e., 11. A play on "a baker's dozen" (13 rather than 12), it refers to lending in which interest is deducted at the time of the loan, therefore yielding less than what the loan actually stipulated. *A soccer team has a banker's dozen players on the field at any given time.*

bankers' hours A working day that is shorter than usual or acceptable, especially one that begins late and ends early. It refers to the traditional

opening times for banks, which formerly opened at 10 AM and closed at 3 PM. *With the boss out on vacation, some of us have been working bankers' hours for the past couple of weeks.*

banker's hours A limited work schedule (as banks were once known for having short work days and being closed on holidays and weekends). *You won't be able to reach her on a Saturday—she keeps banker's hours.*

bankroll **1.** noun The ready and available money of a person, group, or organization. *The company's large bankroll ensures they have the means to pay for any legal challenge they may face.* **2.** verb To finance or put up money for someone or something, as for a business endeavor. *My wealthy uncle has generously offered to bankroll my independent film.*

banned from See [ban from](#).

banyan day **1.** obsolete A day of the week on which British sailors were not given meat with their meals. Taken from the Banyan (or Vaniyan) caste of Indian merchants, who wholly abstained from meat. Primarily heard in UK. *The captain makes some pretense that the banyan day is for a religious fast, but really, it is just a way to save on the price of meat for a day.* **2.** obsolete In Australian outstations (homesteads), a day on which the food is of the poorest quality, as when the meat supply has run out. Primarily heard in Australia. *Truly, the hardest days out here are the banyan days, when the meals are at their thinnest.*

baptism by fire **1.** The first time a soldier enters combat. Taken from a phrase that originates from the Bible, in Matthew 3:11. *As they marched onto the battlefield, you could see all of the uniformed boys become men as they experienced baptism by fire.* **2.** A difficult ordeal that one has to undergo through immersion and without preparation. *One week into her new job, Mary felt like she was undergoing a baptism by fire when she was suddenly put in charge of the company's largest account.*

baptism of fire **1.** The first time a soldier enters combat. Taken from a phrase that originates from the Bible, in Matthew 3:11. *As they marched onto the battlefield, you could see all of the uniformed boys become men as they experienced baptism of fire.* **2.** A difficult ordeal that one has to undergo through immersion and without preparation. *One week into her new job, Mary felt like she was undergoing a baptism of fire when she was suddenly put in charge of the company's largest account.*

bar from To prohibit someone from a certain place or thing. *My rude comments got me barred from that website. My friends and I were barred from that restaurant after we got into fight there. I bar you from every coming in here again.*

bar none For sure; unequivocally. *This is the best restaurant in town, bar none. Stephanie got the lead in the school play because she's the best actress in the school, bar none.*

bar off **1.** To barricade, erect a barrier around, or deny access to something. *Remember to bar off the front and back doors when you leave the building at night. The school threatened to bar off Internet access for students who use it to look at unrelated or inappropriate material.* **2.** In agriculture, to plow a furrow on either side of a row of plants so that their roots sit atop a high, narrow bed of soil. *Make sure you bar off those rows of new seedlings first thing this morning.*

bar sinister **1.** obsolete In heraldry, a mark that runs from the left shoulder of the bearer down to the right, often used to denote a noble who is of illegitimate birth. "Sinister" comes from a Latin word meaning "on the left." *The young duke, born out of wedlock to the king, wore a bar sinister upon his shield.* **2.** By extension, the status, stigma, or implication of illegitimate birth. *The boy grew up in comfort, but his other brothers never let him forget his bar sinister.*

bar star Someone who has or seeks a popular reputation by frequenting bars or night clubs. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *Though he does not have a vibrant social life during the week, during the weekend he is something of a bar star.*

bar up To barricade, fit, or fortify with metal bars. *Crime has gotten so bad in this area that we've had to bar up our windows. They finally barred up that old abandoned building last weekend.*

barbarian cruelty Cruel behavior toward a person or people that is especially ferocious, violent, inhuman, and uncivilized. *There is no barbarian cruelty greater than violence inflicted by an adult upon a child. The area was infamous for the barbarian cruelty inflicted upon minorities and foreigners.*

bare metal Computer hardware without an operating system. *Right now, my new computer is bare metal, and I can't wait to build it and configure it*

just the way I want.

bare necessities That which is absolutely essential, with nothing superfluous, extravagant, or unnecessary. *All I'm looking for in a mobile phone is the bare necessities: the ability to make phone calls. They weren't kidding when they said the apartment only had the bare necessities: just a bed, a bathroom, and a stove!*

bare (one's) breast **1.** To expose oneself in a vulnerable or unguarded position, especially to that which may cause harm or distress. *I bare my breast to you, so do as you will. I am at your mercy! He bared his breast to the armed guards to show that he was not a threat.* **2.** To share with another person one's private emotions and thoughts, especially those that are emotionally troubling or make oneself vulnerable to the other person in some way. *I bared my breast to Samantha and told her how much I loved her.*

bare (one's) heart To share one's intimate thoughts or feelings with another person. *I don't know Adam that well, so I was surprised that he bared his heart to me. There are very few people I would bare my heart to.*

bare (one's) soul To share one's intimate thoughts or feelings with another person. *I don't know Adam that well, so I was surprised that he bared his soul to me. There are very few people I would bare my soul to.*

bare (one's) teeth To display an angry, violent, and/or threatening reaction to or against something or someone, as does a dog or wolf when threatened. *I will bare my teeth to anyone who tries to take away my land. We seemed to be getting along just fine, but she suddenly bared her teeth when I brought up religion.*

bare (something) to (someone) To reveal something to another person. *I don't know Adam that well, so I was surprised that he bared his fears to me. She finally bared the truth to me, after weeks of lying.*

barefaced liar One who tells blatantly obvious and/or impudent untruths easily and with little or no attempt to disguise the lie. *Everyone knows he is just a barefaced liar. It's a wonder anyone believes a thing he says anymore.*

barefaced lie A blatantly obvious and/or impudent untruth, one in which the liar does not attempt to disguise their mendacity. *My opponent's assertion that I intend to raise the tax rates is baseless; it is nothing but a barefaced lie.*

barely made it See [to barely make it](#).

barely made it on time See [to barely make it on time](#).

barf out slang To become very emotional or nervous. *I nearly barfed out when I heard that I had to perform first in the school talent show. Mom will barf out if you come home after curfew again.*

barfly Someone who spends the greater part of their time in bars or other drinking establishments. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *You get to know the people in these places when you're a barfly like me.*

bargain-basement 1. Sold at a low or reduced price; very inexpensive. The term comes from a section of a department store, usually at the ground or basement level, where inexpensive items or those at reduced prices are sold. *George paid nearly \$500 for his designer suit, but I think my bargain-basement suit looks just as nice.* **2.** Of very poor or inferior quality; having very little or no value. *You can tell that these are bargain-basement toys: they all broke after an hour of the kids playing with them.*

bargain-bin 1. adjective Sold at an extremely low or reduced price; very inexpensive. The term comes from a bin or some other container in a store or shop where very inexpensive items or those at greatly reduced prices are sold. *I found these great bargain-bin sneakers on the clearance rack at the shoe store.* **2.** adjective Of very poor or inferior quality; having very little or no value. *It's no wonder your bargain-bin phone has stopped working. If you want a phone that lasts, you have to pay the price for it.*

bargain for To prepare for or expect something. *This report has been more than I bargained for—I've been working on it for hours. They bargained for an easy flight but faced a lot of turbulence instead.*

bargain on To expect, anticipate, or plan on something or some situation. *I didn't bargain on having to look after my daughter's children when I retired. I'm bargaining on having enough money saved by the end of the year to buy a brand new sports car.*

bargaining chip Something used during a negotiation that provides one party leverage over another party. *The company hoped that its generous benefits package would be the bargaining chip it needed to acquire and retain new talent.*

bargaining counter Something used during a negotiation that provides

one party leverage over another party. Primarily heard in UK. *Joe's willingness to walk away from the deal proved to be an effective bargaining counter when it came to purchasing a new car.*

barge in on To abruptly and rudely interrupt or intrude on someone or something without warning. *My bedroom is a private place, you can't just barge in on me like that! John thought he'd found the door to the restroom, but he accidentally barged in on the board meeting instead.*

barge in(to) **1.** To abruptly and/or rudely interrupt or intrude on someone or something without warning. *My bedroom is a private place, you can't just barge in like that! John thought he'd found the door to the restroom, but he accidentally barged into the board meeting instead.* **2.** To collide with another person or thing. In this usage, "into" is always used. *She cut her forehead when she barged into the bookcase. I rounded the corner and nearly barged into Tara.*

bark at **1.** Literally, of a dog, to make a barking noise at something. *The dog is barking at something outside—can you please calm him down?* **2.** To yell at or speak severely to another person. *The science teacher barked at us for not doing our homework.*

bark at the moon To make appeals in vain. *Good luck talking to the principal, but I think you'll just be barking at the moon—I doubt you'll get a better grade.*

(one's) bark is worse than (one's) bite One's demeanor is worse than one's actual behavior. *Mr. Stewart may yell a lot, but his bark is worse than his bite—he's actually helped me carry my groceries many times.*

(one's) bark is worse than (one's) bite One's actions will not be nearly as severe as one's words imply. *Don't worry about John's threats. His bark is worse than his bite.*

bark up the wrong tree To attempt or pursue a futile course of action, often by making some kind of suggestion or request. *If you think I'll help you cheat, you're definitely barking up the wrong tree! I barked up the wrong tree when I applied to such good colleges with my average grades.*

a barking dog never bites One who regularly makes angry or threatening statements rarely acts upon them. *Mr. Stewart may yell a lot, but I doubt he'll do anything to you—a barking dog never bites.*

barking dogs seldom bite People who make themselves appear threatening rarely do any harm. A: *"I'm really scared to tell Mr. White that I haven't finished my project. You know how he yells."* B: *"Yeah, but barking dogs seldom bite. He'll get over it."*

Barkis is willin' A phrase emphasizing one's availability and/or openness to a situation. It refers to Mr. Barkis, a character in Charles Dickens' novel *David Copperfield*, who used the phrase to express his interest in marriage. A: *"Are you ready for the race today?"* B: *"Oh yeah! Barkis is willin'!"*

Barmecide feast That which pretends or is imagined to be extravagant, plentiful, or opulent, but which in reality is comprised of little or nothing; that which proves to be illusory or unreal. Taken from the name of a prince in *Arabian Nights* who offers a feast to a beggar but gives him only empty plates. *The money you make on the stock market can end up as a Barmecide feast: you think you're making millions of dollars, and then in the blink of an eye it is all gone.*

barmy on the crumpet Eccentric or weird. In this phrase, a "crumpet" (a muffinlike pastry) is synonymous with one's head, and "barmy" means "yeasty." *What do you think of John's strange behavior lately? I'm starting to wonder if he's a bit barmy on the crumpet.*

barn find Something of great value, usually a vintage automobile, that was discovered abandoned in some place that is unbecoming or unbecoming its value, as in a disused barn, shed, or the like. *Did you hear about that massive barn find outside of town? They discovered about 15 old cars, each of which was worth about \$40,000!*

barnburner Any thing, event, or occasion that is especially exciting, impressive, and/or successful. *I had so much fun at Jonathan's bachelor party last night; it was a real barnburner! The majority of the game was rather lackluster, but it was a barnburner in the final quarter.*

barrage of criticism A large amount of criticism, condemnation, or reproach. *The congressman faced a barrage of criticism for his remarks this morning.*

barred from See [bar from](#).

barrel along To move very quickly, perhaps in a turbulent or

uncontrolled manner. *The tour bus was just barreling along the highway when it suddenly hit the guardrail.*

barrel in(to) **1.** To enter someplace abruptly or aggressively, or force one's way into a place or thing. *He just barreled into the meeting with no warning. Don't barrel in here talking loudly—this is a church!* **2.** To collide with someone or something. *There's a dent in the garage door from when my son barreled into it with his bike. I rounded the corner and nearly barreled into Tara.*

barrel of fun A person or thing that is very enjoyable. This phrase is often used sarcastically. *Oh sure, our science teacher is a real barrel of fun, especially when he's the detention monitor. Carnivals are always a barrel of fun!*

barrel of laughs Fun, funny, and pleasant. Often used sarcastically to indicate that someone is unpleasant or not enjoyable to be around. A: *"Is Mr. Grant always cranky?"* B: *"Oh, yeah—he's a real barrel of laughs!"* *I always have so much fun when Katie's around—she's totally a barrel of laughs!*

barrel of monkeys A group that is having fun and enjoying themselves. Often used in the phrase "more fun than a barrel of monkeys." *I always have a great time when Katie's around—she's more fun than a barrel of monkeys!*

barrel out (of) To move quickly out of a particular location. *Once his cell phone rang, he barreled out of the meeting with no explanation. Someone's coming! We need to barrel out before we get caught!*

barrow boy A boy or man who sells fruit, vegetables, or other comestibles from a handcart (barrow) on the streets. Primarily heard in UK. *When spring arrives, you can hear the calls of barrow boys selling their goods along the avenues.*

barrow man **1.** A boy or man who sells goods (usually fruit, vegetables, or other comestibles) from a handcart (barrow) on the streets. Primarily heard in UK. *When spring arrives, you can hear the calls of barrow men selling their goods along the avenues.* **2.** obsolete A prison convict whose sentence is transportation (deportation to a penal colony, such as the Americas or Australia in the 18th and 19th centuries). The term refers to Woolwich prison bulk inmates whose primary labor was to haul dirt and bricks in wheelbarrows. Primarily heard in UK. *I was once a barrow man on the*

street, selling fruit to the people; but then I killed a man for money, and now I am a barrow man set for Australia.

barter away To swap or trade something, often for an item of lesser value. *I can't believe you bartered away your car in exchange for a few old records.*

barter for To swap or trade items with another person, rather than exchanging money. A noun can be used between "barter" and "for." *I bartered some old records for a futon, so now I have a place to sleep, at least. I'm going to try to barter for that antique chair. Should I offer my Tiffany lamp?*

barter off To relinquish ownership of an item by trading it to another person. A noun can be used between "barter" and "off." *I didn't need that old piece of junk, so I bartered it off. I can't believe you bartered off your car in exchange for a few old records.*

barter with To swap or trade items with another person, rather than exchanging money. *I bartered with some guy at the flea market for a futon, so now I have a place to sleep, at least. I don't have any cash right now—will you barter with me?*

base instinct A subconscious urge, behavior, or intuition directed by primeval, animalistic, self-serving, and/or ignoble motivations. *Greed and selfishness are unfortunately two of the base instincts ingrained in the human psyche. Though he is an upstanding citizen, when he drinks, he unfortunately succumbs to his base instincts.*

base motive Motivation for some action or actions that is guided by selfishness or moral depravity. *It is clear now that his decision to marry into her wealthy family was led purely by base motives. I don't believe the defendant had any base motives in this case. I think she was well-intentioned but naïve about the repercussions of her actions.*

base on balls In baseball, the term used when a batter reaches first base after taking four pitches outside the strike zone (known as "balls"). A: "Oh, Robertson's on first?" B: "Yeah, base on balls."

base (one's) opinion on To found or root one's view of something or someone on a particular idea or occurrence. *Unfortunately, I think she based her opinion of me entirely on one wild night out together. I'm basing my*

opinion on the facts, and nothing else.

base over apex Literally, bottom over top, as in the way one might stumble or fall; head over heels. *The ice on the paths is so dangerous because you can't always see it. Just yesterday, I slipped and went completely base over apex!*

base (up)on To found or root something on a particular idea or occurrence. A noun can be used between "base" and "on" or "upon." *My love of science is based upon an interest in experimentation. Unfortunately, she has a low opinion of me. I think she based it on our first meeting, which didn't go well.*

basement battler In sports, a team that is ranked in a lower division (known as the relegation or "drop" zone) of a given league, and that competes against similarly ranked teams to try and advance into a higher division. Primarily heard in UK. *They face another fierce basement battler in this week's match, and a lot is at stake for both teams.*

bash around To mistreat something or someone; to treat forcefully or roughly. A noun can be used between "bash" and "around." *Please be careful not to bash my phone around when you borrow it. If I see my neighbor bashing around his pets, I will call the police.*

bash in To strike and dent or damage something. *That accident bashed in the door of my car. The vandals bashed in the door and then spray painted it.*

bash (someone's) brains in To strike or assault someone violently and severely, typically on the head, such that it may cause the person severe injury or death. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *I warned her that I was going to bash her brains in if she didn't stop insulting me. They left him to die after nearly bashing his brains in.*

bash (something) against To smack something against another surface. *Billy went to the nurse after he bashed his head against the low ceiling in the art studio. He bashed his guitar against the amp and it splintered apart.*

bash the bishop vulgar slang To masturbate. A term only applied to men. A: "Why is he all embarrassed today?" B: "Oh, his crush walked in on him bashing the bishop. How horrifying is that?"

bash up To strike and dent or damage something. *That shopping cart*

really bashed up the door of my car.

basic slang Describing one who likes stereotypically trendy things. Primarily heard in US. *I'm not trying to be basic, I just love going to Starbucks.*

basic bitch rude slang One who likes stereotypically trendy things. Primarily heard in US. *I'm not a basic bitch, I just love going to Starbucks, OK?*

basic decency Common, everyday courtesy, respect, and politeness that is expected and assumed by social convention. *Please have the basic decency to at least consult me before you make some extravagant purchase. It is an assumed basic decency that you should help someone if they are in distress.*

bask in **1.** To bathe oneself in sunlight. *I love laying on the beach and basking in the sunlight.* **2.** By extension, to revel in something pleasant or enjoyable. *She's still basking in the favorable reviews of her performance in the play.*

basket case **1.** Someone who is viewed as emotionally unstable and unable to function in normal situations. *Sarah was so nervous on her first day of high school that she burst into tears after walking into the wrong classroom. Her classmates looked at her like she was a complete basket case.* **2.** A country, business, or other entity that is facing economic strife. *If the unemployment rate doesn't decrease soon, the country is going to become a financial basket case.*

basket house A bar, café, or other public venue where musicians perform and are paid only by the collection of money from the audience in a basket or similar receptacle. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *Many of the most famous musicians began their careers eking out a living in basket houses around Greenwich Village in New York City.*

bass-ackward Opposite or contrary to what is expected, completely disordered or disarranged, or that which is done incompetently. A euphemistic rearranging of "ass-backward," meaning the same. *That's the last time I let you fix the electrical work by yourself. You've wired it all bass-ackward! I must not be completely awake yet, I just put my pants on bass-ackward!*

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disordered or disarranged, or that which is done incompetently. A euphemistic rearranging of "ass-backwards" (meaning the same) to emphasize the disorder at play. *That's the last time I let you fix the electrical work by yourself. You've wired it all bass-ackwards! I must not be completely awake yet, I just put my pants on bass-ackwards!*

bastardly gullion obsolete An extremely vile, despicable, and/or worthless person; a person of low birth or esteem; the bastard son of a bastard. "Guillion," a dialectical variation of "cullion," is an archaic term for a contemptible, mean-spirited, or vulgar person; "bastardly" is used to further emphasize this. *The scoundrel, the bastardly gullion! He has robbed us of all we own, and after we had the decency of giving him shelter for a night!*

bat a thousand **1.** In baseball, to get a hit every time one is at bat (resulting in a batting average of 1.000). *The slugger is still batting a thousand after a record eight at-bats.* **2.** By extension, to be successful in an endeavor or in multiple areas of one's life. *I'm really batting a thousand this week—I got an A on my exam, I got the lead in the school play, and I won the poetry contest!*

bat an eye To display a subtle emotional reaction, such as consternation, annoyance, sadness, joy, etc. Generally used in the negative to denote that the person in question did not display even a hint of an emotional response. *Mary didn't even bat an eye when I told her I was moving out. That guy is dangerous. I heard he killed a man without batting an eye.*

bat an eyelash To display a subtle emotional reaction, such as consternation, annoyance, sadness, joy, etc. Generally used in the negative to denote that the person in question did not display even a hint of an emotional response. *Mary didn't even bat an eyelash when I told her I was moving out. That guy is dangerous. I heard he killed a man without batting an eyelash.*

bat an eyelid To display a subtle emotional reaction, such as consternation, annoyance, sadness, joy, etc. Generally used in the negative to denote that the person in question did not display even a hint of an emotional response. *Mary didn't even bat an eyelid when I told her I was moving out. That guy is dangerous. I heard he killed a man without batting an eyelid.*

bat around **1.** To push an object around playfully. *The cat has been batting around that toy for at least an hour.* **2.** To strike repeatedly. *If I see my neighbor batting around his pets, I will call the police. I was small in high*

school, so I got batted around a bit, but I eventually learned to stand up for myself. **3.** To exchange and contemplate ideas or suggestions. *We did bat around other ideas, but that's the slogan we liked the best.* **4.** To wander aimlessly. *I doubt he has a job—he's been batting around out West for a while.* **5.** In baseball, to reach a team's first batter again in a single inning (because all of the team's batters have already batted in the inning). A: *"It's still the top of the third inning?"* B: *"Yeah, the Cubs have batted around."*

bat five hundred To be correct or successful around half of the time. Taken from baseball terminology, referring to the average times a player makes a hit when at bat (i.e. the batting average). One hit for every two at-bats is a .500 batting average. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *That math exam didn't go so well, I only batted five hundred or so. The market is so hit and miss at the moment, you can only really expect to be batting five hundred at best.*

bat for both sides **1.** To play for or support two opposing sides in a given contest or debate. Refers to cricket and baseball terminology, meaning to be a batter for both teams during a game. *Many feel that the congressional candidate is trying to bat for both sides in the debate on tax reform. We didn't have enough kids to make two full teams, so I ended up having to bat for both sides.* **2.** To be attracted to or have sexual relations with both males and females; a euphemism for being bisexual. *Jim is currently dating Steve, but I know that he bats for both sides.*

bat for the other side **1.** To play for or support, either secretly or openly, the opposing side in a given contest or debate. Refers to cricket and baseball terminology, meaning to be a batter for the other team during a game. *While the senator continues to publicly denounce the proposed tax law, many feel that he is really batting for the other side.* **2.** To be attracted to or have sexual relations with people of the same sex; a euphemism for being homosexual. *I asked Simone out on a date, but it turns out that she bats for the other side.*

bat for the other team **1.** To play for or support, either secretly or openly, the opposing side in a given contest or debate. Refers to cricket and baseball terminology, meaning to be a batter for the other team during a game. *While the senator continues to publicly denounce the proposed tax law, many feel that he is really batting for the other team.* **2.** To be attracted to or have sexual relations with people of the same sex; a euphemism for

being homosexual. *I asked Simone out on a date, but it turns out that she bats for the other team.*

bat (one's) eyelashes To flirt with or feign romantic interest in someone, either by literally fluttering one's eyelashes or merely in general. Usually, but not exclusively, refers to women. *She kept batting her eyelashes at me each time I talked to her, so I'm thinking of asking her out on a date. I like to bat my eyelashes at bartenders to see if I can get a drink or two for free.*

bat (one's) eyes To flirt with or feign romantic interest in someone, either by literally fluttering one's eyelashes or merely in general. Usually, but not exclusively, refers to women. *She kept batting her eyes at me each time I talked to her, so I'm thinking of asking her out on a date. I like to bat my eyes at bartenders to see if I can get a drink or two for free.*

bat the breeze To chat or converse aimlessly or casually, without any serious topic of conversation. *Customers always want to bat the breeze with me in the store before they buy something. I just batted the breeze with John for a while when he passed me on the street.*

bathe in **1.** Literally, to wash a person or thing in something. In this usage, a noun is used between "bathe" and "in." *I have such fond memories of bathing my newborn daughter in our kitchen sink. If you burned your fingers, bathe them in cold water.* **2.** To cover with a substance, typically an intangible one (such as light). *When we turned on our Christmas lights, our house was bathed in bright colors. I love laying on the beach and bathing in the sunlight.*

bathtub gin Any alcoholic drink that is made by an amateur at home or in makeshift conditions. Refers to the use of bathtubs in creating illegal alcohol (most often gin, hence the name) during the prohibition years in the US. *This stuff is strong, but it tastes like bathtub gin!*

bats in the belfry See [have bats in the belfry](#).

batshit rude slang Unreasonably or uncontrollably wild, irrational, or insane. *At first I liked his manic energy, but after a few dates I've come to realize that he's just completely batshit!*

batshit crazy rude slang Unreasonably or uncontrollably wild, irrational, or insane. *At first I liked his manic energy, but after a few dates I've come*

realize that he's just batshit crazy!

batten down the hatches To prepare for a challenging situation. While this originated as a nautical phrase, it is now used for any sort of imminent problem. *There's a tornado coming—batten down the hatches! My mother-in-law is coming to town this weekend, so I better batten down the hatches.*

batter down To remove or destroy a particular structure. A noun can be used between "batter" and "down." *Which wall will the construction crew batter down?*

batter up 1. verb To harm or damage someone or something. A noun or pronoun can be used between "batter" and "up." *That accident battered up the door of my car. I think that kid will listen to us if we batter him up a bit and scare him.* 2. noun An expression used to summon the next batter to home plate in a baseball game. *Let's get this game started. Batter up!*

battered and bruised See [bruised and battered](#).

batting on a losing wicket See [be \(batting\) on a losing wicket](#).

batting on a sticky wicket In the midst of or dealing with a particularly awkward or difficult situation or circumstance. Refers to the pitch, called a "wicket," used in the game of cricket and the difficulty of playing on one after it has been wetted with rain. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *I found myself batting on a sticky wicket when the boss saw me kissing his daughter at the cinema. I'll be batting on a sticky wicket if I arrive at the train station and don't have enough money for the tickets!*

battle against 1. To compete with an opponent in an intense way. *We've been battling against enemy soldiers for days, and still they refuse to retreat. Those two teams battled against each other in a brutal seven-game playoff series.* 2. To try to overcome something, such as a problem, issue, or illness. *Aunt Margaret has been battling against cancer disease for a while now. As women, we had to battle against sexism in order join the city council.*

battle cry 1. A shout or chant issued by soldiers, especially when charging into battle. *Let the enemy hear our battle cry from miles away; let them fear us from afar.* 2. A particular slogan, chant, or motto used by a group or its proponents to generate enthusiasm and support. *"No New Taxes" has become the new congressional candidate's battle cry for this election.*

The stadium shook with the battle cry of the team's home fans.

battle for To fight or compete to win or gain control of something. *The soldiers have been battling for control of the border for days now. Paula and I are currently battling for a big promotion.*

a battle of nerves Psychological warfare used to wear down an adversary's resolve through fear tactics. *Election cycles have become a battle of nerves as both parties continually try to scare the voters into electing their representative.*

battle of the bulge slang The struggle to lose weight and/or stay slim. The phrase is a humorous reference to the World War II battle of the same name. *The battle of the bulge keeps me going to the gym.*

a battle of wills A competition in which opposing sides are unrelenting in their attempts to achieve a particular outcome. *Each refusing to compromise, the husband and wife entered into a battle of wills as they attempted to negotiate their divorce settlement.*

a battle of wits A competition in which opponents attempt to gain victory or an advantage over each other using their intelligence. *The two young geniuses entered into a battle of wits as they competed for first place in the national trivia championship. As each candidate tried to defend his stance on the hot-button issue, a battle of wits began as they each produced seemingly endless lists of statistics to support their views.*

a battle royal 1. A fight in which more than two participants are involved and the last person to survive is declared the winner. *The men were eager to see who would be declared the wrestling champion at the end of the battle royal.* 2. A heated argument. *Things got pretty heated between the union and the school board at the meeting last night. It was quite the battle royal!*

battle (something) out To struggle against an opponent for something. *Those two teams really battled it out in an intense playoff series. My agent and the movie studio are battling out the terms of my contract now.*

bawl (one's) eyes out To sob or weep loudly, uncontrollably, and for a long period of time. *After we broke up, I just lay on my bed and bawled my eyes out.*

bawl out 1. To scold someone vehemently. A person's name or a pronoun

can be used between "bawl" and "out." *The teacher bawled us out when she caught us cheating on the test. I was bawled out by my mother for staying out past curfew.* 2. To speak loudly. *Be sure to bawl out the weekly announcements so everyone in the auditorium can hear them.*

bay at To howl at. A: "What's that noise?" B: "Just some coyotes baying at the moon."

bay for blood To seek punishment for a person or group. *My co-workers have been baying for blood ever since they found out that I lied about my credentials on my resume.*

BBC English Formal, proper English, as would be spoken on the BBC (the British Broadcasting Corporation). *Just so you know, the professor talks in that BBC English, so you might have a hard time understanding him. And he might not get your slang either.*

be 10 a penny See [be ten a penny](#).

be 6 feet under See [be six feet under](#).

be a barrel of laughs To be fun, funny, and pleasant. Often used sarcastically to indicate that someone is unpleasant or not enjoyable to be around. A: "Is Mr. Grant always cranky?" B: "Oh, yeah—he's a real barrel of laughs!" *I always have so much fun when Katie's around—she's a barrel of laughs!*

be a bed of nails To be painful, challenging, or unpleasant. *This project is a bed of nails—it's just so tedious. My family members are constantly arguing, so spending time with them can be a bed of nails.*

be a bird in a gilded cage See [be \(like\) a bird in a gilded cage](#).

be a bit much To be unnecessarily excessive. *Julie's mother thought that it was a bit much to expect the students to stay at school until 10 o'clock for theater practice.*

be (a bit) on the expensive side To be somewhat expensive. This intentionally vague phrase highlights the speaker's awareness of or hesitation about the cost of something. *That car service is a bit on the expensive side. Can't we just take a taxi?*

be (a bit) on the heavy side To be somewhat heavy. This intentionally vague phrase highlights the speaker's awareness of or hesitation

about the weight of something or someone. *Be careful moving that bookshelf, guys—it's on the heavy side! Emma used to be a bit on the heavy side, but she's lost a lot of weight since she started going to the gym regularly.*

be (a bit) on the large side To be somewhat large. This intentionally vague phrase highlights the speaker's awareness of or hesitation about the size of something. *That table is a bit on the large side for our dining room, don't you think?*

be a blessing in disguise To result in an unforeseen positive outcome. *Running late for work turned out to be a blessing in disguise. I would have been in the middle of that big multi-car pileup had I left the house on time.*

be a bundle of laughs To be fun, funny, and pleasant. Often used sarcastically to indicate that someone is unpleasant or not enjoyable to be around. A: *"Is Mr. Grant always cranky?"* B: *"Oh, yeah—he's a real bundle of laughs!"* *I always have so much fun when Katie's around—she's a bundle of laughs!*

be a bundle of nerves To be very nervous, anxious, or uneasy. *I was a bundle of nerves before the driving test started. She was a bundle of nerves as she took the stage to sing.*

be a card-carrying member (of something) To be a certified member of a particular group or organization; to have paid the necessary dues or fees to be part of a group. *I never knew until he was on his deathbed that my father was a card-carrying member of the Freemasons. You'll have to be a card-carrying member of the union before we can give you any regular shifts on the docks.*

be a chapter of accidents To be characterized by multiple problems or mishaps. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *Despite all of our planning, the birthday party was a chapter of accidents.*

be a closed book To be difficult to know or understand. *She's such a private person that I don't know much about her. I guess she's a closed book. I'm a scientist, so art will always be a closed book to me.*

be a crock of shit rude slang To be false or ridiculous. *He never came, so his promise to help us was a crock of shit! Oh, that rumor is a crock of shit. Can you believe that penalty call? What a crock of shit!*

be a cut above To be noticeably superior to others within the same

category. *With his vast experience and charming personality, it was clear to see that Gary was a cut above the rest of the candidates who interviewed for the sales position.*

be a dab hand To be skilled in a particular area. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *Amanda can fix that hole in your blouse—she's a dab hand at sewing.*

be a dead cert slang To be likely to do a certain thing or to succeed in a particular area. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *Sally is the most qualified candidate by far, so she's a dead cert for the promotion.*

be a dead loss slang To be unsuccessful in a certain area or pursuit. *I thought I could reconcile with my mother, but our phone call was a dead loss. My drawing is a mess—I'm a dead loss as an artist. Don't put him on our team, he's a dead loss at basketball!*

be a dead ringer for To bear a strong resemblance to someone or something else. *People sometimes ask Susie for her autograph because she is a dead ringer for Kate Winslet.*

be a different kettle of fish To be entirely different in scope or description from someone or something that was just being discussed. *Steve: "So you like your first two roommates, but what about your third one?" Joe: "William? Oh, he's a different kettle of fish altogether." I suppose we could start looking at buying a house now that our baby is on the way, but that's an entirely different kettle of fish!*

be a dime a dozen To be ubiquitous; to be so abundant or common as to hold little or no value. *In Los Angeles, waiters trying to become famous actors are a dime a dozen. That bird might be a rare sight where you come from, but around here they're a dime a dozen.*

be a far cry from To be vastly different from something else. *Living in the heart of New York City is a far cry from living in the rural countryside.*

be a fate worse than death To be a very unpleasant situation or experience. This phrase is usually used hyperbolically, especially when referring to some form of punishment. *It will be a fate worse than death if my parents catch me sneaking in after curfew. I appreciate Gina inviting me to go with her to the theater, but having to listen to those opera singers would be a fate worse than death.*

be a figment of (one's/the) imagination To be an imagined experience (especially after one has initially thought it to be real). *I thought I heard the sound of my front door opening last night but it turned out to be a figment of my imagination.*

be a fine figure of a (man or woman) To be physically attractive. *I'm too nervous to ask Miranda out on a date because she's such a fine figure of a woman. Now that he's been going to the gym regularly, Jeff is a fine figure of a man.*

be a force to be reckoned with To be strong, powerful, or difficult to defeat. *They say the young boxer is a force to be reckoned with, so I'm betting he'll win the match tonight. The attorney may look petite and meek, but she's a force to be reckoned with in the courtroom.*

be a (fully) paid-up member of something To be a certified member of a particular group or organization; to have paid the necessary dues or fees to be part of a group. *I never knew until he was on his deathbed that my father was a paid-up member of the Freemasons. You'll have to be a fully paid-up member of the union before we can give you any regular shifts on the docks.*

be a game of two halves sports cliché In football (soccer), to have one team outplay the other in the first half of the game, only to be outplayed themselves in the second half. Used especially in sports reporting and analysis. *In a stunning conclusion, Barcelona has overcome a four-goal deficit at half-time to defeat Real Madrid! It truly was a game of two halves.*

be a happy camper To be pleasant and in good spirits. *I'm a happy camper now that I've been promoted and am no longer an intern! He's not going to be a happy camper when he finds out you ate his leftovers.*

be a hard act to follow To be so interesting and/or impressive as to overshadow all the following acts. *She is such a talented singer that she'll be a hard act to follow in the talent show.*

be a howling success To be extremely or triumphantly successful. *For having such a limited budget, their play turned out to be a howling success. My business was a howling success in the 1980s and '90s, but the advent of the Internet rendered my services obsolete.*

be a huckleberry above a persimmon dated To be better than

average among similar things. Primarily heard in US. *I reckon that horse of yours is a huckleberry above a persimmon, but you've got to know how to ride it for it to be of any use to you.*

be a huckleberry above (one's) persimmon dated To be somewhat or slightly beyond one's abilities or talents. Primarily heard in US. *I'd like to help you fellas out, but I'm afraid herding cattle is a huckleberry above my persimmon.*

be a huckleberry over (one's) persimmon dated To be somewhat or slightly beyond one's abilities or talents. Primarily heard in US. *I'd like to help you fellas out, but I'm afraid herding cattle is a huckleberry over my persimmon.*

be a laugh a minute To be very funny. The phrase can also be used sarcastically to describe something that is not funny. *Joe's standup comedy routine is a laugh a minute—the people in the audience barely have time to catch their breath. Bob has been so morbid lately. Spending time with him is a laugh a minute.*

be a law unto (one)self To do whatever one desires and/or ignore rules and regulations. *If you need to delegate, I wouldn't ask Gina—she is a law unto herself, and it's hard to persuade her to do anything she's not interested in. How many times has Jason been arrested now? Geez, he sure is a law unto himself!*

be a licence to print money Of an activity, business model, or company, to yield very high profits but require little or no effort to do so. *All these hefty parking fees and fines are just a licence to print money for the city. These trashy gossip magazines are of such low quality, yet they always fly off the shelves. The whole racket is a licence to print money.*

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be (a little) slow on the uptake To struggle to understand something. This phrase is often used as a euphemism for stupidity. *Joe's a nice kid, but tutoring him is a challenge because he's a little slow on the*

uptake, you know? That group is slow on the uptake, so I don't know if they'll ever understand how to use this fancy new printer.

be a load off (one's) mind To be a relief due after having shared what one is thinking or feeling with others, or upon no longer having a particular problem. *I finally completed my tax return for this year. That's a load off my mind! Talking over my problem with my close friend was a load off my mind.*

be a long shot To be very risky, uncertain, or unlikely to succeed. (Of an attempt, proposition, or guess.) *I know this is a long shot, but would you like to go out on a date with me sometime? The proposed tax law is a bit of a long shot from Democrats, as it is unlikely to be met with much support by the Republicans in Congress.*

be a loud mouth To have a tendency or habit of speaking incessantly, indiscreetly, and/or in a noisy, boastful manner. *I can't stand Terry's new husband—he's such a loud mouth when he drinks! If I had known you were such a loud mouth, I'd have never shared my secret with you!*

be a man An imperative to act like a man or as a man should, stereotypically meaning to be strong, unemotional, strong-willed, authoritative, or stoical, or to take responsibility for one's actions, words, or beliefs. *Stop crying over losing your cat and be a man already! You need to be a man and accept the punishment coming to you.*

be a matter of opinion To be a topic that is subject to one's preferences, as opposed to a verifiable fact. *I know it's a matter of opinion, but I think that living in the city is more enjoyable than living in the suburbs.*

be a matter of record To be a recorded or proven fact. *His tardiness is a matter of record now, so it will definitely affect his performance review.*

be a mixed blessing To have both positive and negative results. *My new promotion will be a mixed blessing for my family because I'll get a substantial raise, but I'll have to work longer hours too.*

be a nasty piece of work To be a difficult or disagreeable person or thing. *His secretary is a nasty piece of work, always snapping at people for no reason. I know you're not excited about this family vacation, but please, don't be a nasty piece of work the whole time. This virus is a nasty piece of work. It's already infected millions of users.*

be a one-way street To be a situation, agreement, or relationship in which only one side or party is benefitting or has any power, influence, or control. *I don't know why you think you always get to have your way; this relationship isn't a one-way street, after all! I'm starting to think that this partnership with the government is a one-way street. They keep putting demands on us, but they've given us very little support in return.*

be a pain in the arse rude slang To be an especially irritating, aggravating, or obnoxious person, thing, or situation. Primarily heard in UK. *You know, Jack, you may be my friend, but you can be a real pain in the arse sometimes! This calculus homework is a real pain in the arse. It's not that I don't understand it, it's just so tedious!*

be a pain in the neck rude slang To be an annoying person, or an annoying or inconvenient thing or situation; to be something that causes aggravation. *You know, Jack, you may be my friend, but you can be a real pain in the neck sometimes! This calculus homework is a real pain in the neck. It's not that I don't understand it, it's just so tedious!*

be a patch on See [be \(not\) a patch on](#).

be a piece of cake To be a very easy task or accomplishment. *I thought I was going to fail the test, but it turned out to be a piece of cake!*

be a pretty sight See [be \(not\) a pretty sight](#).

be a recipe for (something) To be likely to cause a particular thing to happen. *Studying all night before your final exam is a recipe for disaster. Eating healthy food and exercising regularly is a recipe for longevity.*

be a roaring success To be extremely or triumphantly successful. *For having such a limited budget, their play turned out to be a roaring success. My business was a roaring success in the 1980s and '90s, but the advent of the Internet rendered my services obsolete.*

be a rough trot To be an especially difficult period or series of misfortune(s) or hardship(s). Primarily heard in Australia, New Zealand. *It's certainly been a rough trot for the beleaguered celebrity family, as news of yet another scandal started hitting the media outlets this afternoon. Jake's chemotherapy was a really rough trot for a while there, but he seems to be handling it much better recently.*

be a sight for sore eyes To be someone or something that one is

excited or overjoyed to see, often after a long absence or separation. *Charlie, I can't believe you're back in town! Get over here, you're a sight for sore eyes! I'm so tired after being on tour. My bed is a sight for sore eyes.*

be a sign of the times To be regarded, usually negatively, as emblematic of the current time period. *Nobody looks up from their mobile phones anymore. I guess it's a sign of the times.*

be a slave to (something) To be unduly influenced by or care too much about something; to spend too much or time or energy on something. *Jeremy is a total slave to fashion. He can't leave the house without making sure every part of his outfit matches perfectly. I wish Sarah would relax a bit more over the weekend. She's a total slave to her job.*

be a (something) in the making To be likely to become a particular thing. *She's the best actress in the school, so I think she's a Hollywood star in the making. The fact that those reports aren't ready yet is a disaster in the making.*

be a (something) through and through To be a particular thing to the utmost degree. *Oh, she's French through and through—she would never leave her country. I'm a student through and through, which is why I'm now pursuing a doctorate.*

be a (something) to (one's) fingertips To be a particular thing to the utmost degree. *Oh, I'm a student to my fingertips—that's why I'm now pursuing a doctorate.*

be a sure thing To be certain to happen; to be a probable outcome. *It's a sure thing that they'll hire you—I just confirmed it with the recruiter. She's the most popular candidate, so it's a sure thing that she'll become student council president. Trust me, when it comes to gambling, there's no sure thing.*

be a tall order To be a difficult task to complete or accomplish. *The boss wants me to compile 300 pages of data today, which is a tall order. Baking hundreds of cupcakes in one night is a tall order.*

be a thing of the past To be outdated. *These days, floppy disks are a thing of the past. I wonder when smartphones will be a thing of the past.*

be a thorn in (one's) flesh To be a constant or persistent cause of annoyance, frustration, or trouble. *My professor was an environmental activist when he was younger, and apparently he's been quite a thorn in the*

oil companies' flesh ever since. This lawsuit is a thorn in my flesh. Let's just settle out of court.

be a thorn in (someone's) side To be a constant or persistent cause of annoyance, frustration, or trouble. *My professor was an environmental activist when he was younger, and, apparently, he was quite a thorn in the oil companies' sides at the time.*

be a waste of space slang To be blatantly unhelpful or useless. This phrase is often applied to people as a derogatory term. *Boy, he's a waste of space, standing around while the rest of us all move furniture. The old monitor doesn't work anymore, so at this point it's just a waste of space. Let's trash it.*

be a weight off (one's) shoulders To be a relief after having shared what one is thinking or feeling with others, or upon no longer having a particular problem. *I finally completed my tax return for this year. That's a weight off my shoulders! Talking over my problem with my close friend was a weight off my shoulders.*

be a whole other kettle of fish To be entirely different in scope or description from someone or something that was just being discussed. *Steve: "So you like your first two roommates, but what about your third one?" Joe: "William? Oh, he's a whole other kettle of fish." I suppose we could start looking at buying a house now that our baby is on the way, but that's a whole other kettle of fish!*

be (a/the) model of To be an ideal example or version of something. *Julie is the model of academic excellence, so she will definitely be this year's valedictorian. He's a model of agility. You won't find a more athletic guy.*

be above board To be legitimate, honest, and/or legal. *I expected that big company to try to take advantage of us, but so far all of their dealings with us have been above board. I think these documents are above board, Tom—go ahead and process them.*

be absorbed by (something) To have all of one's attention, interest, or identity completely dominated by or engrossed in something. *I was so absorbed by the movie that I didn't even notice you coming in! He is so absorbed by his work that he doesn't have enough time for his family anymore.*

be afraid of (one's) (own) shadow To be easily or constantly spooked, nervous, timid, afraid, or fearfully suspicious. *I can't say I have much faith in Johnny helping us on this expedition—that boy's afraid of his own shadow! You can't live life being afraid of your shadow—you need to get out into the world and taste adventure!*

be after her scalp See [be out for/after \(someone's\) scalp](#).

be after (one's) blood To seek revenge on another person. *He hit my classic car, so I'm after his blood now.*

be ahead of the game 1. To be prepared for something ahead of schedule. *For once, we got our Christmas decorations up right after Thanksgiving, so we're ahead of the game.* 2. To learn something before other people do. *I was ahead of the game because I heard that Greg would be promoted before it actually happened.*

be ahead of the pack To outshine one's competition in a particular area. *The boss singled me out for praise at this week's department meeting, so I'm ahead of the pack now. My sister was ahead of the pack during the entire race.*

be alive and kicking To be active and healthy. A: "How are you doing after your surgery?" B: "I'm alive and kicking!" *I thought for sure that old dog wouldn't survive the winter, but he's alive and kicking!*

be alive and well 1. To be alive, especially after having been in danger or thought to be in danger. *The search party was overjoyed to find that all of the stranded hikers were alive and well after enduring the cold for eight days.* 2. To be active and healthy. *I knew Jane's dad was very sick, so I'm thrilled to hear that he's alive and well.* 3. Of a concept or practice, to be flourishing despite a perception of decline elsewhere. *I'm glad to see chivalry is alive and well—thank you for holding the door for me. Electronic music is huge now, but guitar-driven rock is still alive and well.*

be alive with To be full of or covered with something. *At night, the field is alive with fireflies. The court was alive with jubilant fans after the basketball team's big win.*

be-all and end-all See [\(not\) the be-all and end-all](#).

be all beer and skittles See [be \(not\) all beer and skittles](#).



be all brawn and no brain(s) To have great power or physical strength but lack mental acuity or intelligence. *He may have been a good football player in high school, but he was all brawn and no brains, so he didn't get into any colleges.*

be all dressed up and nowhere to go To be ready for an event or occasion that has since been canceled. *Jimmy canceled our date tonight, so I'm all dressed up and nowhere to go. Jill is all dressed up and nowhere to go because the friend she was supposed to meet got sick.*

be all ears To be ready and eager to hear what one has to say. *Tell me about your first day at the new job—I'm all ears!*

be all eyes To watch something intently. *The children were all eyes when the magician started performing.*

be all fingers and thumbs To be clumsy with one's hands. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *Tom could never be a surgeon—he's all fingers and thumbs. Can you sew this button on for me? I'm all fingers and thumbs.*

be (all) for (someone or something) To support a person, group, or effort. *If management is considering adding a gym to the building, I'm all for it! I respect your opinion, but I'm for the other candidate.*

be all fun and games See [be \(not\) all fun and games](#).

be all fur coat and no knickers To be attractive on the surface but lack substance underneath. *I thought David and I would really get along well, but we had nothing to talk about at dinner—he's all fur coat and no knickers. Our new boss sounded like she had a lot of good ideas for the department, but it turns out she's all fur coat and no knickers.*

be all heart **1.** To be very considerate and generous. *Of course Jenna gave you her last dollar—she's all heart.* **2.** Of an athlete, to be especially gritty and courageous, perhaps to make up for talent. *Peter may not be a star, but he's all heart and always willing to play against the other teams' best players.*

be all in **1.** To be fully committed to a task or endeavor; to give or be prepared to give all of one's energy or resources toward something. *Just so you know, I'm all in if you're serious about taking that cross-country trip next week.* **2.** To be completely exhausted, fatigued, or worn out. *I was all in after only the first mile of the race; I could barely even walk for the rest of it!*

be all in a day's work To be normal and ordinary. This phrase is often used humorously to minimize an aspect of one's job that is particularly good or bad. *Oh, solving technological crises is all in a day's work for those of us in IT. I can't believe I had to unclog a toilet today, but it's all in a day's work, I guess. Dealing with screaming kids is all in a day's work when you're a pediatrician.*

be all in (one's/the) mind To exist solely in one's thoughts, rather than in reality. *Don't tell me that my worries are all in my mind—you know this can be a dangerous area. Your presentation sounded great, honestly. Your fears are all in the mind.*

be all moonlight and roses See [be \(not\) all moonlight and roses](#).

be all mouth To be full of boastful, arrogant, or shallow talk without the ability to deliver on such claims *He talks a big game, but when it actually comes to asking out a woman, he's all mouth.*

be (all) of a piece To share the same characteristics as those of the same kind. *I don't why you're surprised about that outrageous new bill—politicians are all of a piece.*

be (all) part of life's rich pageant A phrase that encourages acceptance of the unenjoyable things that happen in life. *Nobody likes dealing with car problems, but they're just part of life's rich pageant, unfortunately. The tantrums of toddlerhood are all part of life's rich pageant.*

be (all) part of life's rich tapestry A phrase that encourages acceptance of the unenjoyable things that happen in life. *Nobody likes dealing with car problems, but they're just part of life's rich tapestry, unfortunately. The tantrums of toddlerhood are all part of life's rich tapestry.*

be (all) shot to hell 1. slang To be in poor condition. *After dropping my phone so many times, the screen is all shot to hell. I'm sorry, what's your name again? My memory is shot to hell anymore.* 2. slang To have failed or gone awry, as of an idea or plan. *We really need to regroup now that our proposal is all shot to hell after the meeting with the CEO.*

be (all) skin and bone(s) To be extremely thin. *I know the merger has been stressful, but have you been eating? Because you're skin and bone these days. I was all skin and bones after I returned from my service trip, so my mom insisted on making me home-cooked meals for a month.*

be all smiles To be visibly happy or cheerful (sometimes to hide inner turmoil). *When I saw Allison today, she was all smiles. I had no idea that her grandmother died. My sweet little daughter has the best disposition—she's all smiles all the time!*

be all sweetness and light To be kind and agreeable. *Susan's all sweetness and light, I'm sure she's not mad at you.*

be all talk (and no action) To talk a lot about something that one has not actually done or will not actually do. *She may brag about donating money to the school, but I know she's all talk and no action. Oh, he's all talk—he's never worked a day in his life!*

be all that To be remarkably adept, intelligent, good-looking, or successful. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *I don't need to see his test results, I already know he's all that!*

be all (the) one (to someone) To make no difference (to someone) one way or another; to be unimportant (to someone) what happens. *I'd actually prefer to continue working on a freelance basis, if it's all one to you. It's only a game, after all, so it's all the one whether we win or lose.*

be all the rage slang Of a thing or trend, to be very popular. *Disco music was all the rage in the 1970s. I can't believe that stupid dance is all the rage right now.*

be all the worse for wear To be shabby or beaten up from use. People sometimes use this phrase to describe themselves after enduring something emotionally or physically taxing. *The books that were in my bag when I got caught in the downpour are all the worse for wear now. I'm afraid they might fall apart altogether! I'm all the worse for wear, thanks to the nights of sleep deprivation with a newborn.*

be all things to all men To be liked or appreciated by everyone (usually after overt efforts to please them). The phrase likely originated in the Bible. *I know you want your students to like you, but you have to discipline them when they misbehave. You can't be all things to all men. I don't trust that candidate—he is trying to be all things to all men and still hasn't committed to a clear course of action.*

be all thumbs To be uncoordinated or clumsy with one's hands. *My mother does beautiful calligraphy, but I'm all thumbs—I can barely hold the*

pen!

be all very well To be acceptable, with room for improvement. *It's all very well to go to the gym, but you need to change your diet too if you want to improve your overall health.*

be all wet **1.** Literally, to be soaked by water. *I'm all wet because I got caught in that thunderstorm without an umbrella. The dryer must be broken because my clothes are all wet.* **2.** To be totally wrong. *We need to come up with a new ad campaign because, based on these negative reactions, the old one was all wet.*

be along the lines of (something) To be approximately or imperfectly similar to something; to be very like something, but not quite the same. *Well, this sketch is along the lines of what I have in mind for the new kitchen, but there are a few tweaks you need to make before it's right.*

be an apology for To be a poor example of a certain thing. *That skinny kid is an apology for a linebacker. I gave you a low grade because the drivel you submitted was an apology for a real paper!*

be an easy touch To be easy to control or bend to one's wishes. *Julia is an easy touch—we can get her to help us with this prank.*

be an open book **1.** To be easy to understand or decipher. *I wish these legal contracts were an open book.* **2.** To act (or purport to act) honestly, with no secrets. *Ask me anything, I'm an open book. Adam says he's an open book, but I've seen him sneaking out of his house late at night.*

be another kettle of fish To be entirely different in scope or description from someone or something that was just being discussed. A: *"So you like your first two roommates, but what about your third one?"* B: *"William? Oh, he's another kettle of fish altogether."* *I suppose we should start looking at buying a house now that our baby is on the way, but that's another kettle of fish!*

be another matter To be a separate and very different situation, topic, idea, etc., that has a whole other set of difficulties or problems to consider or contend with. *It's all well and good wanting to help your fellow man, but inviting strangers off the street to come live with us is another matter entirely!*

be another of life's great mysteries To be difficult to understand

or decipher. This phrase is often humorously applied to unimportant things. *The living cannot truly understand death—it's another of life's great mysteries. Why dogs and cats hate each other is another of life's great mysteries.*

be another thing To be a separate and very different situation, topic, idea, etc., that has a whole other set of difficulties or problems to consider or contend with. *It's all well and good wanting to help your fellow man, but inviting strangers off the street to come live with us is another thing entirely!*

be anybody's guess To be uncertain or unknown. *Why dogs and cats hate each other is anybody's guess. No one has been able to determine why my daughter has been having nightmares—apparently, it's anybody's guess.*

be armed to the teeth To possess many weapons. *The city is armed to the teeth. Someone trying to commit a crime would probably get shot by the intended victim! They thought the criminal only had a knife, but he was armed to the teeth.*

be around **1.** To be present at or come to a certain place, usually specified by a particular time. *Sorry I can't make it out to see you today! Will you be around tomorrow? Thanks for taking care of my pets while I'm away! I'll be around to collect them on Monday.* **2.** To exist, be relevant, or have significance, usually specified by a particular period of time. *Yes, I'm still around after all these years. Printed books are just something humanity won't forget; they'll be around forever.* **3.** To socialize with or have close physical proximity to somebody. *I just feel safer when you're around. John is so pleasant to be around.*

be as American as apple pie To be exemplary or indicative of American life, interests, or ideals (often stereotypically so). *Baseball is as American as apple pie.*

be as as they come See [be as \(something\) as they come](#).

be as bald as a coot To be totally bald. *My father had long hair as a teen, but now he's as bald as a coot.*

be as black as is painted See [be \(not\) as black as \(someone/something\) is painted](#).

be (as) blind as a bat **1.** slang To be unable to see at all. *After neglecting his vision for years, my grandfather became blind as a bat, unable*

to even see shadows. **2.** slang To have poor vision. *I've worn glasses for 20 years, so I'm as blind as a bat now. That's not a cat, it's a trashcan! Geez, you really are blind as a bat!* **3.** slang To be oblivious to something. *Are you blind as a bat? Those two have been flirting all afternoon!*

be as bright as a button To be intelligent and a quick-thinker. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *Ted's as bright as a button, so he'll find a solution to this problem. Of course Ellen is our valedictorian—she's as bright as a button.*

be as brown as a berry To have tanned skin due to sun exposure. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *She was as brown as a berry when she returned from her tropical vacation.*

be (as) busy as a bee To be very busy. *I'm currently choreographing three plays, so I'm as busy as a bee. Can we meet next week instead? I'm busy as a bee right now.*

be (as) clean as a whistle **1.** To be neat and tidy in appearance. *This house needs to be as clean as a whistle before my mother-in-law gets here.* **2.** To be well-behaved and not involved in illegal or questionable activities. *You can trust George, he's a good kid—as clean as a whistle. I don't have a criminal record, I'm clean as a whistle.*

be as clear as crystal To be easily visible and/or understandable. *I want the language in these legal contracts to be as clear as crystal so that there is no confusion. The sign is right there on the door—it's as clear as crystal.*

be as clear as day To be easily visible and/or understandable. *I wish these legal contracts were as clear as day so that there is no confusion. The sign is right there on the door—it's as clear as day.*

be as clear as mud To be difficult to see or understand. *I guess I need to call a lawyer because these legal contracts are as clear as mud.*

be (as) cold as ice **1.** To be very cold in temperature. *My feet are cold as ice after being outside for hours. I'm wearing three sweaters because it's as cold as ice in here!* **2.** To be distant or unfriendly in temperament. *Is Heather mad at me? She was as cold as ice when I tried to talk to her earlier.*

be as cool as a cucumber slang To be calm and composed, especially in times of stress. *I was petrified to take the stage, but Alice was as*

cool as a cucumber. Practicing meditation has helped me to be as cool as a cucumber in times of trouble.

be as cute as a button To be pleasing in appearance and/or temperament. This phrase is most often applied to children and females. *Your little girl is as cute as a button in that frilly dress. Katie is pretty and has such a sweet disposition—she's as cute as a button.*

be as daft as a brush slang To act in a strange or silly way. Primarily heard in UK. *Quit being as daft as a brush—it's too dangerous to play on this busy street!*

be as dead as a dodo To be outdated or unpopular. The "dodo" is a now-extinct bird. *Although popular in the 1970s, disco music is as dead as a dodo today.*

be (as) dead as a doornail **1.** To be no longer alive, for certain. (Doornails were hammered in a such a way that they could not be reused.) *I poked that squirrel with a stick and, yeah, it's as dead as a doornail.* **2.** To be totally defunct. *Oh, that idea from last week's meeting is dead as a doornail now that the CEO has vetoed it.*

be as deaf as a post To be unable to hear well or at all. *I hope grandpa wears his hearing aid to dinner tonight because he's as deaf as a post without it. After years of listening to loud rock music, I'm deaf as a post.*

be as dry as a bone To be completely dry. *Man, it is as dry as a bone out there today—not a bit of humidity in the air And if that floor is not as dry as a bone when you're done, make sure to put up the signs—we don't need anyone slipping out here!*

be as dull as dishwater To be very boring or unexciting. This phrase is often used to describe a person. *My date with Dave was not great—he is as dull as dishwater. I fell asleep during that movie because it was as dull as dishwater.*

be (as) easy as ABC To be extremely easy, simple, or intuitive; to require very little skill or effort. *After so many years as an accountant, doing taxes is as easy as ABC for me. Don't worry, after some lessons and a bit of practice, driving is as easy as A-B-C!*

be (as) easy as falling off (of) a log To be extremely easy, simple, or intuitive; to require very little skill or effort. *After so many years as an*

accountant, doing taxes is as easy falling off a log for me. Boy, that test was easy as falling off of a log!

be (as) easy as one-two-three To be extremely easy, simple, or intuitive; to require very little skill or effort. (Sometimes used with the numbers spelled out ("one-two-three") or written numerically ("123" or "1-2-3").) *After so many years as an accountant, doing taxes is as easy as one-two-three for me. Boy, that test was easy as 1-2-3!*

be (as) easy as pie To be extremely easy, simple, or intuitive; to require very little skill or effort. *After so many years as an accountant, doing taxes is as easy as pie for me. Boy, that test was easy as pie!*

be (as) easy as rolling off (of) a log To be extremely easy, simple, or intuitive; to require very little skill or effort. *After so many years as an accountant, doing taxes is as easy as rolling off a log for me. Boy, that test was easy as rolling off of a log!*

be as fit as a fiddle To be in good health. *Yes, I did have surgery a few months ago, but I'm as fit as a fiddle now. I just saw Eric recently, and he's as fit as a fiddle.*

be (as) flat as a pancake slang To be physically squashed or flattened. *I forgot that I had a muffin in my bag, and it's flat as a pancake now. My model of a volcano is as flat as a pancake now that you've sat on it!*

be (as) fresh as a daisy To be eager and enthusiastic, typically after some refreshing activity. *After getting some sleep, I was as fresh as a daisy. Now that I've showered, I'm fresh as a daisy!*

be as full as a boot slang To be very intoxicated. Primarily heard in Australia. *Do you remember last night at all? You were as full as a boot!*

be as gentle as a lamb To be pleasant, caring, and calm. *My rambunctious son is as gentle as a lamb with our cat. Mr. Stewart may seem crotchety, but he's as gentle as a lamb—he's actually helped me carry my groceries many times.*

be as good as dead To be in a position of great and irreversible danger or trouble, with the outcome of death being either figurative or literal. *I'm as good as dead after crashing my parents' car! You're as good as dead if you come around these parts of the neighborhood again.*

be as good as gold 1. To be obedient and well-behaved. *Sure, I'll baby-*

sit Cindy's kids tonight—they're as good as gold every time I watch them. 2. To be authentic and legitimate. According to the curator, this painting is as good as gold.

be as good as gone To be very nearly, inevitably, or for all intents and purposes lost, departed, defunct, or deceased. *After bungling that account last week, I'd say Jeff's job here is as good as gone. I'm afraid the cancer has spread so rapidly that the patient is as good as gone.*

be as good as new To be in good condition, sometimes after an act of restoration. *When I broke my foot, I was in a cast for six weeks, but now I'm as good as new. Look at this vintage comic book I found in the attic—it's as good as new! Once I sand this old chair, it will be as good as new.*

be as good as (one's) word To be reliable and truthful. Said of one who typically follows through on one's promises. *Tom is as good as his word—if he promised to help you move, then he'll be here.*

be (as) green as a gooseberry To be very young, immature, and/or inexperienced. *Are you sure he's fit to run your campaign? He's just out of college and still as green as a gooseberry!*

be as happy as a sandboy To be in very good spirits. It is possible that sandboys (boys who sold sand in Victorian England) were said to be so happy because they were paid in alcoholic beverages. Primarily heard in UK. *I was as happy as a sandboy when I found out that I'd gotten an A on my hardest exam.*

be as happy as Larry To be in very good spirits. The phrase's origin is unknown, but it may refer to Australian boxer Larry Foley. *I was as happy as Larry when I found out that I'd gotten an A on my hardest exam.*

be (as) hard as nails To be physically or mentally tough. *I'm scared of those bikers—they all look like they're hard as nails! Our aunt is as hard as nails, so we asked her to give the eulogy, knowing that she's the only one who could do it without crying.*

be as high as a kite 1. slang To be very intoxicated with drugs or alcohol. *Do you remember last night at all? You were as high as a kite!* 2. To be very happy. *I was as high as a kite when I found out that I'd gotten an A on my hardest exam.*

be as honest as the day is long To be very truthful and reliable.

Tom is as honest as the day is long—if he promised to help you move, then he'll be here. Kate would never cheat on an exam—she's as honest as the day is long.

be as keen as mustard To be very enthusiastic about something. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *These new kids are as keen as mustard to be in the choir, so we can definitely get them to clean up the choir room for us.*

be as light as a feather To be light in weight (instead of being heavy or burdensome). *Sadie is scrawny, so let her carry that box over there—it's as light as a feather. I can carry all of these bags at once because they're all as light as a feather.*

be (as) mad as a hatter **1.** To be crazy. *Tim has been behaving very erratically lately, so I'm afraid that he's as mad as a hatter.* **2.** To be very angry. *Mom was mad as a hatter after I dented her brand-new car.*

be as mad as a hornet See [\(as\) mad as a hornet](#).

be as mad as a hornet To be very angry. Primarily heard in US. *Mom was as mad as a hornet after I dented her brand-new car.*

be as mad as a March hare To be crazy. The phrase alludes to hares' erratic behavior during their breeding season. *Mom was as mad as a March hare after I dented her brand-new car.*

be as mad as hops See [\(as\) mad as hops](#).

be as nice as pie slang To be surprisingly or unexpectedly pleasant. *Mr. Stewart may seem crotchety, but actually he's as nice as pie—he's helped me carry my groceries many times.*

be (as) nutty as a fruitcake slang To be crazy and/or wacky. Usually used humorously. *Don't listen to a word he says, he's as nutty as a fruitcake! You're nutty as a fruitcake if you think that plan will work.*

be as oil and water See [be as/like oil and water](#).

be as old as Methuselah To be very old or elderly. In the Bible, Methuselah lived 969 years. *I know I'll have a long life because my grandparents were as old as Methuselah when they died. Of course she can't use a smartphone, she's as old as Methuselah!*

be (as) old as the hills To be very old. Usually used humorously. *Oh,*

she's old as the hills, she can't hear us. Why don't we ever sing new songs? Those hymns are as old as the hills.

be as plain as the nose on (one's) face To be very obvious or noticeable. *Those two have been flirting all afternoon—it's as plain as the nose on your face! In the end, the solution was as plain as the nose on my face.*

be (as) pleased as punch To be very happy. The phrase refers to the titular character from "Punch and Judy," a 17th-century comedic puppet show. *I was as pleased as punch when I found out that I'd gotten an A on my hardest exam. I am pleased as punch that you two were able to come to the party after all!*

be as poor as church mice To have little to no money. *Now that we're paying a mortgage, we're as poor as church mice.*

be (as) pure as the driven snow To be virtuous and/or chaste. *The bride looked as pure as the driven snow in her gown. Kate would never cheat on an exam—she's pure as the driven snow.*

be (as) quiet as a mouse To be silent and meek. *I just can't believe that Kate actually yelled at Mike—she's as quiet as a mouse! I always tell my young son that he needs to be quiet as a mouse during the church service.*

be as regular as clockwork To happen at predictable intervals. *My daughter starts crying every night at bedtime—it's as regular as clockwork.*

be (as) right as rain To be in good health (often after some restorative action has been taken). *I have a broken foot, but once I get my cast off, the doctor says I'll be as right as rain. Dad is right as rain now that he's been able to rest.*

be as safe as houses To be protected. The phrase alludes to the idea of "home" as a safe haven or shelter. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *I locked your jewelry in a drawer, so it's as safe as houses.*

be as scarce as hen's teeth To be incredibly rare; to be extremely difficult or impossible to find. *Support for the president is as scarce as hens' teeth in this part of the country.*

be as sharp as a tack To be intelligent and a quick-thinker. *Ted's as sharp as a tack, so he'll find a solution to this problem. Of course Ellen is our valedictorian—she's as sharp as a tack.*

be (as) sick as a dog slang To be very ill. *Honestly, I haven't been avoiding you—I've been sick as a dog. I had to go to the doctor on Monday because I was as sick as a dog all weekend.*

be (as) sick as a parrot To be thoroughly displeased, disappointed, or dejected (about something). Primarily heard in UK. *Tim was as sick as a parrot when he learned that he had been passed over for the promotion. I'm delighted that my children have such wonderful opportunities abroad, but I must say I've been sick as a parrot at the thoughts of being separated from them for so long.*

be (as) silent as the grave To be totally silent, especially as produces an ominous or foreboding effect. *I knew something was wrong when I walked into the meeting room and all the members of the board were silent as the grave. I hate staying in my grandma's house. It's as silent as the grave at nighttime, and it really creeps me out.*

be as slippery as an eel To be devious, scheming, and untrustworthy—and difficult to apprehend. *Of course that guy took everyone's money and left town—he's as slippery as an eel!*

be (as) snug as a bug in a rug To be warm and cozy, typically while wrapped in blankets. *My daughters are all snug as a bug in a rug watching a movie together. I hate the cold weather, so I look forward to bedtime—when I can be as snug as a bug in a rug.*

be (as) sober as a judge 1. To be stoic and reserved, perhaps even somber. *Anita has been sober as a judge ever since she heard of Marshall's death.* 2. To be calm and rational. *He's usually as sober as a judge, so I'm confident that he'll make a sound decision.* 3. To be not at all intoxicated. *I haven't been drinking at all, I swear! I'm sober as a judge!*

be (as) solid as a rock To be stable, sturdy, and reliable. *They've been married for 50 years, so their relationship has to be solid as a rock. That table must be as solid as a rock to withstand the ceiling collapse with hardly a scratch.*

be as (something) as they come To display a trait to the utmost degree. *Bryce is as talented as they come. Once you see him on stage, you'll agree. These strawberries are as fresh as they come. They were literally just picked!*

be as sound as a bell To be in good health or condition. *When I broke my foot, I was in a cast for six weeks, but now I'm as sound as a bell. Once I sand this old chair, it will be as sound as a bell.*

be (as) sound as a dollar 1. To be stable, sturdy, and reliable. *That table must be as sound as a dollar to withstand the ceiling collapse with hardly a scratch.* 2. To be in good condition. *Once I sand this old chair, it will be sound as a dollar*

be (as) stiff as a board To be very stiff; to be rigid and/or difficult to bend. *The dry cleaner really starched this shirt—it's as stiff as a board! After being on a plane for eight hours, I'm stiff as a board.*

be as stiff as a ramrod To have very erect posture. *I've never seen Olivia slouch—she's always as stiff as a ramrod.*

be as straight as a die 1. To be very straight. Primarily heard in the UK and Australia. *I get carsick, so I hope the roads we're taking are as straight as a die.* 2. To be truthful and reliable. *Kate would never cheat on an exam—she's as straight as a die. I know Bob's story sounds ridiculous, but I believe him because he's as straight as a die.*

be (as) strong as an ox To have great physical strength. (Oxen were traditionally used as work animals.) *You should get Bert to help you move all this furniture—he's as strong as an ox. If you go to the gym every day, you too will be strong as an ox.*

be (as) stubborn as a mule To be very devoted to a particular opinion or course of action, especially when faced with opposition. *My toddler is as stubborn as a mule and has a tantrum every night at bedtime because he doesn't want to stop playing. You'll never get Rich to change his opinion—he's stubborn as a mule.*

be (as) thick as a brick To be remarkably stupid, dimwitted, or obtuse. *I smoked a lot of marijuana when I was in high school, so I was as thick as a brick by the time I finally graduated. Jen's new girlfriend is very nice, but she's thick as a brick.*

be (as) thick as a shit vulgar slang To be remarkably stupid, dimwitted, or obtuse. Primarily heard in UK. *I smoked a lot of marijuana when I was in high school, so I was as thick as a shit by the time I finally graduated. Jen's new girlfriend is very nice, but she's thick as a shit.*

be (as) thick as a short plank To be remarkably stupid, dimwitted, or obtuse. *I smoked a lot of marijuana when I was in high school, so I was as thick as a short plank by the time I finally graduated. Jen's new girlfriend is very nice, but she's thick as a short plank.*

be (as) thick as thieves To be very close friends. *Anna and Beth are together all the time these days—they're as thick as thieves.*

be (as) thick as two short planks To be remarkably stupid, dimwitted, or obtuse. *I was as thick as two short planks back in high school. Good thing I straightened out in college. Jen's new girlfriend is very nice, but she's thick as two short planks.*

be (as) thin as a rail To be extremely skinny or slender. Primarily heard in US. *Have you seen Claire lately? I'm really worried about her, she's as thin as a rail! I've always been thin as a rail, even when I tried to gain weight.*

be (as) thin as a rake To be extremely skinny or slender. Primarily heard in UK. *I'm really worried about Claire, she's as thin as a rake! I've always been thin as a rake, even when I try to pack on some muscle.*

be (as) thin as a stick To be extremely skinny or slender. *I'm really worried about Claire, she's as thin as a stick! I've always been thin as a stick, even when I try to pack on some muscle.*

be (as) tough as old boots **1.** To have physical strength and/or be rarely sick or injured. *Marty has played in 500 straight games—he's tough as old boots. Bert is as tough as old boots, so get him to help you move all this furniture!* **2.** To have a tough, leathery skin (as of meat). *This meat is as tough as old boots—I can't even cut it!* **3.** To not feel or show one's emotions. *Our aunt is as tough as old boots, so we asked her to give the eulogy, knowing that she's the only one who could do it without crying.* **4.** To be determined, perhaps stubbornly so. *You'll never get Rich to change his opinion—he's as tough as old boots.*

be (as) ugly as sin To be extremely visually displeasing or unattractive. *I wouldn't buy that painting, it's ugly as sin. I heard the date didn't go well and that the guy was as ugly as sin.*

be as white as a sheet To have a very pale face, often due to illness or fear. *I knew that Maureen wasn't feeling well because her face was as white*

as a sheet. Everyone in the band was as white as a sheet before taking the stage.

be (as) white as snow 1. To have a very pale face, often due to illness or fear. *I knew that Maureen wasn't feeling well because her face was white as snow. Everyone in the band was as white as snow before taking the stage.*
2. To be very white in color. *Now that my grandfather has stopped dying his hair, it's as white as snow.*

be as/like oil and water To be unable or unwilling to mix together easily or readily, as of two objects, elements, factors, forces, people, etc. Refers to the natural tendency of oil and water to separate. *My dad is like oil and water with my mom's boyfriend, so I don't know how they're going to get through the family reunion in each other's company. The more I pay attention to the news, the more it seems that politics and common sense are as compatible as oil and water.*

be asking for trouble To be doing something or acting in a manner that will very likely result in trouble, difficulty, or danger. *I'd keep your mouth shut if you want to keep your job; arguing with the boss like that is just asking for trouble! Those kids were asking for trouble when they went trespassing on my property, and now trouble is what they'll get!*

be asleep at the switch To fail to attend to one's responsibilities or duties; to not do or be inattentive to that which is important or for which one is responsible. *Johnson was supposed to make sure the paperwork went through on time before the deadline, but it looks like he was asleep at the switch. Our goalkeeper is such a nincompoop. We would have won if he hadn't been asleep at the switch!*

be asleep at the wheel To fail to attend to one's responsibilities or duties; to be inattentive to that which is important or for which one is responsible. *Johnson was supposed to make sure the paperwork went through before the deadline, but it looks like he was asleep at the wheel. Our goalkeeper is such a nincompoop. We would have won that match if he hadn't been asleep at the wheel!*

be at a crossroads To be at a point when a choice must be made; to be at a point of change. *After earning my degree, I'm at a crossroads. I need to figure out which direction my life should take. As a company, we're at a crossroads. We can continue business as usual, or we can take a risk and try*

to grow.

be at a loose end To have nothing to do, often resulting in boredom. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *Connie is at a loose end because she finished all of her chores early. My plans were canceled, so I'm at a loose end now.*

be at a loss To be uncertain of how to proceed or what to do or think. *Your behavior is absolutely unacceptable. I'm at a loss as to what to do with you. Now that the whole schedule has been rearranged, I'm at a loss.*

be at daggers drawn To be prepared to verbally or physically fight another person or group. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *The police have had to intervene because those rival gangs have been at daggers drawn lately. The members of the committee are at daggers drawn because they cannot agree on a course of action.*

be at death's door To be extremely ill or very close to death or total destruction. *I was at death's door after a case of untreated rabies. There are many parts of the environment that are at death's door due to the effects of pollution.*

be at each other's throats Of two or more people, to be noticeably and aggressively angry with each other. *Those two are at each other's throats because they can't agree on how to best lead the committee. You can hear their shouting all the way down the hall!*

be at half-mast To be partially raised or lowered. The phrase most often describes a flag that has been lowered to honor a recently-deceased person. *After our former president died, flags were at half-mast all across the country. When my daughter came home from the park, she was covered in dirt, and her ponytail was at half-mast.*

be at home **1.** To physically be in one's place of residence. *I was at home all day and the repairman never came. I'm at home now, so feel free to come over.* **2.** To be very comfortable or proficient in a particular area. *My mother is at home in the kitchen and can make just about any dish.* **3.** To match or suit a particular environment. *Considering her aesthetic, I think that antique chair would be at home in her gallery.* **4.** Of a sports team, to play in one's own arena or field. *The Yankees have been on the road for a while now. When will they be at home again?*

be at it 1. To partake in an action, activity, or pursuit vigorously, exhaustively, or determinedly. *I studied really hard for this test; I was at it all night. I wish those dogs would quit barking, they've been at it since the sun came up!* **2.** slang To engage in sexual intercourse. *I can always hear when the neighbors are at it. It's really embarrassing!*

be at it hammer and tongs To do something or perform some task with tremendous fervor, determination, energy, or forcefulness. An allusion to the force with which a blacksmith strikes metal using a hammer and tongs. *What started as a minor disagreement has escalated into a heated argument, and the two have been at it hammer and tongs ever since.*

be at loggerheads To be in conflict. A "logger" is a 16th-century term for a block of wood, so a "loggerhead" is a blockhead or fool. *They are at loggerheads over the best way to lead the committee.*

be at odds (with) To be in conflict (with). *They are at odds over the best way to lead the committee. Our fact-checker found that the witness's story was completely at odds with what the reporter had written.*

be at (one's) beck and call To be completely compliant or obedient to another person; to cater to one's every need. The phrase has a negative connotation. A: *"How can we get to the mall this weekend?"* B: *"Oh, my sister will take us—she's been at my beck and call ever since I caught her sneaking in past curfew!"*

be at (one's) wit's end To be in a state of distress because one has no more patience or mental stamina, often after having dealt with some kind of problem or difficult situation. *The baby's been crying for hours, and I'm at my wit's end! I'm at my wit's end, so if this train gets delayed too, I'm going to scream.*

be at pains To put forth effort toward some goal or end. *Annabelle is at pains to make sure her relatives are comfortable when they come to visit. So far, she's cleaned the whole house and set up all the guest rooms.*

be at peace with the world To feel an overall sense of happiness and contentment. *I was at peace with the world as I stared down at my infant daughter's sweet face. I hate running, but Matt is at peace with the world when he's jogging through the woods.*

be at sea 1. To literally sail on the sea in a boat or ship. A: *"Is your mother*

at sea yet?" B: "Yes, her cruise lasts several weeks." **2.** To be puzzled, perplexed, or completely confused (about a subject or some task at hand). *I tried to do well in this class, but I've been at sea since we started.*

be at sixes and sevens To be frazzled or disorganized. The phrase likely originated from a dice game in which rolling a six or a seven was unfavorable. *After caring for three sick kids all week, I'm at sixes and sevens. Now that the whole schedule has been rearranged, I'm at sixes and sevens.*

be at the bottom of (something) To be the fundamental cause of something. *Stubbornness is at the bottom of every unresolved disagreement.*

be at the end of (one's) rope To be completely worn out, exasperated, or exhausted; to have no more patience, endurance, or energy left. *Joshua started throwing a tantrum this afternoon, and with all the other things I have to get done, I'm at the end of my rope!*

be at the end of (one's) tether To be completely worn out, exasperated, or exhausted; to have no more patience, endurance, or energy left. *Joshua started throwing a tantrum this afternoon, and with all the other things I have to get done, I'm at the end of my tether!*

be at the helm To be in charge; to be the leader (of something). The phrase originated as a nautical term, meaning "to steer a ship." *Jack is at the helm, so I know they'll get this project done on time! Nancy has been at the helm of our department for so long that I can't imagine what it will be like once she retires!*

be at the mercy of (something) To be subject to the control of a particular person or thing. *When you're a minor, you're at the mercy of your parents completely. When you travel by public transportation, you're at the mercy of the weather. Her fate is at the mercy of the jury—it's their decision now.*

be at the right spot at the right time See [be in the right spot at the right time](#).

be at the wheel **1.** Literally, to drive a vehicle (and thus sit at the steering wheel). *Don't worry, Katie's at the wheel, and she is excellent at driving in the snow. I'm so excited to finally be at the wheel of my own car! **2.** To be in charge; to be the leader (of something). *Jack is at the wheel, so I know they'll get this project done on time!**

be au fait with To be knowledgeable and prepared with the latest information on a particular subject. "Au fait" is French for "to the fact." *Please review these reports so that you are au fait with the latest market trends.*

be away with the fairies To be a bit crazy. *I can't follow what your mom is talking about—it's like she's away with the fairies all of a sudden.*

be back in business To be ready and able to function or begin an activity, pursuit, or task again, as after a period of dysfunction, disability, or disrepair. *Okay! The engine had to be completely overhauled, but we're back in business now! Her business grew stagnant because of the building's poor condition, but she's back in business now that the place is all fixed up! Don't worry about the sprained ankle, you'll be back in business in no time!*

be back in harness To resume one's daily work. Primarily heard in UK. *I'm not thrilled to be back in harness on Monday. When are you back in harness after your trip?*

be back on the rails To resume forward progress or momentum. Primarily heard in UK. *Now that we have funding again, our research project is back on the rails.*

be backward in coming forward See [be \(not\) backward in coming forward](#).

be bad news slang To be, or be perceived as, unpleasant or unsavory. *Stay away from that gang of kids from the other side of town—they're bad news. Coach lets me play a lot, so if he gets fired, it will be bad news for me. Our wedding is this weekend, so a snowstorm would be bad news indeed!*

be bag See [be \(not\) \(one's\) bag](#).

be bang on slang To be exactly right. Primarily heard in UK. *I think you were bang on in your analysis of Forster's novel.*

be barking mad To be crazy or insane. Although its origin is unknown, the phrase may refer to rabid dogs. *It's freezing today, and you're not going to wear a coat? Are you barking mad? You're barking mad if you think that plan will work.*

be (batting) on a losing wicket To be in a situation in which one is unlikely or unable to win; to be doing something that is likely or certain to

fail. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *Teachers who try to keep mobile phones out of their classrooms are on a losing wicket these days. The prime minister, knowing his party has been batting on a losing wicket regarding immigration reform, today announced a major U-turn in his position on the matter.*

be (batting) on a sticky wicket To be in the midst of or dealing with a particularly awkward or difficult situation or circumstance. Primarily heard in UK. *I knew I was batting on a sticky wicket when the boss saw me kissing his daughter at the cinema. I'll be on quite a sticky wicket if I arrive at the train station and don't have enough money for the tickets!*

be beat **1.** To fail or be defeated. *Down by 10 points with only two minutes left, we knew we were beat.* **2.** To be thoroughly fatigued or physically exhausted. *After two hours in the gym and another hour swimming, I was beat by the time I got home.*

be before (one's) time To predate one's tenure or birth. A: *"Have you ever seen this show?"* B: *"No, sorry, it's before my time."* *I don't know how that project was organized—it was before my time at the company.*

be behind the eight ball To be in a challenging situation; to be at a disadvantage. An "eight ball" is one of the numbered balls used in the game of pool, and the last one supposed to be hit into a pocket. If the eight ball is accidentally hit into a pocket prematurely, the player will lose, and it therefore needs to be avoided. *If we don't leave early tomorrow, we'll be behind the eight ball, and I doubt we'll reach the cabin by dusk. Because I got the flu, I'm behind the eight ball with my Christmas shopping.*

be behind the times **1.** To behave in an outdated way. *Of course grandpa doesn't have a cell phone—he's behind the times, as usual.* **2.** To lack the latest information on a particular subject. *Wait, Joe and Mara broke up? Wow, I'm behind the times!*

be below par To be below average; to be not as good as desired, required, or expected. *This essay you turned in on Friday is really below par. Has something been distracting you from your studies recently? Our food was rather uninteresting, and the service was really below par. I honestly don't understand why this restaurant is so popular!*

be below the belt To unfairly target another person's weakness or vulnerability. The phrase refers to boxing, in which hitting an opponent

below the waist is unacceptable. *I know she really wants the promotion, but telling the boss about my personal problems was below the belt.*

be beside (oneself) To be very emotional, especially shocked or distraught. *I was beside myself when I found out I'd been rejected from my first-choice school. Honestly, we've all been beside ourselves since the funeral.*

be beside the point To be tangential or insignificant. *I do love the apartment, but that's beside the point because I don't have enough money for a security deposit right now. Your weekend plans are beside the point—let's get back to the topic at hand.*

be better off dead **1.** To be in a position, state, or predicament so hopeless or painful that death would be the preferable solution. *This cancer is just going to get worse, crippling me with pain every day. I'd be better off dead. I lost everything I own to gambling and am still in debt. I'm better off dead at this point.* **2.** To be of so little use or consequence, or of such an unpleasant nature, that the world would benefit from the person not being alive. *John bungles everything he tries to do and aggravates everyone he knows. He'd just be better off dead.*

be beyond (one's) ken To be advanced beyond one's ability to understand or make sense of the subject matter or task at hand. *The stuff they're teaching in this advanced math class is beyond my ken.*

be beyond the pale To be unacceptable or inappropriate. A "pale" is an area bounded by a fence. *Disrupting my class is beyond the pale, young lady—go to the principal's office! Most people would consider stealing to be beyond the pale.*

be big of (one) To be noble or commendable. This phrase is often said sarcastically. *Wow, you're actually going to spend time with your brother tonight? That's big of you. It's big of you to reconcile with people who have wronged you in the past.*

be big on See [be \(not\) big on \(something\)](#).

be bitter and twisted To be miserable, typically because of past traumas or problems. *My sister is bitter and twisted after years in a bad relationship. Oh, she's been bitter and twisted ever since she found out she didn't make the team.*

be blasted to smithereens To be blown up or broken apart into tiny, fragmentary pieces. "Smithereens," first appearing in English in 1829 as "smiddereens," is likely derived from the Irish word "smidirín" or "smidiríní," meaning "fragment." *I wish I could still go visit our old family home, but it's already been blasted to smithereens by the demolition crew. The village was blasted to smithereens by the typhoon's gale-force winds.*

be blind as a bat See [be \(as\) blind as a bat](#).

be blind to To ignore; to be oblivious to (something). *Kara worships her father and is completely blind to his shortcomings—so she is going to be heartbroken once she learns about his embezzlement. I know you're blind to any issues with your car, but unless you want it to break down, you're going to have to take it to the shop.*

be blotto See [blotto\(ed\)](#).

be blown away To be thoroughly impressed, overwhelmed, or excited by something. *I am blown away by the show of support from everyone. I was blown away by how good that movie was!*

be blown to smithereens To be blown up or broken apart into tiny, fragmentary pieces. "Smithereens," first appearing in English in 1829 as "smiddereens," is likely derived from the Irish word "smidirín" or "smidiríní," meaning "fragment." *I wish I could still go visit our old family home, but it's already been blown to smithereens by the demolition crew. The village was blown to smithereens by the typhoon's gale-force winds.*

be bomb See [be \(the\) bomb](#).

be bone dry To be extremely dry. *Man, it is bone dry out there today—not a bit of humidity in the air. And if that floor is not bone dry when you're done, make sure to put up the signs—we don't need anyone slipping out here!*

be bone idle To be extremely lazy. *Can you please get Billy to go to the playground or something? He's been bone idle, just laying around all day.*

be bored to death To be extremely bored. *My flight's been delayed, and I'm bored to death after sitting around the airport all day.*

be born yesterday To be naïve or easily deceived. Often used in the phrase "I wasn't born yesterday." *Oh, you expect me to believe that you've been in your room all night and didn't just sneak in the house a few minutes*

ago? Well, I wasn't born yesterday—and I heard the door open! Do you think I was born yesterday? There's no way that email isn't a scam!

be bound and determined To be very focused on completing a particular task or goal. *My brother has been practicing all summer because he's bound and determined to make the basketball team this year. I am bound and determined to lose weight, so please don't bring any sweets into the house.*

be brain dead **1.** Literally, to lack brain activity, as after a brain injury. *After the car accident, Kendra was brain dead. Despite the surgeon's best efforts, the patient was brain dead.* **2.** slang To be so mentally exhausted or lacking focus that one does something poorly and/or makes easily avoidable mistakes. *Did I just say that two plus two equals five? Wow, I'm really brain dead today.*

be bright and breezy To be confident and cheerful. *I may be bright and breezy now, but I often felt melancholy as a teenager.*

be bright-eyed and bushy-tailed To be energetic and enthusiastic. *After that nap, I am bright-eyed and bushy-tailed! As usual, the new interns are bright-eyed and bushy-tailed—just watching them is exhausting.*

be broad in the beam **1.** (of a ship) To be particularly wide in the middle. *Since that ship is broad in the beam, I doubt it will fit through the narrow channel.* **2.** (of a person) To have an ample buttocks. *Because I'm broad in the beam, I doubt those pants will fit me.*

be brother's keeper See [be \(not\) \(one's\) brother's keeper](#).

be brought down a notch (or two) To have one's ego or pride reduced or damaged; to be humbled or humiliated. *I hope that pompous oaf has been brought down a notch or two after losing his court case. If Sarah keeps acting like a spoiled brat to everyone, she's going to be brought down a notch some day.*

be brought down a peg (or two) To have one's ego or pride reduced or damaged; to be humbled or humiliated. *I hope that pompous oaf has been brought down a peg or two after losing his court case. If Sarah keeps acting like a spoiled brat to everyone, she's going to be brought down a peg some day.*

be brought in from the cold To be allowed to join or participate in

a group from which one was previously excluded; to be accepted in a certain social setting. *A relatively unknown director for most of her career, she was brought in from the cold after her work with the A-list celebrity garnered the attention of a major Hollywood studio. The striking workers were finally brought in from the cold after the union and corporate leaders settled the wage dispute.*

be brought to account To be made to take responsibility and/or accept punishment for one's actions. *If you committed a crime, you will be brought to account soon enough.*

be built like a brick shithouse **1.** slang To be very muscular and strong. *Bert is built like a brick shithouse, so get him to help you move all this furniture!* **2.** slang To be very buxom and curvaceous. *Mary has a great body—she's built like a brick shithouse.*

be built like a tank To have a physique or structure that is strong and physically imposing. *George started going to the gym every day since January—now he's built like a tank! These bomb shelters are built like tanks by design, so they can withstand anything.*

be built on sand To be unstable. *A relationship based entirely on physical attraction is built on sand and won't last long.*

be bulging at the seams slang To be overly crowded. *Because of all the delays this morning, the train station is bulging at the seams. Good luck finding a place to sit!*

be burnt to a crisp To be or have been significantly burned, as by fire or the sun. The variant spelling "burned" is also commonly used in the headword. *If you don't get the bread out of the oven now, it will be burnt to a crisp! I fell asleep on the beach, and now I'm burnt to a crisp.*

be busted **1.** To be bankrupt or without money. *I wagered all I owned on that investment, and now I am completely busted.* **2.** In the military, to be demoted in rank. *The four lieutenants were caught with drugs and alcohol, and all were subsequently busted to the rank of cadet.* **3.** To be arrested by the police. *I told you we'd be busted if we tried to sell alcohol without a license!* **4.** To be caught in the act of wrongdoing, bad behavior, or lying. *I was busted by my parents when I tried sneaking into the house after curfew last night. I saw what you did, you are so busted!* **5.** To be broken, physically damaged, or in a state of disrepair. *Ah, no one can get this car to run, it's*

completely busted.

be busy as a bee See [be \(as\) busy as a bee](#).

be call See [be \(someone's\) call](#).

be card-carrying member See [be a card-carrying member \(of something\)](#).

be careful To act cautiously. Usually issued as a warning. *Be careful when you go out in the city at night. Be careful with that box—don't bang around my glassware! Be careful! Stay with the tour guide!*

be careful not to (do something) Proceed cautiously, in an attempt to avoid potential problems or pitfalls. This phrase is often said as a warning or instruction. *I was careful not to make any noise as I crept into the house after curfew. As you plan your talk, be careful not to bore the audience with scientific terms they won't understand. This plate is very hot—be careful not to burn yourself.*

be carried out feet first To be removed from a place or situation only after one has died. *Gary will never retire—he'll be carried out of his office feet first.*

be carved in stone To be made permanent, typically of a plan or idea. *We might get brunch next weekend, but nothing is carved in stone yet.*

be cast in cement To be firmly or permanently established; to be unalterable or not subject to change. *The healthcare law looks promising, but we'll have to wait until it's cast in cement before we know exactly what it will do.*

be cast in concrete To be firmly or permanently established; to be unalterable or not subject to change. *The healthcare law looks promising, but we'll have to wait until it's cast in concrete before we know exactly what it will do.*

be cast in the same mould To share similar characteristics or behaviors. Primarily heard in UK. *I hate the snow, but my kids just love it—they are definitely cast in the same mould. Julia and her mother are cast in the same mould, as they are both so kind and sweet.*

be caught in a time warp To remain unchanged from a time in the past, especially in an antiquated or obsolete way. ("Time warp" is sometimes

hyphenated.) *This town is so entrenched in its backwards ideals and moral values, like it's caught in a time warp or something! There's nothing digital in the house—no computers, no smartphones, just a typewriter and a single rotary telephone. Talk about being caught in a time-warp!*

be caught in the crossfire **1.** To literally be in the middle of an exchange of gunfire. *Police officers are often caught in the crossfire when apprehending criminals.* **2.** To feel the effects of an issue that one is not directly involved in. *I know that they're arguing about the budget because I walked into the conference room at the wrong time and was caught in the crossfire.*

be caught in the middle To be in a position between two or more sides in an argument or contentious issue, often leaving one without a clear course of action to satisfy either side. *When my friends broke up, I was often caught in the middle, as each one complained to me about the other.*

be caught off (one's) guard To be taken by surprise; to be caught when one is vulnerable, careless, or inattentive. *We'll wait until he's caught off guard, and then we'll take him and his company for all they're worth! Don't be caught off your guard. There are a lot of suspicious characters around here.*

be caught on the hop To be caught unawares or in a state of unpreparedness. *Please forgive my distracted attention—I'm afraid I was caught on the hop by your sudden arrival. Terry hadn't prepared anything to say at the reception, so he was caught on the hop a bit when they asked me to say a few words.*

be caught short **1.** To be unprepared for a certain situation, often one involving money. *I was caught short at the restaurant, so I had to borrow money from my mom.* **2.** To become pregnant when one is not married. *I think that Heather has missed so much school because she's caught short.* **3.** slang To have an urgent need to use the toilet. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *I always use the toilet before a long drive, to avoid being caught short.*

be caught with (one's) pants down To be taken by surprise; to be caught in a vulnerable (often embarrassing) position or situation. *When the boss started firing questions at me, I was caught with my pants down and looked like a fool. I just hadn't considered all of those potential outcomes yet and didn't know what to say. We seriously underestimated our opponents on*

Saturday and were caught with our pants down.

be center stage To be the main focus. *I'm not talking about my promotion today because my sister's engagement should be center stage. Her photos will be center stage at the exhibit.*

be chafing at the bit To be impatient and/or eager for something to happen or over some delay. Used to liken someone to an overexcited horse straining against its bit (the metal piece of the harness that fits between its jaws). *I was chafing at the bit for the game to start. After two hours of waiting in the airport lobby, we were chafing at the bit to finally get on the plane.*

be chalk and cheese To be very different from one another. *Good luck getting those two to talk to each other—they're like chalk and cheese. My daughters are chalk and cheese these days—one loves baseball and the other loves ballet.*

be chasing tail 1. To be very busy or working very hard at some task but accomplishing little or nothing as a result; to be engaged in some fruitless or futile task or endeavor. Likened to a dog running in circles trying to catch its own tail. *I'm chasing tail trying to talk to a person at the cable company. I've been on the phone for an hour!* **2.** To be pursuing or seeking out sexual activity with someone. (Usually used by men to refer to women.) *My brother is always chasing tail in bars around town.*

be child's play 1. To be very easy. *Oh please, I've been playing guitar for 20 years—that song is child's play.* **2.** To be insignificant. *Those drafts are child's play compared to my latest one—I think I really have a strong argument now.*

be chomping at the bit To be impatient and/or eager for something to happen or over some delay. Used to liken someone to an overexcited horse straining against its bit (the metal piece of the harness that fits between its jaws). *I was chomping at the bit for the game to start. After two hours of waiting in the airport lobby, we were chomping at the bit to finally get on the plane.*

be clean as a whistle See [be \(as\) clean as a whistle](#).

be cleaned out To be emptied or devoid of money, food, resources, etc. *I'd like to play another round of poker, but I'm totally cleaned out! I wish I*

could offer you some food to go with your tea, but I'm afraid we're cleaned out.

be close to home To affect one deeply and emotionally because one can strongly relate to it. *My patient's lung cancer diagnosis is close to home for me because my uncle recently died of the same thing. Because I was bullied as a kid, I teared up when my son told me that he gets teased at school—it's just so close to home.*

be close to the bone To be very close to the truth in a hurtful way. *Of course I'm mad—dad's remarks about how I'm wasting my life were close to the bone.*

be close to the mark To almost reach a desired target or outcome. *Some of you were very close to the mark on this last test, but no one got a perfect score. His design is close to the mark, but I think we can do better.*

be clued in To be familiar with or aware of the particulars of a situation, especially through inference, previous knowledge, or by being privy to inside information. Usually followed by "on," "to," or "about." *By the end of the week, everyone was clued in on the reason for the professor's sudden absence from class. You need to be clued in to the way people behave in social situations!*

be cocksure of (oneself) To be completely certain of oneself or one's actions, to the point of overconfidence. *You seem pretty cocksure of yourself—do you really know how to handle that machine?*

be cold as ice See [be \(as\) cold as ice](#).

be cold comfort To fail as an intended source of solace. *The news that I got a meager raise is cold comfort after not getting that big promotion. The fact that it's "stage one" is cold comfort to me—it's still cancer!*

be comme il faut See [be \(not\) comme il faut](#).

be compos mentis Sane or mentally competent. The phrase is Latin for "of sound mind." *I doubt that Travis was compos mentis when he committed that crime.*

be comprised of To be made up of (something). To consist of (something). *Your grade is comprised of several factors, such as homework, projects, and test scores.*

be conspicuous by (one's) absence To be noticeably missing from something. *You're the loudest one in the class, so of course you're conspicuous by your absence!*

be cooked To be in serious trouble; to be ruined, finished, or defeated. *If mom and dad find out we took their car out last night, we're cooked! Down by 45 points with only two minutes left in the game, it's pretty safe to say that the home team is cooked at this point.*

be cooked **1.** To be overheated or uncomfortably warm, as due to the sun. *Even though I'd worn light clothing for my hike, the sun was beating down so hard that I was cooked after half an hour.* **2.** To be in inescapable or imminent trouble, danger, or difficulty. *I knew we'd be cooked if the police discovered the drugs in the trunk of my car.* **3.** To be thoroughly or soundly defeated. *I knew we were cooked before the game even started, but we still played with everything we had.* **4.** To be physically, mentally, or emotionally exhausted. *After two hours in the gym and another hour swimming, I was cooked by the time I got home. I'm already pretty cooked from writing essays, and I still have another one to write for tomorrow.*

be cooked to a turn To be cooked for exactly the right amount of time necessary or desired. *My goodness, these steaks are so flavorful and have been cooked to a turn!*

be cooking on gas slang To be making rapid progress or performing efficiently. *Now that we've had this breakthrough with our experiment, we're really cooking on gas.*

be cut adrift To be detached or cut off from something. Likened to a boat having its mooring cut so that it drifts freely in the water. *She was cut adrift after her parents found drugs in her room and kicked her out of the house.*

be damned See [\(something\) be damned](#).

be dead and buried To be completely gone or defunct. The phrase can refer to one who has literally died and been buried, as well as to failures. *Their father is dead and buried, but they still complain about him daily. Oh, that idea from last week's meeting is dead and buried now that the CEO has vetoed it.*

be dead as a doornail See [be \(as\) dead as a doornail](#).

be dead from the neck up To be stupid. *Did I just say that two plus two equals five? Wow, I'm dead from the neck up today.*

be dead from the waist down To be unable to be sexually aroused. *You're dead from the waist down if you don't think that girl is gorgeous.*

be dead in the water To be completely defunct. *Oh, that idea from last week's meeting is dead in the water now that the CEO has vetoed it.*

be dead meat slang To be the target of forthcoming violence or ill-will. This phrase is usually issued as a threat. *I heard you slashed my tires—you're dead meat! If my brother catches us messing with his stuff, we'll be dead meat!*

be dead on (one's) feet **1.** To be near to the point of collapse or losing consciousness (as due to exhaustion or injury) while still remaining on one's feet; to be just short of being asleep or unconscious. *It seems dangerous to force sleep-deprived doctors to attend to their patients while they're dead on their feet.* **2.** To be all but or as good as defeated; to be still functioning, but past the point of usefulness or productivity. *The company has managed to remain open, but, truth be told, it's really been dead on its feet for the last year.*

be dead on the vine **1.** Literally (of fruit), to have shriveled and died before being harvested, as due to neglect or lack of resources. *With the horrible drought we've had this summer, nearly all of the fruit in my orchards are dead on the vine. You forgot to water my tomato plant! Now they're all dead on the vine!* **2.** By extension, to have failed prematurely or not come to fruition, as due to being ignored, neglected, impractical, or without the necessary means to succeed. *The president made sweeping promises during his campaign, but many of those are now dead on the vine. Many of the resources for students with learning disabilities were dead on the vine following the school board's budget cuts.*

be dead to the world To be sleeping very soundly. *Don't worry, the vacuum won't wake him—he's dead to the world.*

be department See [be \(not\) \(one's\) department](#).

be devils advocate See [be \(the\) devil's advocate](#).

be done in To be exhausted and in need of rest. *I'm done in after exams each year—I feel like I need to sleep for a few days afterward. Can you pick*

up the kids from soccer practice? I'm totally done in.

be done like a (dog's) dinner To fail or lose. Primarily heard in Australia. *Your team will be done like a dog's dinner if they play against the all-star team. I just finished my paper, but class starts in five minutes, and the printer isn't working, so I'm done like a dinner.*

be done to a turn To be done for exactly the right amount of time necessary or desired. *My goodness, these steaks are so flavorful and have been done to a turn!*

be done to death To be commonly seen or done, to the point of boredom or oversaturation. *Book reports on Bridge to Terabithia have been done to death—can't I write about something else?*

be done with it See [and be done with it](#).

be doped to the gills To be thoroughly intoxicated by drugs, especially those prescribed by a doctor, to the point of incoherence or senselessness. *I was doped to the gills for about two weeks after my surgery. I'm off the painkillers now, but I still feel pretty out of it.*

be down To feel sad, depressed, dejected, or generally unwell. *I got some bad news this morning, so I'm a bit down at the moment. You didn't do that poorly on the exam, don't be so down!*

be down in the dumps To be visibly sad or depressed. *Molly's been moping around all week, and I have no idea why she's so down in the dumps. Rob has been down in the dumps ever since Gloria broke up with him.*

be down in the mouth To be visibly sad or depressed. *Molly's been moping around all week, and I have no idea why she's so down in the mouth. Rob has been down in the mouth ever since Gloria broke up with him.*

be down on (one) like a ton of bricks slang To punish someone swiftly and harshly. *Mom will be down on you like a ton of bricks if you come home past curfew again. When I was caught cheating on a test, the principal was down on me like a ton of bricks.*

be down on (one's) luck To experience a period of misfortune. *Ryan is really down on his luck these days—he just lost his job, and then he got evicted from his apartment!*

be (down) on (one's) uppers 1. To have no money; to be broke. The

phrase was originally used to describe people who were so poor that they had worn their shoes down to the uppers (the part of the shoe above the sole). This usage includes a pronoun between "on" and "uppers," and can include "down" between "be" and "on." Primarily heard in UK. *I am down on my uppers this week, so can we go out for dinner next week, after I get paid?* **2.** slang To be on stimulant drugs. In this usage, the set phrase is "be on uppers." *My son has been acting really weird and says he's been awake for days, so I'm worried that he's on uppers.*

be down on (someone or something) To have or express negative or overly critical feelings toward someone or something. *I don't know why you're so down on Robert, he's such a nice guy to everyone! Don't be so down on this vacation to your grandparents' farm. I know it's not very exotic, but we'll still have a great time!*

be down to (do something) To be ready, willing, or eager to do something. *I'm down to play a quick game of soccer if you are. I am so down to see that movie tonight, I've been waiting for it to come out for months!* A: "You want in?" B: "Yeah, I'm down."

be down to (someone) To be someone's duty, decision, or responsibility. *After your father retires, it will be down to you to lead the company. So I guess it's down to me then.*

be down to (something) **1.** To be or be considered the essential or most important factor or thing. *Our success is down to our persistence and precise planning.* **2.** To have something reduced to a minimal amount. *I can't come with you tonight. I'm down to my last dollar, I'm afraid. We're down to the last two days of the competition, so be sure to enter for your chance to win!*

be down with (something) **1.** To be in agreement with, in support of, have interest in, or thoroughly enjoy some subject, activity, or thing. *I am so down with math, it's my favorite subject in school! Yeah, I'm down with seeing a movie later this evening.* **2.** To be on friendly terms with or enjoy the company of somebody. *I'm down with Cathy, we just had a small disagreement is all. I'm just not down with John, I think he's kind of a jerk sometimes.* **3.** To be ill or have caught some disease. (More often expressed as "come down with something.") *Marigold had to go home early today. I think she's down with the flu.*

be dragged kicking and screaming To be forced (to go somewhere or do something) with extreme reluctance, especially despite lengthy or vehement protests. *I really thought Mike would be perfect for the job, but he had to be dragged kicking and screaming into an interview for it. When we were kids, we were dragged to our grandparents' boring old house kicking and screaming every summer for two weeks.*

be dressed to kill To be very well-dressed and fashionable, typically to impress other people. *I have to be dressed to kill at this event tonight—a lot of important people will be there.*

be dressed (up) to the nines To be very well-dressed and fashionable, typically for a formal event. *I have to be dressed to the nines at this gala tonight—a lot of important people will be there. The whole family will be dressed up to the nines at the wedding, I'll make sure of it.*

be duck soup slang To be very easy. Primarily heard in US. *Oh please, I've been playing guitar for 20 years—that song is duck soup.*

be duty bound To be obligated or expected to do something. *Now that our parents are dead, I'm duty bound to care for my siblings. As a parent, you are duty bound to protect your child.*

be dying for (something) To be desperately longing or hoping for something. *I'm dying for a chance to introduce myself—he's one of my favorite actors! It's so bloody hot out, I'm dying for a cold drink.*

be easy as 1-2-3 See [be \(as\) easy as one-two-three](#).

be easy as a-b-c See [be \(as\) easy as ABC](#).

be easy as falling off a log See [be \(as\) easy as falling off \(of\) a log](#).

be easy as pie See [be \(as\) easy as pie](#).

be easy as rolling off a log See [be \(as\) easy as rolling off \(of\) a log](#).

be easy meat slang To be an easy target, typically for criticism or deception. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *When I'm with my family, I'm easy meat because I'm the youngest. Julia is easy meat—we can get her to help us with this prank.*

be easy on the ear To have a pleasant and enjoyable sound. *I find classical music to be very easy on the ear. After months of lessons, your sister's piano playing is finally easy on the ear.*

be easy on the eye(s) To be attractive or aesthetically pleasing. A: *"He's easy on the eyes, isn't he?"* B: *"Of course he is, he's a model!"* *This painting is so easy on the eye. It will be wonderful to wake up to every morning.*

be economical with the truth To be deceitful; to lie. *I wouldn't trust him—everyone says he's economical with the truth. When I walked into a house full of teenagers, I knew that my kids had been economical with the truth when they said they'd only invite a few friends over.*

be even (with someone) 1. To not be indebted (to someone) for something; to not owe (someone) anything. *I helped Sarah set up the community center for her casino night in return for her helping me move, so she and I are even now. Tell you what: buy me dinner this Friday. That way, you'll be even with me for the money I lent you.* 2. To no longer have cause to seek revenge (against someone). *You broke the tail light on my car, so I slashed your tires—now we're even.*

be every inch (something) To fully embody a certain trait or look. *The designer will understand if you want to make more changes—he is every inch the professional. Wow, your costume is great! You look every inch the old Hollywood starlet.*

be expecting euphemism To be pregnant. *I heard that you're expecting—congratulations! When is the baby due?*

be fair game To be legitimately or permissibly targeted for something, such as criticism, use, or discussion. *As the youngest sibling, I'm always fair game for mockery at family events. If you're playing football with us, then you're fair game to get tackled.*

be far and away To have surpassed everyone or everything else in some way. A superlative (often "the best") is used after "away." *This is far and away the best cake you've ever made—it's positively scrumptious! I'm far and away the worst player on the team, so I doubt I'll play in the big game.*

be fast on the draw 1. Literally, to be very quick at drawing one's gun in readiness to shoot it. *The gunfighter was so fast on the draw that he often shot his enemies before they reached their own gun.* 2. By extension, to be able to understand, anticipate, or react to a given situation or circumstance very quickly. *Faced with criticism by environmentalists, the company's PR*

rep was fast on the draw to point out its important role in job creation for the local community. John's always a little too fast on the draw to defend his country's role in the war. You have to be fast on the draw if you want to get ahead in the world of business.

be fed up to the back teeth slang To be bored or annoyed with a persistent issue. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *I'm fed up to the back teeth with this weather—will it ever stop raining? We're all fed up to the back teeth with your constant complaining, Marge!*

be few and far between To be rare or seldom-seen. *Warm days have been few and far between this winter. Good luck finding a nice house in that neighborhood—they're few and far between.*

be fighting fit To be in very good health. Primarily heard in Australia. *My father has never been sick a day in his life—he's truly fighting fit. Now that I'm going to the gym regularly, I hope to be fighting fit soon.*

be fighting for (one's/its) life **1.** To be close to death, but with the possibility of recovery. *Chris is fighting for his life after that accident. The doctors aren't sure that he'll survive the night.* **2.** To be close to failure, but with the possibility of recovery. *Because the business is fighting for its life right now, layoffs are imminent.*

be fighting mad To be very angry. *Mom was fighting mad after I dented her brand-new car.*

be first among equals To be more important or renowned than one's peers. *Riley is the best choice for that difficult project—she's first among equals.*

be first past the post To be the first person to reach a particular goal. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *I'm so proud of my daughter—she was first past the post in this morning's race.*

be fit to be tied To be very angry, as if one needs to be physically restrained. *Mom was fit to be tied after I dented her brand-new car.*

be flat as a pancake See [be \(as\) flat as a pancake](#).

be flat broke slang To have no money. Primarily heard in US. *I get paid next week, so can we go out to dinner then? I'm just flat broke right now. I'm flat broke once again and don't know how I'm going to pay my rent.*

be (flat) on (one's) back To have no strength or ability to get up. Often used when someone is sick or injured, but it can be used figuratively as well. *Oh man, I'm flat on my back with this flu. I haven't been out of bed in days! Sally's been on her back ever since she broke her leg. She's having a really hard time getting around in her cast. Losing my job has left me flat on my back. I'm really worried about how I'll pay my bills right now.*

be floating on air To be extremely happy. *I've been floating on air ever since I got engaged!*

be flying high **1.** To be very successful. *Our business has been flying high ever since we launched this very popular new product.* **2.** slang To be very happy, often because of drug use. Primarily heard in US. *Mary was flying high after her surgery, but I don't think she'll be quite as happy once the drugs wear off.* A: "Wow, everyone is really excited to see this band play." B: "I think they're all just flying high."

be footloose and fancy-free To be free of responsibilities, including romantic commitments (a fact that is often highlighted when this phrase is used). *I love being a single woman, so I intend to be footloose and fancy-free for a long time. Now that I have a family and a mortgage, I miss being footloose and fancy-free.*

be for See [be \(all\) for \(someone or something\)](#).

be for the asking See [be \(one's\) for the asking](#).

be for the best To be a positive occurrence (especially when it initially seems bad or problematic). This is usually an expression of hope or insight after something has gone awry. *I had to go home and change after spilling coffee on myself, but it was for the best because I avoided a major traffic jam. I was really disappointed to get rejected from my first-choice school, but I think it will be for the best because now I won't be so far from home.*

be for the birds See [be \(strictly\) for the birds](#).

be for the high jump To be punished swiftly and harshly. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *You will be for the high jump if mom finds out that you came home past curfew again. When I was caught cheating on the test, I knew I was for the high jump.*

be for the taking See [be \(one's\) for the taking](#).



be fresh as a daisy See [be \(as\) fresh as a daisy](#).

be fresh from **1.** To have just returned from a certain place. *Our new exchange student is fresh from Russia and doesn't speak English at all. He's in a good mood because he's fresh from a tropical vacation.* **2.** To have just completed a particular task or goal, often a level of education. Primarily heard in UK. *This candidate is fresh from university and has no teaching experience. I'm fresh from swim practice, so I need to shower.*

be fresh out of **1.** To have no stock of a certain item or product because the last one has just been sold or used. *I'm sorry, but it looks like we're fresh out of tangerines. They checked their inventory, but apparently they're fresh out of the blender that's on sale.* **2.** To have just completed a particular task or goal, often a level of education. *This candidate is fresh out of college and has no teaching experience. I'm fresh out of swim practice, so I need to shower.*

be full of beans **1.** To be nonsensical. *His explanation is totally full of beans and doesn't answer the question at all.* **2.** To be very energetic. *Whenever my daughter is full of beans, I have her run around and play in our backyard.*

be full of bull To often say far-fetched, nonsensical, erroneous, or ignorant things. *Ah, don't listen to him, he's full of bull. My dad is so full of bull, it's embarrassing to listen to him talk to other people sometimes.*

be full of crap rude slang To be unreliable or ridiculous (usually because one makes unfounded or nonsensical statements). *You can't listen to Sean, he's full of crap! He doesn't know any more about robotics than we do. Oh, Stephanie is full of crap—she threatens to move out all the time. Quit trying to convince me that pigeons can swim—I know you're full of crap!*

be full of holes To be unsound or flawed. *Does anyone have a better suggestion? Mark's idea is clearly full of holes. The boss will never approve our idea if it is full of holes.*

be full of (oneself) To be conceited. *Andrew seems to honestly think that he's the greatest scholar of our time—he's so full of himself!*

be full of piss and vinegar To have an abundance or excessive amount of boisterous, youthful energy, enthusiasm, or rowdiness. *Although we were full of piss and vinegar, our team just didn't have the skill necessary to beat our cross-town rivals. It took having kids of my own to remember how*

a child can be full of piss and vinegar at 6 AM.

be full of the joys of spring To be very happy. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *I was full of the joys of spring when I found out that I'd gotten an A on my hardest exam.*

be fully paid-up member See [be a \(fully\) paid-up member of something](#).

be funeral See [be \(someone's\) funeral](#).

be gagging for it vulgar To have an intense desire for sexual intercourse. Primarily heard in UK. *Many people are under the impression that men are gagging for it 24 hours a day.*

be gagging for (something) To have a strong desire for something, especially a beverage of some kind. Primarily heard in UK, Ireland. *Good lord, I am gagging for a cup of tea.*

be game To be willing to do something. *Sure, I'm game to go to the mall. Vince is game to play basketball—why don't you go to the park with him?*

be gathered to (one's) fathers euphemism To die. *It's such a shame that Tom has been gathered to his fathers. When is his funeral?*

be given no quarter To be offered no mercy, concession, or indulgence. *We are at war with barbarians, soldier. You will be given no quarter if you are taken captive; likewise, you shall give them no quarter should you take them alive. This match determines if we're heading to the finals of the tournament, so make sure they are given no quarter!*

be glad to see the back of (someone) Be glad to see someone leave (usually because the speaker dislikes the person). *Ed has been driving me nuts with requests, so I'll be glad to see the back of him when the construction is done on his office.*

be going great guns To do something enthusiastically and successfully. *He was hesitant at first, but now that he's been on the job for a month, he's going great guns.*

be going spare To be available for one to take or claim. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *If that cake is going spare, I'll take a few pieces home with me.*

be gone on slang To be very enamored of another person. *Oh, I know he's*

gone on Christina— he won't stop gushing about her!

be good **1.** A set phrase urging one to behave. *Kids, please be good for your grandparents this weekend.* **2.** A valediction. *All right, see you next week. Be good!*

be grateful for small blessings To appreciate small or minor benefits, advantages, or opportunities one is afforded, particularly in the midst of an otherwise difficult, frustrating, or unfortunate situation or circumstance. *My car's air conditioning stopped working two hours into my cross-country road trip across America. The radio still works, though, so I guess I should be grateful for small blessings. Our son's accident left him without the use of his right eye; we're just grateful for small blessings that he still has the use of his left one.*

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be green as a gooseberry See [be \(as\) green as a gooseberry](#).

be green with envy To be very jealous of another person. *My daughter loves being on stage, so she is just green with envy that Alice got the lead in the school play. When I was a kid, I threw my brother's birthday cake on the floor because I was green with envy that it wasn't my birthday.*

be gunning for **1.** To pursue something or someone aggressively. *Even since I got that promotion, Mike has been gunning for me. I know Emily is gunning for that job, but it sounds like she has a lot of competition.* **2.** To support someone or something. *Sally is my friend, so of course I'm gunning for her in the election.*

be had To be deluded, tricked, swindled, or outsmarted. (Always used in the past tense.) *I was had by that insurance salesman. Now we're paying twice as much for a plan that, in reality, doesn't cover anything! I think you were had, my friend. That car is a complete piece of junk. The master chess player was had in the end by the young prodigy.*

be had To be deluded, tricked, swindled, or outsmarted. *I've been had by that insurance salesman. Now we're paying twice as much for a plan that, in reality, doesn't cover anything! I think you've been had, my friend. That car is a complete piece of junk. The master chess player has been had by the young prodigy.*

be had up (for something) To be indicted, arrested, and/or tried (for a crime). *The CEO was had up for embezzling nearly \$18 million of company money.*

be half-cut To be drunk. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *Do you remember last night at the pub at all? You were half-cut!*

be half-dead To be exhausted. *Don't ask her anything yet—she's half-dead until she's had a cup of coffee. I'm half-dead after studying all night.*

be half the battle (won) To represent the completion of a significant task in the process to achieve a certain goal or outcome. *If we can get the CEO to approve of our plan, that will be half the battle won. Digging the car out of the driveway will be half the battle of getting out to the store.*

be half the (something) (one) used to be To lose some of one's skill in a particular area. This phrase can also be applied derisively to men who appear to have lost their virility, especially after marriage. *After years away from the sport, she's half the swimmer she used to be—I doubt she'll place in the upcoming meet. A: "Can you believe that Joe is out shopping with his wife right now, instead of watching the game with us?" B: "Ever since he got married, he's half the man he used to be."*

be hanging over (one) To be a source of lingering concern or worry. *All these bills are hanging over me, and I don't get paid for another week. I'm so glad that exam is over—it's been hanging over me for months.*

be hard as nails See [be \(as\) hard as nails](#).

be hard hit (by something) To be adversely affected (by something) to a great degree; to suffer financial losses (as the result of something). *The seaside town was hard hit by storms this year. After the recession, all of our investments were hard hit.*

be hard on To treat someone strictly or with severe reproach. *I know I didn't do well on the exam, but I didn't expect my dad to be so hard on me about it—he grounded me for a month!*

be hard-pressed To struggle to do or accomplish something, especially because it seems impossible. *You'll be hard-pressed to find a better guy than Bill. Come on—if we don't leave soon, we'll be hard-pressed to get there on time.*

be hard put To struggle to do or accomplish something, especially because it seems impossible. *You'll be hard put to find a better guy than Bill. Come on—if we don't leave soon, we'll be hard put to get there on time.*

be hard up **1.** slang To have little to no money. *I get paid next week, so can we go out to dinner then? I'm just hard up right now.* **2.** slang To be lonely and thus accept questionable friends or lovers. *You must be hard up for friends if you're spending time with those losers.* **3.** slang To need drugs or alcohol. *Don't give him any money—I just know he's hard up for drugs.* **4.** slang To be intoxicated. *Do you remember last night at the pub at all? You were hard up!*

be head over heels (in love) To be completely enamored of someone, typically a new romantic partner. *Oh, I know he's head over heels in love with Christina—he won't stop gushing about her! We used to be head over heels, but now we just annoy each other most of the time.*

be heavy going To be difficult, especially due to being tedious, boring, or unpleasant. *Reading medieval literature is heavy going—I have to stop every few minutes to define a term I've never heard of.*

be held in high esteem To be regarded with a large amount of respect or admiration. *I'll go see if I can persuade the committee, for I am held in high esteem among them. Mr. Ross has always been held in high esteem for all his charity work.*

be held in high regard To be regarded with a large amount of respect or admiration. *I'll go see if I can persuade the committee, for I am held in high regard among them. Mr. Ross has always been held in high regard for all his charity work.*

be hell-bent on To be very determined to do something, perhaps annoyingly so. *She's hell-bent on coming here for Thanksgiving, so we better clean the guest room. I'm hell-bent on getting an A on this exam, so I've been studying all week.*

be hell on wheels To be unpleasant or difficult. *That woman is hell on*

wheels when she's angry, so don't let her into my office.

be here to stay To be permanent or firmly established; to be a normal part of everyday life, especially after once being considered abnormal or unusual. *A lot of people see the ubiquity of the Internet as the death of face-to-face communication, but at this point it is very much here to stay.*

be hers for the asking See [be \(one's\) for the asking](#).

be hers for the taking See [be \(one's\) for the taking](#).

be herself See [be oneself](#).

be higher than a kite 1. To be very intoxicated by alcohol or (especially) drugs. *I tried tutoring him in math, but he was always higher than a kite when I came by.* 2. To be elated or euphorically happy. *I was higher than a kite when I found out I got into Stanford.*

be his bag See [be \(not\) \(one's\) bag](#).

be his brother's keeper See [be \(not\) \(one's\) brother's keeper](#).

be his department See [be \(not\) \(one's\) department](#).

be his funeral See [be \(someone's\) funeral](#).

be his last resort See [be \(one's\) last resort](#).

be his main squeeze See [be \(one's/the\) main squeeze](#).

be his own man See [be \(one's\) own man/woman/person](#).

be his own master See [be \(one's\) own master](#).

be his own worst enemy See [be \(one's\) own worst enemy](#).

be his pigeon See [be \(one's\) pigeon](#).

be his strong point See [be \(one's\) strong point](#).

be his strong suit See [be \(someone's\) strong suit](#).

be history 1. To be dead, destroyed, or in deep trouble after something negative happens. Almost always used in a figurative sense. *I just got bad news from the auto repair shop—my car is history. You'll be history once the principal finds out you plagiarized that paper.* 2. To be a thing of the past; to be no longer relevant. A: *"I thought that you didn't get along with Jenny."* B: *"Oh, that's history! We're friends now." Can you please clean out all this junk? Cassette tapes are history, and there's no reason to keep them!*

be hit for six To be upset or overwhelmed, especially suddenly or unexpectedly. Primarily heard in UK. *I was completely hit for six by the news of my father's death.*

be home and dry To have successfully completed something, as a project or activity. Primarily heard in UK. *I just need one more source for this essay and then I'll be home and dry.*

be home and hosed To have successfully completed something, as a project or activity. Primarily heard in Australia. *I just need to list one more source for this essay and then I'll be home and hosed.*

be home free To be assured of success because the most difficult part is over. *Oh, we're home free now—that was the hardest part of the repair. I'm so relieved that the scans are clean. After months of treatment, I'm finally home free!*

be honor-bound to do (something) To be or feel obliged to do something because it is morally correct or required by one's sense of duty or integrity, even if one does not desire to do so. Primarily heard in US. *It pains me to turn you in to the police, my friend, but I am honor-bound to inform them of your actions.*

be hopping mad To be very angry. *Mom was hopping mad after I dented her brand-new car.*

be hot and cold 1. To feel that one's body is both hot and cold at once, as from shock or illness. *After the pneumonia took hold, she was hot and cold all night.* 2. To alternate between two opposite states, especially being enthusiastic or interested one moment and disinterested the next. *He was hot and cold throughout our entire date, so I have no idea if he wants to see me again.*

be hot off the press 1. To be freshly printed, as of a periodical. *The latest edition of the student newspaper is hot off the press, and my class is going to distribute it at lunch.* 2. To be a newly-circulating bit of news or gossip. *Did you hear that Mara dumped Jim? It's hot off the press! Hey, it's hot off the press—Greg got the promotion over Paul.*

be hot stuff 1. To be very sexually attractive or exciting. *Man, that supermodel is really hot stuff!* 2. To be particularly popular, fashionable, interesting, exciting, etc. *That new talking robotic doll is hot stuff for gift-*

seeking parents this holiday season. That new pilot thinks he's hot stuff, but he's got a lot to learn. **3.** Especially of media (such as books, magazines, videos, etc.), to be erotic or salacious. *Man, this magazine you swiped from your brother's room is hot stuff!*

be hounded (by someone or something) To be pursued, chased, badgered, or pestered (by someone or something), especially persistently or relentlessly. *The president was hounded by the media about the country's involvement in the foreign war. I'm sick of being hounded by you to finish this assignment. The suspect was hounded by police for days, being pursued as far as the border before he was finally arrested.*

be huckleberry See [be \(someone's\) huckleberry](#).

be hunky-dory slang To be fine or all right. *Don't worry about us, everything is hunky-dory here.*

be ill at ease To be nervous or anxious. *My sister loves performing, but I'm ill at ease on stage. Fred is ill at ease in big crowds.*

be in 7th heaven See [be in seventh heaven](#).

be in a bad way To be suffering or struggling in some way. *Ashley has been in a bad way ever since her mother died. Frank's illness has gotten much worse—he's really in a bad way right now.*

be in (a bit of) a jam To be in a troublesome situation. *I'm in a bit of a jam—I accidentally made plans with two different men tonight! We're in a jam now because the hotel gave our room away!*

be in a (blue) funk slang To feel sad or unhappy for a lengthy period of time. *Ever since I got rejected from my first-choice college, I've been in a funk. I'm taking Don out tonight because he's been in a blue funk since his wife left him.*

be in a blue funk **1.** To be in a melancholy, depressed, or dejected state. *Jill has been in a blue funk ever since her wife moved out.* **2.** To be in an extremely anxious, nervous, or fearful state. *I was in a blue funk waiting to hear the outcome of the surgery.*

be in a dream world To have unrealistic expectations or an unrealistic view of the world, often one that is more beneficial or positive for oneself than is the case. *You're in a dream world if you think I'm buying you a brand-new car for your birthday. With her grades, there's no way she's getting into*

Harvard—she's in a dream world.

be in a fix To be in a troublesome situation. *Boy, I'm really in a fix—I accidentally made plans with two different men tonight! We're in a fix now because the hotel gave our room away!*

be in a groove 1. To be immersed in a particular task and thus working smoothly and efficiently. *Now that I'm in a groove, I think I'll be able to finish this paper tonight—ahead of schedule! If I'm in a groove, I can clean for hours.* **2.** To become seemingly trapped or stuck in a mundane, non-changing pattern of life, work, and/or personal behavior. In this usage, "stuck" can be used after the conjugated form of "be." *I had so many ambitions when I first graduated from college, but now I feel like I'm in a groove. We're stuck in a groove—let's move abroad for the summer and shake things up!*

be in a hole slang To be in a disadvantageous position. *I'm in a hole here, trying to fix my car on the side of the road with no clue what to do! I've been in a hole with some of my friends ever since they heard that I started a rumor about them.*

be in a lather To be very nervous, distressed, or upset. *Sam is in a lather because she doesn't think her job interview went well. I told mom that we'll get there on time, but she's still in a lather about us leaving behind schedule.*

be in a pickle slang To be in a troublesome situation. The adjectives "pretty" and "right" are commonly used before "pickle." *Boy, am I in a pickle—I accidentally made plans with two different men tonight! We're in a pretty pickle now because the hotel gave our room away!*

be in a rut See [be \(stuck\) in a rut](#).

be in a sorry state To be in a very poor, pitiful, dysfunctional, or sad state or condition. *I guarantee that the company will be in a sorry state in no time if my no-account brother is put in charge. Their house has been in a sorry state ever since Dan's wife passed away.*

be in a spin To be worried and flummoxed about something. *Mom is in a spin because she just found out that we're hosting all of our relatives for Christmas—which is three days away.*

be in a spot of bother To be in a position of trouble, danger, difficulty, or unpleasantness, usually one which is not severe. *I am in a spot*

of bother with this essay. I just can't seem to get the first paragraph right. He's been in a spot of bother ever since his business partner ran off with the pension funds.

be in a stew To be worried and flummoxed about something. *Mom is in a stew because she just found out that we're hosting all of our relatives for Christmas—which is three days away.*

be in a sticky situation To be in the midst of or dealing with a particularly awkward, embarrassing, precarious, or difficult situation or circumstance. *I knew I was in a sticky situation when the boss saw me kissing his daughter at the movies. I'll be in quite a sticky situation if I arrive at the train station and don't have enough money for the tickets!*

be in a tight corner To be in a particularly difficult or awkward situation, especially one that is not easy to escape or resolve. *Jeremy's been in more tight corners since he left college than I care to recount. I just don't know what's going to become of that boy if he doesn't clean up his act soon. I'm going to be in quite a tight corner if this loan isn't approved.*

be in a tight spot To be in a particularly difficult or awkward situation, especially one that is not easy to get out of. *Jeremy's been in more tight spots since he left college than I care to recount. I just don't know what's going to become of that boy if he doesn't clean up his act soon. I'm going to be in quite a tight spot if this loan isn't approved.*

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be in a transport of delight To be extremely happy. *I've been in a transport of delight ever since I got engaged—I just can't stop looking at my ring!*

be in aid of To support or help something or someone. *The fundraiser is in aid of the local family whose house just burned down.*

be in altitudes See [be in \(one's\) altitudes](#).

be in another world To be lost in thoughts or daydreams and thus oblivious to one's surroundings. *Jill must have been in another world when I*

asked her to turn off the oven because the bread is burned now. I have no idea what the professor said during today's lecture because I was in another world the whole time.

be in apple-pie order To be very neat and organized. *Don't worry, we'll find that file—Elaine keeps all the records in apple-pie order.*

be in arms See [in arms](#).

be in bad odor with To be the target of another's anger or unhappiness. *I've been in bad odor with Tiffany ever since she found out that I started that rumor about her. You will be in bad odor with the boss if you keep coming into work late.*

be in bad with (someone) To be disliked or out of favor with someone; to be in trouble with someone. *After pointing out her mistake on the first day of class, I was in bad with my teacher for the rest of the semester. I didn't want to be in bad with the boss, so I decided to laugh at his insulting joke.*

be in bed with To be in a relationship with another person, either for business or pleasure, and often with an air of unseemliness. *I don't trust Albert because I heard he's in bed with the mob. Did you hear that Todd was in bed with his secretary? How gauche.*

be in blood See [be in \(one's\) blood](#).

be in business To be ready and able to function or begin an activity, pursuit, or task again, as after a period of dysfunction, disability, or disrepair. *The engine had to be completely overhauled, but we're in business now! Her storefront grew stagnant because of the building's poor condition, but she's in business now that the place is all fixed up!*

be in cahoots To be working together in secret, often with an air of unseemliness. *Those two have been whispering all day. I wonder what they're in cahoots about. I think all of those kids are in cahoots because they're all on the surveillance video from the night of the robbery.*

be in cloud-cuckoo land To believe in or be absorbed by unrealistic, idealized, and/or fanciful ideas that are beyond the realms of possibility. *If Tom thinks he'll be able to live off his bad poetry, he's in cloud-cuckoo land!*

be in clover To live without financial stress. *If only I could win the lottery, then I would be in clover, instead of working three jobs to pay my*

bills.

be in contact with (one) To communicate with one. *Has anyone been in contact with grandma since the storm hit? Don't worry, I'll be in contact with you once I have some more information.*

be in cups See [be in \(one's\) cups](#).

be in deep shit rude slang To be in a very troublesome situation, usually one that will trigger another person's anger and/or a severe punishment. *If we get caught breaking into school, we'll be in deep shit! I knew I was in deep-shit when I dented my mom's brand-new car.*

be in deep water To be in a dangerous, vulnerable, or troublesome situation or position, especially that which could be beyond one's abilities to resolve. *Anthony is in deep water with his creditors. If he doesn't pay off his debts, they're going to take everything he owns. I think I'm in deep water with this course—I don't know how I'll be able to catch up with all the work!*

be in dire straits To be in a very bleak or grim situation. *All of those recent layoffs indicate that the company is in dire straits. I was in dire straits there for a while, but I'm feeling much better after my hospital stay.*

be in dotage See [be in \(one's\) dotage](#).

be in eclipse To be dwindling in success or popularity. *Sure, that author was big 10 years ago, but her career is in eclipse now, and I doubt her new book will be a big seller.*

be in fighting trim To be prepared to tackle a situation, often with an emphasis on one's physical strength or readiness. Primarily heard in US. *You'll do great in the race—after months of training, you're in fighting trim.*

be in fine fettle To be in good physical and/or mental health. A: *"I heard you had the flu last week, so how are you feeling now?"* B: *"I'm finally back in fine fettle, thank goodness!"* *I was in fine fettle for a while, but now that school is over I'm feeling pretty sad.*

be in for 1. To anticipate or be very likely to experience something, usually that which will be unpleasant or undesirable. *They just called another general meeting with the staff. It looks like we're in for more bad news.* **2.** To be involved with or a part of something for a particular reason or purpose. More usually "be in it for." *I'm not really that concerned with non-profit work. I'm in for the boost it will give my career.* **3.** To be in prison or

similarly detained for a particular reason. *What are you in for? My brother is in for stealing a car.*

be in for a shock To be guaranteed to receive or experience an unexpectedly jarring outcome, especially a negative one. *If you think being a parent is easy, then you're in for a shock! Mary's been so sheltered all her life that she'll be in for a shock when she has to start paying her own bills.*

be in for a surprise To be guaranteed to receive or experience an unexpected outcome, especially a negative one. *If you think being a parent is easy, then you're in for a surprise!*

be in for a treat To be guaranteed to receive or experience something unexpectedly pleasant or beneficial. *Is this your first time seeing this movie? Gosh, you're in for a treat!*

be in for it To be very likely or guaranteed to face trouble, punishment, or retribution. *I'm telling mom and dad that you broke the window. You're in for it now! I'll be in for it once they realize the money is gone.*

be in full cry To be vocal in one's criticism. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *The students are in full cry over this movement to introduce healthier lunches.*

be in full flow To be happening at a fast pace. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *If you're not coming home for Christmas, you need to tell mom because her planning is already in full flow.*

be in full swing To be well underway and continuing at a fast pace. *If you're not coming home for Christmas, you need to tell mom because her planning is already in full swing.*

be in good company To share similarities with accomplished or respected people. *As a Harvard grad, you'll be in good company for the rest of your life. All of your sisters failed the driving test on the first try, too, and they're great drivers now, so you're in good company.*

be in hand To be stable and controlled. *There was a fire across the street, but it seems to be in hand now.*

be in hospital See [in hospital](#).

be in hot water To have provoked or incited anger, hostility, or punishment against oneself; to have caused or encountered trouble or

difficulty, especially that which will result in punishment or reprisal. *I was in a bit of hot water with Janice last night when she found out I went to the movies instead of cleaning out the garage. The senator is in hot water with constituents over his callous remarks.*

be in it for To be involved with or a part of something for a particular reason or purpose. *I'm not really that concerned with non-profit work. I'm in it for the boost it will give my career.*

be in line **1.** Literally, to wait in a line of people. *This shouldn't take much longer—mom's in line to pay right now. People who wanted to get one of the early smartphones would be in line for hours, if not days!* **2.** To be a likely recipient of something, such as a job or an award. *I'm pretty sure I'm in line for Connie's position once she retires. My daughter is a great student, so she's in line for many academic awards at graduation.* **3.** To conform, adhere to, or agree with that which is established or generally accepted, such as rules, beliefs, modes of behavior, etc. *You might have some wild ideas for the future, but you'll never get anywhere in this business if your actions aren't in line with your boss's expectations.* **4.** To be an area of skill or interest for someone. In this usage, a pronoun is usually used between "in" and "line." *My mom studied art in college, so it's not surprising that photography is in her line.*

be in line for To be a likely recipient of something, such as a job or award. *I'm pretty sure I'm in line for Connie's position once she retires. My daughter is a great student, so she's in line for many academic awards at graduation.*

be in luck To experience good fortune, typically when one's wishes are fulfilled unexpectedly. A: *"Aw, man, I can't believe I forgot to bring my headphones with me to the gym."* B: *"Well, you're in luck—I have an extra pair you can borrow."*

be in mint condition To be in pristine condition with no evidence of use or wear. *My brother made a lot of money selling vintage baseball cards that were in mint condition. My family goes to the auto show every year because we all love seeing classic cars that are in mint condition.*

be in (one's) altitudes obsolete To be inebriated. *That gentleman becomes most uncivil when he is in his altitudes.*

be in (one's) blood To be innate, as of a skill or quality. *All of my*

relatives are doctors—medical prowess is just in our blood.

be in (one's) cups To be drunk. *Do you remember last night at the bar at all? You were really in your cups!*

be in (one's) dotage To be in a state of senility or mental decline due to old age. *Just because we are in our 70s doesn't mean we are in our dotage! You'd best treat your children well, for it is they who will look after you when you're in your dotage.*

be in (one's) element To be doing something that one is very comfortable with or proficient in. *My mother is in her element in the kitchen and can make just about any dish.*

be in (one's) face slang To aggressively interact with someone, often implying physical proximity. *Why are you in my face? I wasn't lying when I told you I don't have an answer yet! Yeah, I shoved him, but he was in my face the whole game!*

be in (one's) good books To be regarded favorably by another person. *Maria has been in my good books ever since she stayed late to help me finish that project. If you want to be in the teacher's good books, try to participate more in class.*

be in (one's) hands To be one's responsibility. *You're an adult now—the decision to stay home from school is in your hands. I'll never get the promotion if the decision is in Tina's hands—she hates me!*

be in (one's) pocket To be under the direct control or influence of someone or some group. The term has a negative connotation. *It's pretty obvious that our national legislators are all in the corporate bigwigs' pockets! The principal has been in the superintendent's pocket ever since he started the job.*

be in over (one's) head To be too deeply involved in or with a difficult situation, beyond the point of being able to control or cope with things any longer. *I'm in way over my head with this money laundering scheme—now the mob is threatening my family if I try to back out! I think I'm in over my head with Amy. She wants marriage, kids, and a house, and I'm just not ready for any of that!*

be in pole position To be ideally positioned for success. The phrase comes from racing, in which the starting position at the inside of the front

row (the "pole position") is thought to improve one's chance of winning. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *She is in pole position to win the scholarship, thanks to all of her extracurricular activities.*

be in pursuit Following or chasing someone or something. *The burglar got away, but I called the police, and now they're in pursuit.*

be in Queer Street To be in a lot of debt. Primarily heard in UK. *If you keep gambling like this, you'll be in Queer Street forever.*

be in safe hands To be cared for by a responsible or trustworthy person or group. *I just got recertified in first aid, so your kids are in safe hands with me. I thought our retirement fund was in safe hands—until our broker fled the country in disgrace!*

be in seventh heaven To be extremely happy. *I've been in seventh heaven ever since I got engaged!*

be in (someone's) shoes To share a particular experience or circumstance with someone else. *It's easy to mock someone else—until you're in their shoes. As hard as it is to live with a disability, remember that you're not alone—a lot of other people are in your shoes too.*

be in tall cotton To be in a time or period of great success or wellbeing; to be doing very well. *We were in tall cotton after my wife's late uncle left us his fortune. I hear Jeff's in tall cotton out in New York City.*

be in the air 1. To be noticeable in a particular setting or group. *A buzz of excitement was in the air as the organist started playing "Here Comes the Bride."* 2. To be likely to happen soon. *When I start to smell my neighbors' fireplaces at night, it feels like winter is in the air.*

be in the balance To be in a state of jeopardy or uncertainty. *I'm afraid that my scholarship is in the balance now that I've been accused of plagiarizing a paper.*

be in the black To be financially solvent. This phrase is often applied to businesses and refers to the traditional bookkeeping practice of writing incoming funds in black ink (and outgoing funds in red). *We had a scare last quarter, but I am happy to report that we are now in the black once again! Thanks to my tax return, my bank account is officially in the black.*

be in the catbird seat See [be \(sitting\) in the catbird seat](#).

be in the chips slang To be wealthy, especially unexpectedly. Primarily heard in US. *You're in the chips now that you got the inheritance from Aunt Louise. Thanks to that huge court settlement, I'm in the chips now.*

be in the clear To be deemed innocent or to avoid blame for some crime or misdeed. *No one saw us take the money from the cash register, so we're totally in the clear! The jury deliberated and determined that my client was in the clear.*

be in the club To be pregnant. Primarily heard in UK. *Yes, it's true—I'm in the club and about three months along!*

be in the dark To not know something that other people do. *Somehow, everyone knew that Alicia had quit school except for me—I was totally in the dark. No, I don't know who's going to get the promotion—now that I'm off the executive board, I'm in the dark about a lot of things.*

be in the doghouse slang To be in trouble with someone due to one's misdeeds or blunders. *I'll be in the doghouse if I come into work late again this week. You've been in the doghouse with Maria ever since you forgot her birthday.*

be in the doldrums 1. To be depressed or in low spirits; to be lethargic, sluggish, or lacking energy. *I've been down in the doldrums ever since my grandfather died last month. I haven't really felt like going out and seeing friends lately. I'm just down in the doldrums a bit, I suppose.* 2. To be in a state of stagnation; to lack activity or progress. *After being in the doldrums for the past several years, the economy finally began to pick up over the last two months. The company has been in the doldrums ever since they replaced their CEO.*

be in the driving seat To be in control of a situation; to be in a position of power. Primarily heard in UK. *Make sure to get good grades now, so that you're in the driving seat when it comes time to choose a college. We're still leading in the polls, so nobody panic—we're in the driving seat here.*

be in the eye of the storm To be directly involved in a tumultuous situation. The "eye," or center, of a storm is surrounded by the strongest winds. *The boss is furious about this blunder—if you go into her office now, you'll be in the eye of the storm. I didn't realize that there were protests going*

on in my neighborhood today, so I was really in the eye of the storm when I left my house.

be in the firing line To be a likely target of anger, criticism, or judgment. *You will be in the firing line if you keep coming into work late. Because I'm an artist and all of my siblings are doctors, I'm always in the firing line at family functions.*

be in the first flush of To be in the beginning or early stages of something. *Of course they're happy now—they're still in the first flush of marriage!*

be in the frame To be a likely recipient of something, such as a job or an award. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *I'm pretty sure I'm in the frame for Connie's position once she retires. My daughter is a great student, so she's in the frame for many academic awards at graduation.*

be in the front line To be a likely target of anger, criticism, or judgment. *Because call center workers are in the front line, they bear the brunt of customer unhappiness.*

be in the grip of To suffer from or struggle with something that one cannot control. *I'm sorry I never called you back, I've been in the grip of illness for days. Many young people can't afford to live on their own because they are in the grip of student loan debt.*

be in the groove 1. To be immersed in a particular task and thus working smoothly and efficiently. *Now that I'm in the groove, I think I'll be able to finish this paper tonight—ahead of schedule! If I'm in the groove, I can clean for hours.* 2. To experience a particularly successful period. *Three championship titles in a row? Wow, that team is really in the groove.*

be in the hole 1. slang To lack money; to be in debt. *I'm really in the hole after that night at the casino. That vacation was great, except that I'm totally in the hole now.* 2. slang To be at a disadvantage when playing a sport, especially to be behind in points. *Boy, they're really in the hole, down three goals in the first period.* 3. To have a score lower than zero when playing a card game. *I did well with the first few hands, but now I'm constantly in the hole.*

be in the know slang To be well-informed, especially about a topic that is not widely known. *Paige is in the know, so if she says that's the best*

restaurant in town, we definitely have to go there. Ask Carrie who's going to get the promotion—she's on the executive board, so she's in the know about a lot of things.

be in the Land of Nod To be asleep. The phrase likely alludes to how one's head nods when one is falling asleep. *I would have told you this last night, but you were already in the Land of Nod, and I didn't want to wake you.*

be in the land of the living To be awake. *Well, I'm glad to see you're finally in the land of the living—it's only 2 PM.*

be in the lap of the gods To be out of one's control or power. *Now that the jury is deliberating, my fate is in the lap of the gods*

be in the limelight To be the center of attention. The phrase refers to a type of lamp that was previously used in theatrical stage lighting. *My sister loves being in the limelight, but I get really nervous on stage. Once news of this scandal breaks, our company will be in the limelight for months.*

be in the loop To be informed about and/or involved in something, such as a plan or project, especially that which involves or pertains to a specific group. *We've hired a new intern to help you with data entry, so she needs to be in the loop about the project too.*

be in the market for To be in pursuit of something. This phrase is often, but not always, used when someone is interested in buying a specific, often expensive, item. *Is it true that you're in the market for a new car? These standing mixers are beautiful, but I'm not in the market for one right now—I hardly ever bake anymore. Sam and I only broke up a few weeks ago, so I'm not in the market for a new girlfriend just yet.*

be in the money 1. slang To be wealthy, especially unexpectedly. *You'll be in the money once you get the inheritance that Aunt Louise promised you. Thanks to that huge court settlement, I'm in the money now.* 2. To finish a race in first, second, or third place. The phrase likely comes from horse racing, in which the top three finishers win prize money. *I've been training for months because I'm determined to be in the money at the end of this race.*

be in the pink 1. To be in very good health or condition. The phrase "in the pink" is often followed by "of health" or "of condition." *Jill is happy to be in the pink again after her hospital stay. Yes, I was sick a few weeks ago, but*

I'm in the pink of health now. After that long downturn, the economy is finally back in the pink. 2. To be drunk. Do you remember last night at the bar at all? You were really in the pink!

be in the pipeline To be in progress. *Don't worry, your raise is in the pipeline for next quarter. I hear some big changes are in the pipeline.*

be in the pocket To be rhythmically complementary, as of jazz or funk musicians playing together. *I can't help but dance to this record because those cats are really in the pocket.*

be in the public eye To be well-known and attract a lot of attention and scrutiny, as of a celebrity. *Yes, celebrities make a lot of money, but being in the public eye and getting recognized all the time has its drawbacks, I'm sure. It's really tough to be in the public eye while going through a divorce, but at least my fans have been supportive.*

be in the pudding club To be pregnant. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *Yes, it's true—I'm in the pudding club and about three months along!*

be in the red To be in debt. This phrase is often applied to businesses and refers to the traditional bookkeeping practice of writing outgoing funds in red ink (and incoming funds in black). *We're back in the red because sales are way down this quarter. I have so many outstanding parking tickets that I'll be in the red if I pay them all off at once!*

be in the right place at the right moment To be in a fortuitous place or position for an opportunity at the exact moment it presents itself or becomes available. *You might have all the necessary qualifications and skills, but sometimes finding a good job comes down to being in the right place at the right moment.*

be in the right place at the right time To be the recipient of good fortune, often accidentally or unintentionally, simply due to one's location and/or timing. *I guess we were in the right place at the right time because the person ahead of us in line paid for our drinks! I got that great parking space because I pulled up just as someone was leaving. Talk about being in the right place at the right time! My friend could never get promoted when she worked here, but I've been in the right place at the right time.*

be in the right spot at the right time To happen to be in a

situation where one can capitalize on or make the most of an extremely fortunate opportunity. *I got talking to the CEO of this new tech company at a party last night, and he said they're looking for developers just like me! I'm telling you, most of life's success comes from being in the right spot at the right time.*

be in the running To be eligible to win something or be appointed to some position. *I'm in the running to win a new car. There are a lot of entries, but at least there's a chance! George is in the running for the manager position, and he's the best candidate if you ask me. There are three playoff spots left—that means we're still in the running, so don't give up!*

be in the saddle To be in control of a situation; to be in a position of power. *Make sure to get good grades now, so that you're in the saddle when it comes time to choose a college. We're still leading in the polls, so nobody panic—we're in the saddle here.*

be in the same ballpark To be close to a specific cost or amount. *I will only sell the house if the buyer's offer is in the same ballpark as the price I want to get. No, the salary isn't as high as I had hoped, but I accepted it because it's in the same ballpark at least.*

be in the same boat To share a particular experience or circumstance with someone else. *My sister failed her driver's test, and I'll be in the same boat if I don't practice parallel parking. As hard as it is to live with a disability, remember that you're not alone—a lot of other people are in the same boat.*

be in the short strokes To be in the last or final stages (of something); to be nearly finished (with) or nearing completion (of something). Said especially of that which has been long, arduous, or tedious. *Now that we finally got the server online and the app stable, we're in the short strokes of making it available to users. We'll be in the short strokes once the moving van arrives with the last of our stuff from the old house.*

be in the soup To be in trouble or experiencing difficulties. *The company will officially be in the soup if it loses money again this quarter. I was in the soup after I dented my mom's brand-new car.*

be in the spotlight 1. Literally, to be positioned in a beam of light, typically while performing onstage. *The director assured me that I would be in the spotlight for my solo.* 2. By extension, to be the center of attention. *My*

sister loves being in the spotlight, but I get really nervous on stage. Once news of this scandal breaks, our company will be in the spotlight for months.

be in the swim (of things) To be actively involved in and knowledgeable about something. *It took me a few months to adjust to my new job, but now I'm really in the swim of things. I want to be in the swim when I come back from leave, so I get updates from my team every week.*

be in the thick of it To be very busy; to be in the middle of or preoccupied with something or several things. *Sorry I couldn't make it to your birthday lunch on Wednesday, I'm afraid I'm really in the thick of it at the office right now. Even when you are in the thick of it, try to take a moment each day and take a deep, calming breath.*

be in the thick of things To be very busy; in the middle of or preoccupied with something or several things. *Sorry I couldn't make it to your birthday lunch on Wednesday, I'm afraid I'm really in the thick of things at the moment. Even when you are in the thick of things, try to take a moment each day and take a deep, calming breath.*

be in the throes of To suffer from or struggle with something. *I'm sorry I never called you back, I've been in the throes of illness for days. After being in the throes of decline for months, the economy is finally starting to recover.*

be in the wind To be likely to happen, often imminently. *With the company doing so poorly these days, we're all afraid that layoffs are in the wind.*

be in the wrong To have done something incorrect or inappropriate. *The other driver was totally in the wrong—he hit me, after all! I was in the wrong to assume that you two had reconciled. I should have checked before inviting you both to the dinner party.*

be in too deep To be too involved in something to easily extract oneself or make reasonable decisions. *I know you think you're in control of this undercover operation, but you're in too deep now—you care about these people too much to arrest them! Now that we're engaged, I've realized I'm in too deep with a man I don't really love.*

be in touch To communicate with someone. *The recruiter said that he'll be in touch about the job next week. You're still in touch with Cara, right?*

How is she these days?

be in two minds To experience indecision and/or conflicting emotions. *I am in two minds about whether or not to go to the party tonight. I'm sure it will be fun, but I have a lot of work to do too. The committee is currently in two minds about a suitable punishment, but hopefully they will reach a decision in the morning.*

be in well (with) To have a friendly relationship with a powerful or important person and, usually, benefit from it in some way. Primarily heard in US. *Now that I'm in well with the CEO, I'm sure I can get you a job at our company.*

be in with a chance To have a good chance or high probability of doing or accomplishing something. Primarily heard in UK. *If the team maintains this level of success, they'll be in with a chance of winning the championship. I think Margaret is in with a chance of getting a promotion.*

be in with (someone) To be in close association with someone or some group. *I'm worried about Johnny—I think he's in with a dangerous group of people. I wish I were in with my brother's friends—they're all so cool!*

be in your altitudes See [be in \(one's\) altitudes](#).

be in your blood See [be in \(one's\) blood](#).

be in your cups See [be in \(one's\) cups](#).

be in your dotage See [be in \(one's\) dotage](#).

be in your element See [be in \(one's\) element](#).

be in your face **1.** slang To be aggressively unavoidable. In this usage, "your" is typically used in the general sense, like "one's." *I hate talking to opinionated people—their views are always in your face.* **2.** slang To aggressively interact with you, often implying physical proximity. *The salesmen are going to be in your face the moment you walk in the door, so remember to say you're just browsing. That player was really in your face during the game. You were right to give him a penalty when he got that close to complain.*

be in your good books See [be in \(one's\) good books](#).

be in your hands See [be in \(one's\) hands](#).

be in your line See [be in line](#).

be in your pocket See [be in \(one's\) pocket](#).

be in your shoes See [be in \(someone's\) shoes](#).

be it as it may Irrespective of the truth of the matter; regardless or in spite of this case or circumstances. *The government has supplied us with a grant of \$10,000 per year. Be it as it may, we still need to be careful with our existing budget.*

be joined at the hip slang To spend a lot of time with someone else, often a close friend. *Every time I see Jenna, Kelli is right there with her. Those two are really joined at the hip these days.*

be jolly hockey sticks To act or speak in an enthusiastic but disingenuous or irritating way, especially when one is of a high social class. Primarily heard in UK. *Lady Cartwright is always jolly hockey sticks, so I don't trust a word she says. I don't have the patience to be around people who are jolly hockey sticks all the time.*

be just a pretty face To be physically attractive but lack any distinguishing achievements, intelligence, abilities, or other personal characteristics. *Tiffany might be popular because of her looks now, but once we're out of college she's going to be just a pretty face.*

be just another pretty face To be physically attractive but lack any distinguishing achievements, intelligence, abilities, or other personal characteristics. *Tiffany might be popular because of her looks now, but once we're out of college she's going to be just another pretty face.*

be just before you're generous Fulfill your duties before engaging in fun activities. This phrase is often used to refer to financial matters. *Put some of your paycheck in savings right away—be just before you're generous. You need to clean your room before you go out with your friends. Be just before you're generous.*

be just the job To be well-suited for a specific task or purpose. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *I don't need a mixer with a lot of settings, so this basic one should be just the job.*

be just the same (to someone) To make no difference (to someone) one way or another; to be unimportant (to someone) what happens. *I'd*

actually prefer to continue working on a freelance basis, if it's just the same to you. If it's just the same, could we move the meeting to tomorrow afternoon instead of this evening?

be just what the doctor ordered To be exactly what one needed or wanted. The phrase does not usually refer to one's actual medical needs. *I've been working on this paper all week, so a night out with friends is just what the doctor ordered! This beach vacation was just what the doctor ordered—I've never felt more relaxed.*

be keen about To be excited about or interested in something. *Rich is very keen about this cruise he's planned for the fall. Don't take this opportunity if you aren't keen about it.*

be keen on To be excited about or interested in someone or something. *I'm glad that Jimmy and Lena are finally going on a date, since he's been keen on her for months. Don't take this opportunity if you aren't keen on it.*

be kept in the dark (about something) To be kept uninformed (about something); to be excluded from full knowledge or disclosure (of something). *The president was kept in the dark about the CIA's assassination attempt so that if things went sour and came to public light, she could claim plausible deniability. I don't fully trust John to keep our plan a secret, so I think it best that he be kept in the dark for now.*

be kept in the loop To be kept informed about and/or involved in something, such as a plan or project, especially that which involves or pertains to a specific group. *We've hired a new intern to help you with the data entry portion of the study, so be sure she's kept in the loop.*

be kept on a short leash To be strictly controlled (by someone); to not be allowed very much independence or autonomy. *George has been kept on a short leash by his husband ever since he gambled away their life savings at a poker match. Everyone feels like they've been kept on a short leash ever since that new manager took over.*

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be kicked to the curb To be discarded, abandoned, or dismissed (as from employment) due to being unwanted, obsolete, or redundant. *I can't believe that I was kicked to the curb after 20 years of hard work for that company! I think it's about time this old computer was kicked to the curb. I heard Jenny's new boyfriend has already been kicked to the curb. Easy come, easy go!*

be kicked upstairs To be promoted to a higher role or position in a company that has little actual responsibility or authority. *John was kicked upstairs to an assistant manager position so he would stop griping about his pay.*

be knee-deep in 1. To have an excessive amount of something. *Thanks to that shipping error, we are knee-deep in T-shirts right now.* **2.** To be mired in something. *We were knee-deep in mud when we heard something rustle in the high grass nearby.*

be knee-high to a grasshopper To be young. *When I was knee-high to a grasshopper, I loved playing with dolls and stuffed animals. Unfortunately, Ed's mother died when he was still knee-high to a grasshopper.*

be knocked down a notch (or two) To have one's ego or pride reduced or damaged; to be humbled or humiliated. *I hope that pompous oaf has been knocked down a notch or two after losing his court case. If Sarah keeps acting like a spoiled brat to everyone, she's going to be knocked down a notch some day.*

be knocked down a peg (or two) To have one's ego or pride reduced or damaged; to be humbled or humiliated. *I hope that pompous oaf has been knocked down a peg or two after losing his court case. If Sarah keeps acting like a spoiled brat to everyone, she's going to be knocked down a peg some day.*

be knocked out cold 1. To be or be rendered unconscious, as by a physical blow, medication, or other means. *I had a shot at a championship boxing title, but I was knocked out cold in the semi-finals. Jim's been knocked out cold by that painkiller for a few hours now. Sam drank a bit too much on her 21st birthday and was knocked out cold by 10 PM.* **2.** To be in a deep, soundless sleep, especially due to exhaustion or fatigue. *The kids are all upstairs, knocked out cold from our day's hike. My girlfriend and I were*

knocked out cold as soon as we got home from our four-hour cycle around the city.

be knocked out of the box baseball Of a pitcher, to be taken out of the game for giving up too many hits. *The pitcher has had a stellar season so far, but he was knocked out of the box not even halfway through the game against this unbeaten team.*

be knocking on heaven's door To be dying; to be approaching or very close to death (i.e., about to be admitted into the afterlife). *My grandfather fought a good fight against his stomach cancer, but I'm afraid he's knocking on heaven's door now.*

be laid to rest 1. To be buried in a grave after having died. *My poor mother was finally laid to rest after a long, painful fight with cancer. I want to be laid to rest with the seed of a tree, so that instead of a headstone, I might have a living testament to my resting place.* 2. To be resolved, ended, or set straight, as with a problem or dispute. *Well, I'm glad that point of contention between you two has finally been laid to rest. The brothers' rivalry was laid to rest after both agreed to share their father's estate equally.*

be larger than life To be (or seem) more important, impressive, or exciting than the average person or thing. *Celebrities are always larger than life to their fans. Have you seen the new stadium? It really seems like it's larger than life when you're inside.*

be last resort See [be \(one's\) last resort](#).

be left hanging (in the air/in midair) To remain unresolved or unaddressed. *I don't think he's very knowledgeable on this topic—my very basic question was left hanging in the air.*

be left holding the baby To be abandoned and burdened with the blame or responsibility of something; to be made to deal with something because no one else is willing to participate or be held accountable. Primarily heard in UK. *The CEO vanished when the police started investigating our questionable investment activity, and I was left holding the baby! John and the boys decided to go to the bar when it came time to clean up after the party, so the other wives and I were left holding the baby.*

be left holding the bag To have responsibility or guilt for something foisted upon oneself; to take the blame for something. Primarily heard in US.

My partner had been cooking the books for years, but I was left holding the bag when the business collapsed.

be left in the dark (about something) To be kept uninformed (about something); to be excluded from full knowledge or disclosure (of something). *The president was left in the dark about the CIA's assassination attempt so that if things went sour and came to public light, she could claim plausible deniability. I don't fully trust John to keep our plan a secret, so I think it best that he be left in the dark for now.*

be left in the lurch To be left or abandoned without assistance in a particularly awkward, difficult, or troublesome situation. (Sometimes written as "left in a lurch.") *I'll really be left in the lurch if the manager decides to quit before this project is finished. Janet was left in a lurch organizing her kid's birthday party when her husband decided to go on a weekend getaway with his friends.*

be left (out) in the cold To be ignored, forgotten, or excluded, as from a group, activity, benefit, etc. *You have to make sure you stand out in a company, or you might be left in the cold when it comes time to hand out promotions. Our constituency feels it has really been left in the cold during the debate around this topic.*

be left to (one's) own devices To be left unsupervised or uncontrolled; to be allowed to do as one pleases. *My job is really great: I know what I need to work on and am just left to my own devices. If left to their own devices, children will get into all sorts of mischief!*

be left to (one's) own resources To be left unsupervised or uncontrolled; to be allowed to do as one pleases. *My job is really great: I know what I need to work on and am just left to my own resources. If left to their own resources, children will get into all sorts of mischief!*

be level pegging To be equal with one's opponent(s), thus making a victory or outcome hard to predict. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *He's level pegging with the other candidate, so it's still unclear if he'll win re-election.*

be light-headed To feel dizzy, as if one might faint. *I'm light-headed because I stood up too quickly. Your mother needs to sit down, she's light-headed all of a sudden.*

be light years away To be very far away. Usually said of something that is unlikely to happen in the near future. *A major technological advancement like that is light years away.*

be light years away from To be very different from a technological predecessor. *My car is light years away from the one my grandfather had in the 1940s.*

be like a bear with a sore head To be exceptionally irritable, annoyed, or grumpy. *John is always like a bear with a sore head first thing in the morning—it's best not to even talk to him until he's had his coffee. Janet was like a bear with a sore head when she found out she had missed her connecting flight.*

be (like) a bird in a gilded cage To live a life of wealth and luxury but to be without true freedom, happiness, or contentment. *She married her husband because of his fortune, and now she is a bird in a gilded cage, living her lonely life inside their empty mansion with a man she does not love. John forsook his friends and family in the pursuit of his riches, but with no friends or loved ones, he is now like a bird in a gilded cage.*

be like a bull in a china shop To be aggressive and clumsy in a situation that requires delicacy and care. *My son is always like a bull in a china shop, so I'm worried about taking him to the museum. Surrounding him with valuables does not seem like a wise idea! This is a complex problem, and if you attack it like a bull in a china shop, you will alienate a lot of people.*

be like a cat on a hot tin roof To be anxious and unable to sit still or relax. A: "Why is Carrie pacing?" B: "She's waiting for the doctor to call with her test results, so she's been like a cat on a hot tin roof all day."

be like a child in a sweetshop To be so excited about one's surroundings that one acts in a childlike or silly way. Primarily heard in UK. *Liam loves football so much that he's like a child in a sweetshop any time he steps into the stadium.*

be like a deer caught in the headlights To be visibly startled and frozen in fear. *I was like a deer caught in the headlights when my mom asked about that hideous sweater she gave me. When the security alarm started blaring, the burglar was like a deer caught in the headlights.*

be like a dog with a bone To be fixated on a particular topic. *I was late once, and my boss is like a dog with a bone, bringing it up every chance she gets. Don't mention his ex-wife, or he'll be like a dog with a bone, and we'll hear about her all night long.*

be like a dog with two tails To be very happy and excited. *Mary's been like a dog with two tails ever since she got her promotion.*

be like a fish out of water To feel uncomfortable in a new environment. *When Carla transferred to a new school, she was like a fish out of water because she didn't know anyone there. Marie was like a fish out of water when she assumed a manger position at the company where she had worked as a clerk for so long.*

be like a kid in a candy store To be so excited about one's surroundings that one acts in a childlike or silly way. *Liam loves football so much that he's like a kid in a candy store any time he steps into the stadium.*

be like a red flag to a bull To be a willfully infuriating or aggravating provocation; to be something that incites great anger or annoyance. An allusion to matadors' practice of waving red flags at a bull during a bullfight, though the color of the flag actually makes no difference to the animal. *John's gone to gloat about his success over his brother, which is like a red flag to a bull, if you ask me. You do realize that bringing your new girlfriend to your ex-wife's house is like a red flag to a bull, right?*

be like a red rag to a bull To be a willfully infuriating or aggravating provocation; to be something that incites great anger or annoyance. An allusion to matadors' practice of waving red rags at a bull during a bullfight, though in fact the color of the rag makes no difference to the animal. *John's gone to gloat about his success over his brother, which is like a red rag to a bull if you ask me. You do realize that bringing your new girlfriend to your ex-wife's house is like a red rag to a bull, right?*

be like a spare prick at a wedding slang To feel awkward and out of place at an event. Primarily heard in UK. *I don't know anyone here, so I've been like a spare prick at a wedding, just standing in the corner by myself.*

be like Fort Knox To be inaccessible, usually because the item or place in question is locked or guarded. Fort Knox is a military site in Kentucky

where stores of gold are kept. *The kids are home by themselves, but don't worry, the house is like Fort Knox with all the security cameras. I can't get into the safe, it's like Fort Knox!*

be like herding cats To be very unwieldy or unmanageable; to be nearly impossible to organize. Usually said of a group of people. *Getting all of the extended family into their right places for the reunion photo was like herding cats! It's like herding cats trying to manage all these different software development teams.*

be like looking for a needle in a haystack To be similar to searching for something that is very difficult to locate, especially something small and/or something hidden among similar things. *Trying to find my contact lens on the floor was like looking for a needle in a haystack.*

be like oil and water To be incompatible or unable to interact or coexist easily, as due to fundamental differences in personality, opinions, beliefs, etc. *I really wish my boyfriend could get along with my friend Tara, but the two of them are like oil and water.*

be like oil and water See [be as/like oil and water](#).

be like painting the Forth Bridge To be such an involved or time-consuming improvement process that it never truly ends. The phrase refers to Edinburgh's Forth Bridge, which once required constant upkeep. Primarily heard in UK. *Remodeling our house was like painting the Forth Bridge—once we saw how nice one room looked, we had to redo another!*

be like rearranging (the) deckchairs on the Titanic To be a task, activity, or course of action that will ultimately prove trivial or futile in its possible effect or outcome. *You're giving the baby a bath before we eat spaghetti? That's like rearranging deckchairs on the Titanic.*

be like ships in the night Of two or more people, especially those who live together, to not see very much of each other; to not be in the same place at the same time very often. (A shortened version of "be like ships that pass in the night.") *Ever since Georgina started managing the restaurant at night, she and I have been like ships in the night. We've had a guy renting our spare room for the last two months. We were worried it would feel crowded, but he works so much that we're like ships in the night with him.*

be like ships that pass in the night Of two or more people,

especially those who live together, to not see each other very often; to not be in the same place at the same time very often. *Ever since Georgina started managing the restaurant at night, she and I have been like ships that pass in the night. We've had a guy renting our spare room for the last two months. We were worried it would feel crowded, but he works so much that we're like ships that pass in the night with him.*

be like taking candy from a baby slang To be an easy task. Primarily heard in US. *If you think that this game will be like taking candy from a baby, you're seriously underestimating your opponents. The security guard isn't at his post, so sneaking out should be like taking candy from a baby.*

be like talking to a brick wall To be like being ignored. *Talking to you when the TV is on is like talking to a brick wall. Hello, can you hear me? Trying to share my opinions with my grandfather is like talking to a brick wall because he views modern society with such disdain.*

be like two peas in a pod To be very similar, typically in interests, dispositions, or beliefs. *Those kids have the same wacky sense of humor—they're truly like two peas in a pod. They're like two peas in a pod, of course they're married!*

be like watching grass grow To be very dull or boring. *Everyone loves that period drama, but, to me, it's like watching grass grow. Rachel fell asleep during the big game because she thinks that watching sports is like watching grass grow.*

be like watching paint dry To be very dull or boring. *Everyone loves that period drama, but, to me, it's like watching paint dry. Rachel fell asleep during the big game because she thinks that watching sports is like watching paint dry.*

be (like) water off a duck's back To be a fleeting presence; to not have a lasting impact on someone or something. *I envy my sister because any criticism or judgment is like water off a duck's back to her.*

be little love lost between (two people) Of two people, to dislike one another very much. *There's little love lost between Sarah and my roommate, so it'll be a little awkward now that Sarah and I are dating. They were great friends when they were younger, but, for some reason, there is little love lost between them now.*

be (living) on another planet slang To be oblivious to one's surroundings or act strangely. *I have no idea what the professor said during today's lecture because I was on another planet the whole time. The millionaire investor always says something wacky in the board meetings—it's like he's on living another planet.*

be locked in a time warp To remain unchanged from a time in the past, especially in an antiquated or obsolete way. ("Time warp" is sometimes hyphenated.) *This town is so entrenched in its backwards ideals and moral values, like it's locked in a time warp or something! There's nothing digital in the house—no computers, no smartphones, just a typewriter and a single rotary telephone. Talk about being locked in a time-warp!*

be long in the tooth To be old. Animals' teeth, especially those of horses, are thought to be an indicator of age. As animals age, their gums recede, and their teeth look longer. *Our poor cat is so long in the tooth that he struggles just walking around the house these days. She's a little long in the tooth to still be working—do you think she'll ever retire?*

be looking for trouble To be doing something or acting in a manner that will very likely result in trouble, difficulty, or danger. *I'd keep your mouth shut if you want to keep your job—arguing with the boss like that is just looking for trouble! Those kids were looking for trouble when they went trespassing on my property, and now, trouble is what they're going to get!*

be losing it To start becoming crazy, insane, or mentally unstable. *I just can't seem to keep my thoughts organized anymore, and I keep forgetting names and things people have told me. I think I'm losing it!*

be lost for words To be unable to speak or articulate a coherent thought, typically because one is surprised. *When I got the call that my straight-A-student daughter had been arrested for breaking into the school, I was lost for words. When I found out that my coworkers had taken a collection to help pay for my medical bills, I was lost for words.*

be lost in translation Of a word or words, to lose the full subtlety of meaning or significance when translated from one language to another, especially when done literally. *My friend tried explaining a few French idioms to me, but I'm afraid they were lost in translation. It's amazing how much is lost in translation in the subtitles of foreign films.*

be lost on (someone) To have little or no impact or effect on someone; to not be valued, appreciated, or understood by someone. *The human cost necessary to make these first-world comforts is a hard truth that is lost on most consumers. I fear our efforts to educate John about the perils of the city may have been lost on him.*

be mad as a hatter See [be \(as\) mad as a hatter](#).

be mad as a hornet See [\(as\) mad as a hornet](#).

be mad as hops See [\(as\) mad as hops](#).

be made for 1. Of clothing, to fit someone's body well. *That suit looks like it was made for you! Wow, that dress was made for you. How much is it?*

2. To be ideally suited for someone or something. *I've never seen a happier couple than Tom and Anna—it's like they're made for each other!*

be made of sterner stuff To be very strong, determined, or of uncompromising character, especially in comparison to others. *Having to take care of both of us growing up, my brother George was made of sterner stuff as a kid than anyone else I knew. I can't believe you let us down at the last minute. I thought you were made of sterner stuff than that!*

be main squeeze See [be \(one's/the\) main squeeze](#).

be man enough To be courageous enough to do something. *Who here is man enough to try the spiciest sandwich on our menu? I was mostly raised by my father because he was man enough to stay home with the kids so that my mother could advance her career.*

be measuring for drapes See [measure for drapes](#).

be measuring the drapes See [measure the drapes](#).

be meat and drink to (someone) To be appealing and/or enjoyable to someone, especially when most people would regard the same task or topic with disdain. *Working on complex pension calculations would put me to sleep, but it's meat and drink to my brother.*

be miles away To be noticeably distracted and unfocused. *Of course you don't remember me saying that—you were miles away the whole time! It's the last day before Christmas break, so my students are miles away.*

be mine for the asking See [be \(one's\) for the asking](#).



be mine for the taking See [be \(one's\) for the taking](#).

be model of See [be \(a/the\) model of](#).

be money for jam To be a very quick and easy way to earn money. Primarily heard in UK. A: *"I'm getting paid to stay in my neighbours' mansion while they're on holiday."* B: *"Wow, that'll be money for jam!" I love working on bicycles, so this job will be money for jam.*

be money for old rope To be a very quick and easy way to earn money. Primarily heard in UK. A: *"I'm getting paid to stay in my neighbour's mansion while they're on holiday."* B: *"Wow, that'll be money for old rope!" I love working on bicycles, so this job will be money for old rope.*

be more Catholic than the Pope (himself) 1. To be more stringently adherent to the laws, tenets, and doctrines of the Catholic faith than is taught or required by the papacy or the Church as a whole. (Usually used hyperbolically as a negative or mocking criticism of someone as being overly pious.) *I can't believe we're not allowed to eat meat on Fridays while we're staying with Grandma. She's more Catholic than the Pope himself! Ah, would you stop with your protestations of our mortal sins and telling us to repent every minute of the day! I swear, you're more Catholic than the Pope.* 2. By extension, to be more extreme in one's beliefs, behavior, attitudes, etc., than that of the prevailing authority or standard of normalcy. *After a year, Jake had started using every dialectic cliché and slang word he had heard in his adopted country, and soon, he was more Catholic than the Pope, so to speak.*

be more fun than a barrel of monkeys To be very fun and enjoyable. Primarily heard in US. *I always have a great time when Katie's around—she's more fun than a barrel of monkeys!*

be more trouble than it's worth To not be important, useful, or beneficial enough to justify the effort or difficulty that something requires. *With all the repairs this car will need to be road-worthy, it's going to be more trouble than it's worth!* A: *"Why don't you apply to some community service projects during summer vacation?"* B: *"Eh, it's more trouble than it's worth."*

be mother To pour tea or serve food, as it was traditionally the mother who served such things in the household. Most often used in the phrase, "Shall I be mother?" Primarily heard in UK. *Sit yourself down, relax, and let*

me be mother. The tea's ready, shall I be mother?

be much of a muchness slang To be excessively alike. *I asked the realtor to find an older home with some charm and character because the new construction houses in this neighborhood are all much of a muchness to me.*

be music to (one's) ears To be exciting or pleasant to hear. *School being closed for a snow day was music to my kids' ears. After such a stressful day at work, news that my friends had to cancel our dinner was music to my ears.*

be my bag See [be \(not\) \(one's\) bag](#).

be my brother's keeper See [be \(not\) \(one's\) brother's keeper](#).

be my department See [be \(not\) \(one's\) department](#).

be my funeral See [be \(someone's\) funeral](#).

be my guest A set phrase encouraging or allowing someone else to take action. A: "Do you mind if I order another glass of wine?" B: "Not at all—be my guest."

be my last resort See [be \(one's\) last resort](#).

be my own man See [be \(one's\) own man/woman/person](#).

be my own master See [be \(one's\) own master](#).

be my own worst enemy See [be \(one's\) own worst enemy](#).

be my pigeon See [be \(one's\) pigeon](#).

be my strong point See [be \(one's\) strong point](#).

be my strong suit See [be \(someone's\) strong suit](#).

be myself See [be oneself](#).

be near the knuckle To be likely to offend others, especially due to being sexually explicit or suggestive. A: "What did you think of the awards ceremony last night?" B: "I found the presenter's jokes to be too near the knuckle for my taste." *If you want to be a great comedian, you can't be afraid of being near the knuckle from time to time.*

be near to impossible To be of such difficulty as to be or seem almost impossible. *The promises of the candidate during her presidential campaign*

are near to impossible to achieve, but they have garnered a huge following of dedicated supporters.

be neither fish nor fowl To be difficult to describe or definitively categorize. *What genre of music is this? It's neither fish nor fowl to me.*

be neither one thing nor the other To be an unappealing combination of two very different things. A: *"I thought you liked country and jazz."* B: *"I do, and that's why this band is so disappointing—it's neither one thing nor the other."*

be new to the game To be inexperienced in a particular area. (Despite its use of the word "game," this phrase does not usually refer to sports.) *I know my employees are skeptical of me because I'm new to the game—I need to find a way to gain their trust.*

be nip and tuck slang To have a very close margin between the competitors in a contest or competition. Primarily heard in US. *This race has been nip and tuck, and we won't know who has won until the final vote is counted.*

be no ball of fire To lack energy and enthusiasm. Primarily heard in US, Australia. *Carla is no ball of fire, so make sure you remind her to do that assignment—I doubt she's even started it.*

be no bed of roses To be a challenging and/or unpleasant situation. *Of course that project is no bed of roses—why else would they assign it to a lowly intern like me? Being around my ex-boyfriend is no bed of roses.*

be no fool To be worldly and difficult to trick or deceive. *Your teacher is no fool—she'll never believe that your homework blew away on your walk home from school.*

be no good to man or beast To be completely useless; to serve no purpose; to be unsuitable to anyone or anything. *I admire the intelligence with which you argue your points, friend, but unless you're willing to put your words into action, I'm afraid your philosophizing is no good to man or beast. After 20 years, my faithful old truck finally broke down for good. It's no good to man or beast anymore.*

be no great shakes slang To be mediocre, unimpressive or disappointing. *I don't know why everyone loves that restaurant so much—I've been there before, and it's no great shakes. That defenseman makes a lot of*

money, but if you ask me, he's no great shakes.

be no joke **1.** To be a serious and important topic or situation. *Your grades are no joke. Unless you want to repeat the ninth grade, you need to start studying.* **2.** To be impressive, especially more so than one or others originally thought. *Wow, this restaurant is no joke. All the great reviews were right. This boxer is no joke. You've got to take him seriously or you'll find yourself knocked out.*

be no laughing matter To be a serious and important topic or situation. *Your grades are no laughing matter. Unless you want to repeat the ninth grade, you need to start studying.*

be no love lost between (two people) To be only dislike or hate between two people. *There's no love lost between Sarah and my roommate, so it'll will be a bit awkward now that Sarah and I are dating. They were great friends when they were younger, but for some reason there is no love lost between them now.*

be no match for To be deemed inferior or powerless in comparison to a certain person or thing. *They've only won twice this season, so of course they're no match for their championship-caliber opponent. Yes, the house is filthy, but don't worry—it's no match for my cleaning service.*

be no mean feat To be a considerably great, difficult, or noteworthy achievement or outcome. *Defeating an incumbent president is no mean feat, but we feel confident that our candidate has what it takes. Well done, John. Getting an A+ on that exam was no mean feat!*

be no oil painting To be physically unattractive. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *Jack's a nice guy, he's just no oil painting, you know?*

be no picnic To be not an easy task; to be unenjoyable or challenging. *I love kids, but watching 20 of them at once is no picnic, believe me! Spending a beautiful Saturday afternoon cleaning out the garage is no picnic.*

be no quarter given To have no mercy, concession, or indulgence offered. *We are at war with barbarians, soldier. There will be no quarter given if you are taken captive, and you shall give them no quarter should you capture them. The match would determine which team made it to the finals of the tournament, so there was no quarter given by either side.*

be no question of (doing) (something) To be no possibility that

something will be done or is the case. (Note: Often confused with the phrase "be no question *that*" something will happen/is the case, which means that what is being discussed is absolutely certain.) *For the record, in the eyes of this administration, there is no question of the Senator's being involved in any untoward business activities. If Justin's sales slump continues, there will be no question of a promotion any longer.*

be no question that (something will happen/is the case)

To be absolutely certain that something will happen, be done, or be the case. (Note: Often confused with "be no question *of*" doing something, which means that there is no possibility that something will be done or is the case.) *If you ask me, there's no question that there is something fishy going on with the company's cash flow. I just know that if you keep working hard, there will be no question that you'll be promoted soon.*

be no screaming hell To be rather unremarkable or unimpressive. Primarily heard in Canada. *My job may be no screaming hell, but I get a steady pay cheque every week and that's good enough for me right now. It was a pretty lame club. The music was mediocre, and the women there were no screaming hell.*

be no skin off (one's) back To be no cause of concern or interest to one; to pose one no difficulty, threat, or risk. *Hey, it's no skin off my back if you want to get a tattoo. I'm just saying that it's something you may regret someday. We all knew that the head chef was stealing from the kitchen, but it was no skin off our backs so we just kept our mouths shut. A: "Do you mind if I store some of my stuff in your garage for a while?" B: "Eh, it's no skin off my back."*

be no slouch To be very hardworking, enthusiastic, and/or skillful. *Tom might not be the friendliest coworker in the world, but he's no slouch when it comes to running the company's IT systems.*

be no spring chicken slang To no longer be youthful. A "spring chicken" is in fact a young chicken. *I'm no spring chicken, so I can't stay out till 2 AM drinking and dancing anymore.*

be no use to beast or man See [be \(of\) no use to man or beast](#).

be none the wiser 1. To not be aware of something (typically because others have kept it a secret). *I came in after curfew last night, but it's OK because I was so quiet that my parents are none the wiser.* 2. To not

understand something, even after receiving explanations and information about it. *My tutor has explained the quadratic equation to me many times, but I'm still none the wiser.*

be not a bed of roses To be a challenging and/or unpleasant situation. *Of course that project is not a bed of roses—why else would they assign it to a lowly intern like me? Being around my ex-boyfriend is not a bed of roses.*

be (not) a patch on To be just as good as someone or something else. Often used in the negative to emphasize someone or something's inadequacy. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *Alice is a patch on the lead actress in the school play, which is why she was chosen as the understudy. I loved my old boss—this new guy is not a patch on her.*

be (not) a pretty sight To be visually pleasing or attractive. This phrase is often used in the negative to convey ugliness or disorder. *All the Christmas lights on our street are a pretty sight! After that accident, my car was not a pretty sight—the bumper was practically hanging off!*

be (not) all beer and skittles To be fun and enjoyable. This phrase is often used in the negative to convey unpleasantness. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *You've been working all weekend, so just come out with us for a little while—it'll be all beer and skittles, I promise. University isn't all beer and skittles—you need to take your schoolwork seriously.*

be (not) all fun and games To be very enjoyable and pleasant. This phrase is often used in the negative to convey difficulty or a lack of fun. *College isn't all fun and games—you need to take your schoolwork seriously.*

be not all it's cracked up to be To be not as good, enjoyable, special, or worthwhile as people insist or believe. *Honestly, the movie isn't all it's cracked up to be. Maybe I'm just not the right audience for it. If you ask me, long-term relationships just aren't all they're cracked up to be.*

be (not) all moonlight and roses To be very enjoyable and pleasant, especially of a romantic situation. This phrase is often used in the negative to emphasize difficulties in a romantic relationship. *I thought that dating an actress would be all moonlight and roses, but she travels so much that I hardly ever see her. Living with a boyfriend or girlfriend is not all moonlight and roses, you know.*

be not anything to write home about See [not anything to write](#)

[home about.](#)

be (not) as black as (someone/something) is painted To be as bad or unpleasant as someone or something is rumored to be. This phrase is often used in the negative to convey the opposite. *That class is as black as it is painted—I've never had so much homework in my life! Mr. Stewart may yell a lot, but he's not as black as he is painted—he's actually helped me carry my groceries many times.*

be (not) backward in coming forward To be reluctant or hesitant to voice one's opinion. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *I should have known that Josh would criticize my entire paper—he's not backward in coming forward. Patty tends to be backward in coming forward, so I don't think she'll say anything tonight.*

be (not) big on (something) To be very interested in something and prioritize it. *My friends love going to clubs, but I'm not big on dancing. My family is big on education, so I know I'm going to college next year.*

be (not) comme il faut To be appropriate or correct behavior, as in a social situation. *Comme il faut* is French for "as is proper." *It is not comme il faut to overshadow the bride at a wedding.*

be not for the faint-hearted To be unsuitable for those who are easily stressed or frightened. *That horror movie is definitely not for the faint-hearted. I don't scare easily, and I screamed the whole time! Working in an operating room is not for the faint-hearted.*

be not half bad To be fine or acceptable, perhaps surprisingly so. *Wow, this dinner isn't half bad—I can't believe Lindsay made it all by herself! The kids' play really isn't half bad, if you want to come see it over the weekend.*

be not having any (of it) 1. To not want any part (in something); to be completely disinterested (in something). *My mother wasn't having any of it when I suggested she come bungee jumping with us. Hiking in this weather? No thank you, I'm not having any!* 2. To completely disagree (with something); to not believe something at all. *I tried to pass it off like it was the dog that broke the lamp, but my wife wasn't having any of it. We laid out our reasons for voting "Yes" in the referendum, but our neighbor wasn't having any.*

be not in Kansas anymore To no longer be in a place that one

knows or where one is comfortable; to be in a completely unfamiliar and/or discomfiting environment. A reference to *The Wizard of Oz*, in which Dorothy, upon arriving to Oz, says, "Toto, I've a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore." *It can actually be quite shocking to finish college and enter the workforce, because suddenly you realize that you aren't in Kansas anymore and life operates in a totally different way now. As we walked into the bustling streets of Delhi, we knew we weren't in Kansas anymore.*

be not just a pretty face To have distinguishing achievements, intelligence, skills, or abilities beyond what was or may have been assumed. *Sure I know how to fix your computer. I'm not just a pretty face, you know! A: "I didn't know Jerry had a PhD in engineering." B: "I guess he's not just a pretty face."*

be not just another pretty face To have distinguishing achievements, intelligence, skills, or abilities beyond what was or may have been assumed. *Sure I know how to fix your computer; I'm not just another pretty face, you know! Bob: "I didn't know Jerry had a PhD in engineering." Dave: "I guess he's not just another pretty face."*

be not long for this world To be approaching death. *Mabel is not long for this world—her health is rapidly declining. Those flowers are so wilted that they're definitely not long for this world.*

be not much between the ears To be rather stupid, dull, or dimwitted; to not have much common sense or basic intelligence. *She seems nice enough, but I get the sense that there might not be much between the ears. Jake's boyfriend is incredibly attractive, but there isn't much between the ears from what I can tell.*

be not much cop To be not very good; to be not noteworthy or exceptional at all. Primarily heard in UK. *I was really looking forward to the film, but it was not much cop, I'm afraid. I just wasn't much cop as an accountant, so I packed up my career and spent a year travelling abroad.*

be not much to look at A euphemism to describe someone deemed physically unattractive. *Jack's a nice guy, he's just not much to look at, you know?*

be (not) on speaking terms To have an amicable, although perhaps guarded or superficial, relationship with someone. This phrase is often used in the negative to show that two people are estranged. *It took a long time, but*

my ex-husband and I are finally on speaking terms these days. After that argument last night, I'm not on speaking terms with Stephanie. I don't know Kyle that well, but we're on speaking terms, and he seems nice enough.

be (not) (one's) bag slang To be something that one is interested in or enjoys. *Dancing just isn't my bag—I always look really foolish. You can tell just by looking at her that fashion design is her bag.*

be not (one's) bag To not be something one prefers, desires, enjoys, or cares about. *Thank you for the invitation, but long-distance cycling just isn't really my bag. When I found out that reading wasn't his bag, I knew that there wasn't much of a relationship in store between us.*

be (not) (one's) brother's keeper To be responsible for another person's actions. This phrase is often used in the negative and can refer to anyone (not just one's literal brother). *Of course I'm disappointed that Travis got arrested again, but I'm not my brother's keeper. When I'm babysitting him, I'm my brother's keeper.*

be not (one's) cup of tea To not be something one prefers, desires, enjoys, or cares about. *Thank you for the invitation, but long-distance cycling just isn't really my cup of tea. When I found out that reading wasn't his cup of tea, I knew that there wasn't much of a relationship in store between us.*

be (not) (one's) department To be one's area of expertise or responsibility. *I can't approve expense reports—that's not my department. Car repair is my dad's department, so he should be able to help you out.*

be not (oneself) To not feel physically or mentally well, or as one normally should. *I'm sorry for getting upset at you earlier, I'm just not myself today. I know Mary hasn't been herself ever since she lost her job.*

be (not) out of the woods To have endured a difficult, unpleasant, or uncertain situation. This phrase is used in the negative when a situation has improved but is not entirely resolved. *For a while, it looked like our school was going to have to close, but thanks to an anonymous donor, we're out of the woods now. These blood test results are a good sign, but you're not out of the woods just yet.*

be not right in the head To be mentally unwell or unstable. The term can be used both literally and hyperbolically. *Tim has been behaving very erratically lately, so I'm afraid that he's not right in the head. Oh, Liz is not*

right in the head if she thinks that plan will work!

be not rocket science To not be a pursuit, activity, or endeavor that requires extraordinary skill or intelligence. *Look, all you need to do is reformat the hard drive on your computer. It isn't rocket science! Sure, it took a little bit of time to figure out, but reinstalling the modem wasn't rocket science or anything.*

be not short of a bob or two To be wealthy. (A "bob" is another name for a shilling.) Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *I hear her father is not short of a bob or two, so I wouldn't be too worried about her future.*

be not short of a penny (or two) To be exceptionally wealthy; to have no concerns regarding money. A: *"I just heard Sarah just lost her job!"* B: *"Well, her husband's family isn't short of a penny, so I think they'll be just fine." I once dated a guy who, though he was never short of a penny or two, was the most miserly person I'd ever met. He wouldn't even tip when we went out to eat!*

be not something to write home about See [not something to write home about](#).

be not the done thing Of a given behavior, to be unacceptable, inappropriate, or incorrect in a particular social situation. Primarily heard in UK. *You should know better than to wear a skirt like that to a formal dinner; it is simply not the done thing! I'm so glad smoking indoors is not the done thing anymore!*

be (not) the end of the world To be a very big deal or problem. Often used in the negative to describe a situation that one believes is being exaggerated. *I know you're upset that you failed a test, but, really, it's not the end of the world! You might think that not getting your driver's license today is the end of the world, but it's not. In five years, you won't even remember this day!*

be not the full quid slang To be a bit crazy or wacky. Primarily heard in Australia. *He's not the full quid if he thinks that plan is going to work. Of course he's not the full quid—he's wearing pajamas at the beach!*

be (not) the marrying kind To be a person who is interested in getting married. This phrase is often used in the negative to convey a disinterest in or opposition to marriage. *Considering how many the women*

he's dated in the past year alone, Jack is not the marrying kind! Oh, you're the marrying kind—you just haven't met the right person yet.

be not up to scratch See [not up to scratch](#).

be not up to snuff See [not up to snuff](#).

be not up to the mark To be not as good as what was expected, required, or demanded; to be unsatisfactory. *Jim, I know you've had a lot going on at home, but these reports just aren't up to the mark. I used to eat there all the time, but to be honest, their food hasn't been up to the mark recently.*

be (not) well up on (something) To be knowledgeable about a particular subject or issue. *My sister did her thesis on robotic surgery, so she is very well up on healthcare technology. I'm not too well up on the policy changes happening this year—is there a reference guide I can consult?*

be not what it's cracked up to be To be not as good, enjoyable, special, or worthwhile as people insist or believe. *Honestly, the movie isn't what it's cracked up to be. Maybe I'm just not the right audience for it. If you ask me, long-term relationships just aren't what they're cracked up to be.*

be not worth a brass farthing To be completely worthless or useless; to have little or no value. Refers to farthings (obsolete British units of currency, worth one-quarter of a penny), formerly made from a copper alloy (brass). Primarily heard in UK. *I was so excited when my grandfather said he'd give me his car, but this old clunker isn't worth a brass farthing. Over the years working here, I've come to realize that the boss's word isn't worth a brass farthing.*

be not worth a plug nickel obsolete To be completely worthless or useless; to have little or no value. (A variant of "not worth a plugged nickel.") Refers to coins (not only nickels) that were "plugged"—that is, those that had a hole drilled in their center and were filled with cheaper metals—which made the coins illegitimate and worthless if spotted. Primarily heard in US. *I was so excited when my grandpa said he'd give me his car, but this old clunker isn't worth a plug nickel. Over the years working here I've come to realize that the boss's promises aren't worth a plug nickel.*

be not worth writing home about See [not worth writing home about](#).

be not your bag See [be not \(one's\) bag](#).

be not your bag See [be \(not\) \(one's\) bag](#).

be not your brother's keeper See [be \(not\) \(one's\) brother's keeper](#).

be not your cup of tea See [be not \(one's\) cup of tea](#).

be not your department See [be \(not\) \(one's\) department](#).

be nothing (much) to write home about To be not especially remarkable or noteworthy; to be rather dull, mediocre, uninteresting, or unimportant. A: *"Have you eaten in that new sushi restaurant yet?"* B: *"Yeah, I went there last week. It was OK, but it's nothing to write home about."* His performance has been nothing much to write home about so far. To be honest, we were expecting much more from him when we recruited him.

be nothing short of (something) To be exemplary a particular quality. (That quality is then stated after "of.") *It's nothing short of astonishing that she got the whole house cleaned in time for her dinner party. I'm surprised we weren't asked to leave the restaurant because the kids' behavior was nothing short of atrocious.*

be nothing special To be not particularly wonderful, remarkable, beautiful, great, etc. A: *"How's your sandwich?"* B: *"Eh, it's nothing special."* I don't know why everyone is so enamored of this actress; she's nothing special, in my opinion.

be nothing to shout about To be not especially remarkable or noteworthy; to be rather dull, mediocre, uninteresting, or unimportant. A: *"Have you eaten in that new sushi restaurant yet?"* B: *"Yeah, I went there last week. It was OK, but it's nothing to shout about."* His performance has been nothing to shout about so far. To be honest, we were expecting much more from him when we recruited him.

be nutty as a fruitcake See [be \(as\) nutty as a fruitcake](#).

be of a piece See [be \(all\) of a piece](#).

be of like mind To share a similar viewpoint, as within a group of people. *My whole family is of like mind with their political views. My fiancé and I are of like mind on many things, but we just can't agree on how many guests to invite to our wedding.*

be of no account To be of no or very little importance, significance, or

worth. *Seeing as his contributions to this institution have been of no account, we're considering cutting his funding. Don't worry, the investigators on this case are of no account, so I'm confident our involvement will go undetected.*

be (of) no use to man or beast To be completely useless; to serve no purpose; to be unsuitable to anyone or anything. *I admire the intelligence with which you argue your points, friend, but unless you're willing to put your words into action, I'm afraid your philosophizing is of no use to man or beast. After 20 years, my faithful old truck finally broke down for good. It's no use to man or beast anymore.*

be of (one's) own making Of a problem or situation, to be created or caused by one. *No one is mad at you—that whole scenario is of your own making.*

be of sound mind **1.** To have full, unimpaired thought, memory, and cognitive understanding; able to think and understand for oneself. *My grandfather may be in a wheel-chair at 94, but he's still of sound mind—sharper than a lot of people I know, actually!* **2. law** By extension, to be fully mentally competent and thus able to stand trial or be otherwise legally responsible. *The state-appointed psychiatrist determined that the defendant was not of sound mind when signing the contract, and thus is not legally bound to honor the terms therein.*

be of two minds To experience indecision and/or conflicting emotions. *I am of two minds about whether or not to go to the party tonight. I'm sure it will be fun, but I have a lot of work to do too. The committee is currently of two minds about a suitable punishment, but hopefully they can reach a decision in the morning.*

be of unsound mind To have impaired or dysfunctional thought, memory, and/or cognitive understanding; unable to think and/or understand for oneself. *My poor grandfather has been of unsound mind ever since he suffered that stroke last year.*

be off **1.** To leave a place or to depart to another one. Though formerly used as an imperative, this use is now rare. *I'm just off to the bar for a few drinks, I shouldn't be there long. I think I'll be off, talk to you soon.* **2.** Of food, to be spoiled, rotten, or past its prime. *This chicken is definitely off, it stinks!* **3.** To be slightly unwell or in poor condition. *My stomach is off, I think it's from something I ate. I'm not sure what's wrong, I'm just a bit off today.* **4.** To be

incorrect, faulty, or in poor condition. Often used with qualifying words, such as "a bit," "far," "really," etc. *It was a nice guess, but you're a little off. That radio is a bit off, it's picking up mostly static. I think we need a different color paint, this one is a little off.* **5.** Without obligation to or free from something, especially work or school. *I'm finally off for my summer vacation! Jonah's off today, he'll be back in the office on Monday.* **6.** In stocks and finance, to be trading at a value lower than the previous one or lower than the value that was expected or hoped for. *The market is off by a huge margin today. This could spell trouble for the economic recovery. The company's stocks are off another 200 points as of this afternoon.* **7.** To be somewhat strange, crazy, or awkward. Often used with "a bit" or "a little." *There's a guy on our corner who shouts about the end of the world; I think he's a little off.*

be off base **1.** To be inaccurate or wrong. *I never once said that! Your reporter is completely off base in her accusations. I thought I knew what real estate costs around here, but wow, I was totally off base.* **2.** Of a runner in baseball, to not be touching the base. *The pitcher saw that the runner at first was off base and threw him out.*

be off beam To be inaccurate or wrong. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *I never once said that! Your reporter is completely off beam in her accusations. I thought I knew what real estate costs around here, but wow, I was totally off beam.*

be off-color To be rude or vulgar; to be likely to offend others, especially due to being sexually explicit or suggestive. Primarily heard in US. A: *"What did you think of the awards ceremony last night?"* B: *"The presenter's jokes were a bit too off-color for my taste."*

be off-kilter **1.** To be out of equilibrium; to not be straight, level, or aligned properly; to be in a state of chaos or confusion. *I've been off-kilter ever since I got that blow to the head during football practice. The economy is still off-kilter in many countries across Europe, even as the global economy has started to recover.* **2.** To not be working correctly or properly; to be out of order; to be out of w(h)ack. *It sounds like your car's engine is a bit off-kilter. I'd recommend taking it to a mechanic before you go for any long drives.*

be off like a prom dress (in May) humorous To leave or depart very quickly or suddenly. Likened crassly to the stereotypical quickness or

eagerness with which American high school students have sexual intercourse after the prom. Primarily heard in US. *I'll have just one more drink, but I've got to be off like a prom dress after that. Jared was off like a prom dress in May once his ex-girlfriend showed up to the party.*

be off (one's) chump To be crazy. In the UK, "chump" is a slang term for "head." Primarily heard in UK. *You're off your chump if you think that plan will work.*

be off (one's) dot To be crazy or mentally unsound; to be extremely foolish or foolhardy. *I'm going to go off my dot if I have to hear that blasted song once more! I think Jane's grandmother is a little off her dot these days. You must be off your dot if you think that's a good idea!*

be off (one's) guard To not be especially careful or vigilant; to not be prepared for danger or surprises. *We'll wait until he's off guard, and then we'll take him and his company for all they're worth! Don't be off your guard, there are a lot of suspicious characters around here!*

be off (one's) nut slang To be crazy and/or wacky. Usually used humorously. *Don't listen to a word he says, he's off his nut! You're off your nut if you think that plan will work.*

be off (one's) rocker To be crazy or mentally unsound; to be extremely foolish or foolhardy. *I think Jane's grandmother is a little off her rocker these days. You must be off your rocker if you think that's a good idea!*

be off (one's) trolley slang To be crazy and/or wacky. Usually used humorously. *Don't listen to a word he says, he's off his trolley! You're off your trolley if you think that plan will work.*

be off the beaten path To be little-known or in a remote or lesser-known area, as of a place or business. Primarily heard in US. *We'll definitely be able to get a table at that restaurant, it's really off the beaten path. I chose that island as a vacation spot because I knew it was off the beaten path and would give me some much-needed solitude.*

be off the beaten track To be little-known or in a remote or lesser-known area, as of a place or business. *We'll definitely be able to get a table at that restaurant, it's really off the beaten track. I chose that island as a vacation spot because I knew it was off the beaten track and would give me some much-needed solitude.*

be off the grid **1.** To live without one's home connected to municipal utility systems, such as water supply or the main electrical grid. *I just need to get enough solar panels installed to disconnect from the city's electricity supply, and then I'll be off the grid.* **2.** To exist outside of governmental observation; to be untraceable through any means of commerce or communication that could be linked to one's identity. *Fearing for his life, the whistle-blower from the intelligence agency was forced to be off the grid for a number of years, eschewing anything that might leave a digital footprint for someone to find.*

be off the ground To be well underway; to be at a point of stable or self-sufficient progress or development. *Now that this project is finally off the ground, we can start to focus some of our attention on other areas of the business. Jack just wants to wait until the company is off the ground a bit before we begin any major media campaigns.*

be off the hook **1.** To be pardoned, vindicated, released, or allowed to avoid blame, responsibility, obligation, or difficulty. *At first, Sam was suspected of stealing money from the safe, but he was off the hook after security camera footage showed it was someone else. A: "I thought you had that big work event tonight." B: "No, it got canceled, so I'm off the hook."* **2.** Of a telephone receiver, to not be positioned on the cradle. *That's why you couldn't get through to grandma's house—her phone was off the hook.* **3.** slang To be very enjoyable or appealing. *That band's new song is really off the hook!*

be off the mark To be inaccurate or wrong. *I never once said that! Your reporter is completely off the mark in her accusations. I thought I knew what real estate costs around here, but wow, I was totally off the mark.*

be off the radar To go ignored, unnoticed, or appreciated; to not be relevant, prominent, or important. *Though they've been prolific music-makers for years, their work has largely been off the radar for most listeners until quite recently. Even though homelessness can be seen as one of the largest underlying causes of societal ills, it is sadly just off the government's radar.*

be off the rails **1.** To be in a state of chaos, dysfunction, or disorder. *Our project has been off the rails ever since the manager up and quit last month.* **2.** To be crazy, eccentric, or mentally unhinged. *I think you should cut back on your drinking—you were totally off the rails last night!*

be off the reservation 1. To be outside the bounds of control, propriety, or acceptance of a given group. The phrase refers to the forced relocation of Native Americans to Indian reservations in the United States. Because of this origin, the phrase can be considered offensive or inappropriate. *The youths in this area act like they are off the reservation more and more these days, disregarding anything they see as a form of authority.* 2. To think or act differently or contrary to the accepted norm. *The vice president seems to be off the reservation regarding his views on legalizing marijuana.*

be off the (starting) blocks To be working on a certain activity. (Runners are positioned at the "starting blocks" at the beginning of a race.) *The construction crew is already off the blocks, so you need to call them right now if you want to stop the project.*

be off the table To be withdrawn or no longer available, as for consideration, acceptance, discussion, etc. *I wouldn't wait too long to accept the job offer—it might be off the table before you know it. Before we begin this debate, let me clarify that you are both to focus solely on the question of the economy; all other topics are off the table.*

be off the wall To be strange, wacky, or unusual. *Her hypothesis is really off the wall, but the facts seem to support it. The millionaire investor is a little off the wall, and you never know what he's going to say in the board meetings.*

be off to a false start To make a failed, impaired, or underdeveloped beginning at something. Taken from racing, when a participant begins before the starting signal has been given. *The small nation has been off to a few false starts since gaining independence, but it is now starting to find some economic and political stability. We knew the company was off to a false start, but, unfortunately, there was no way to put things on hold once the wheels were in motion.*

be OK To be fine; to be not especially good or bad. A: "How have you been?" B: "Oh, I've been OK." *These fries are OK, but they're not the best I've ever had.*

be old as the hills See [be \(as\) old as the hills](#).

be on 1. To be taking or under the influence of drugs (legal or illegal).

They've got me on a load of antibiotics to fight off the infection. He acts so crazy that sometimes I wonder if he's on drugs! **2.** To be performing or displayed, as on a stage, on television, or in a venue. *That new play is on at the National Theater this evening. They're showing my favorite film on TV tonight! I hear there's a great new band on at the bar down the road.* **3.** To perform exceptionally well or impressively. *The home team is really on tonight, it looks like they'll have an easy victory.* **4.** To be in support of, have interest in, or plan to participate in some activity or thing. *Yeah, I'm on for having a few drinks later! Mary said she's on to go to a movie tonight.* **5.** To do something as planned or according to schedule. *Are you still on to pick me up from the airport tomorrow? The meeting is on at five o'clock.*

be on a collision course Of a person, group, or object, to be on a certain path to conflict, collision, destruction, or ruin with someone or something else. *The radical coalition is set to be on a collision course with the majority government this year. Little did the passengers know that their train was on a collision course with disaster.*

be on a hiding to nothing slang To be likely to fail; to be in a futile situation. Primarily heard in UK. *You're on a hiding to nothing if you think you're going to get a raise out of the boss.*

be on a losing wicket See [be \(batting\) on a losing wicket](#).

be on a rampage To be causing great destruction, disruption, or chaos; to be behaving very violently or aggressively. *Many ancient artifacts were destroyed while enemy forces were on a rampage in the holy city. Our teacher was on a rampage this morning, screaming at the kids for their misbehavior.*

be on a roll To be experiencing a particularly successful period, especially one that has not had any setbacks, low points, or interruptions of failure. *Three championship titles in a row? Wow, that team is really on a roll.*

be on a short leash To be strictly controlled (by someone); to not be allowed very much independence or autonomy. *George has been on a short leash with his husband ever since he gambled away their life savings at a poker match. Everyone feels like they're on a short leash at the office ever since that new manager took over.*

be on a sticky wicket See [be \(batting\) on a sticky wicket](#).

be on a tight leash To be strictly controlled (by someone); to not be allowed very much independence or autonomy. *George has been on a tight leash with his husband ever since he gambled away their life savings at a poker match. Everyone feels like they're on a tight leash at the office ever since that new manager took over.*

be on about (something) To be speak about something tediously and at great length. Primarily heard in UK. *He just kept rambling about literary metaphors and imagery. I didn't know what he was on about! She's always on about some new show she has started watching.*

be on acid To be under the influence of lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD), a powerful psychedelic drug commonly known as "acid." *A lot of my friends like being on acid, but it just makes me feel really tense and paranoid.*

be on air See [be on \(the\) air](#).

be on another planet See [be \(living\) on another planet](#).

be on back See [be \(flat\) on \(one's\) back](#).

be on cloud nine To be in a state of extreme happiness. *Ever since Mary got her promotion at work, she's been on cloud nine. I don't think I've ever seen her happier!*

be on course for To be likely to reach a particular, often positive, outcome. *Those two have been dating since high school, so they're definitely on course for marriage.*

be on edge To be anxious and tense. A: "Why is Carrie pacing?" B: "She's waiting for the doctor to call with her test results, so she's been on edge all day."

be on everyone's lips To be a popular topic of conversation or gossip. *The word "layoffs" is on everyone's lips because our company was bought last month. That scandal with the CEO is on everyone's lips these days.*

be on full alert To be very attentive and ready to take action. This term is often applied to soldiers. *We're safe here—the soldiers patrolling the border are on full alert. As soon as I heard my window break in the middle of the night, I was on full alert to fight off an intruder.*

be on good terms with (someone) To have a friendly or pleasant relationship with someone. *No, I'm on good terms with Stephanie now—we*

reconciled after that argument. You should always try to be on good terms with your boss.

be on guard To be very attentive and alert, so as to avoid danger in a particular situation. A possessive pronoun can be used between "on" and "guard." *When you're in the big city, you need to be on guard against criminals. I'm on my guard because I know the older guys on the team are going to prank me.*

be on hand To be close by and readily available. *Call housekeeping to ask if any extra towels are on hand.*

be on her tail See [be \(sitting\) on \(one's\) tail](#).

be on her uppers See [be \(down\) on \(one's\) uppers](#).

be on ice **1.** Literally, to be kept cold by being surrounded by ice, as of food or drink. *That shrimp has been on ice, so it's fine to eat. You made sure that the champagne is on ice, right?* **2.** slang To be postponed or suspended. *Oh, that idea from last week's meeting is on ice now—the CEO said we'll revisit it in the spring.* **3.** slang To be absent from public activity, typically because one is in prison. *With all the crimes he's committed, that guy will be on ice for the rest of his life.* **4.** To be a certain victory or success. *I wouldn't worry, sir. Based on my meeting with the constituents, your nomination is on ice.*

be on in years To be advanced or advancing in age; to be old or aging. *I might be a little bit on in years, but I'm no fool when it comes to technology! Your grandfather's on in years, so you may need to speak a bit more loudly around him.*

be on (its/one's) last legs **1.** slang Of a machine, to be near a complete breakdown or loss of functionality. In this usage, "its" is used between "on" and "last." *Judging by all that noise coming from her car, I'm pretty sure it's on its last legs. The blender stopped working again today—it must be on its last legs.* **2.** slang Of a person, to be near physical collapse or death. In this usage, a pronoun for the person being discussed is used between "on" and "last." *I knew I was on my last legs, so I was very relieved to see the marathon's finish line in the distance. Ed's on his last legs—you should probably try to visit him in the hospital today.*

be on (one's) ass **1.** slang To be driving too close to another car.

Primarily heard in US. *Why is this guy on my ass when I'm already going over the speed limit?* **2.** slang To be a constant critical presence in someone's life. Primarily heard in US. *My mother has been on my ass this entire visit, questioning every aspect of my life from my marital status to the improper folding of my linens.*

be on (one's) best behavior To be very polite or exercise exceptionally good manners. *Now, you kids must be on your best behavior for your Auntie this weekend! Good morning, class. I hope everyone was on their best behaviour for the substitute teacher yesterday.*

be on (one's) best behavior To be very polite or exercise exceptionally good manners. Primarily heard in US. *Now, you kids must be on your best behavior for your Auntie this weekend! Good morning, class. I hope everyone was on their best behavior for the substitute teacher yesterday.*

be on (one's) conscience To be a persistent cause or source of guilt, such as an act of wrongdoing. *It's because of your cruelty that your brother died. I hope it's on your conscience for the rest of your days!*

be on (one's) good behavior To be very polite or exercising exceptionally good manners. Primarily heard in US. *Now, you kids must be on your good behavior for your Auntie this weekend! Good morning, class. I hope everyone was on their good behavior for the substitute teacher yesterday.*

be on (one's) mettle To be determined to succeed and thus prove one's worth, often in a difficult or unpleasant situation. *I know my employees think I'm too young to be their supervisor, so I have to be on my mettle every day at the office.*

be on (one's) pat To be without anyone else; to be on one's own. Shortened from the Australian rhyming slang "to be on one's Pat Malone," which refers to a ballad about an Irishman (called Pat Malone) who suffered numerous misfortunes after emigrating to Australia. Primarily heard in Australia. *To be quite honest, after a hectic week of work, I much prefer being on my pat than spending the weekend around a bunch of people. Mary's been on her pat ever since Rupert broke up with her last week.*

be on (one's) Pat Malone To be without anyone else; to be on one's own. Australian rhyming slang referring to a ballad about an Irishman (called

Pat Malone) who suffered numerous misfortunes after emigrating to Australia. Primarily heard in Australia. *To be quite honest, after a hectic week of work, I much prefer being on my Pat Malone than spending the weekend around a bunch of people. Mary's been on her Pat Malone ever since Rupert broke up with her last week.*

be on (one's) shit list rude slang To be one's enemy, or at least a source of displeasure or anger. Primarily heard in US. *Once you betray me, you're on my shit list, and that's it.*

be on (one's) tod To be without anyone else; to be on one's own. A shortening of the Cockney rhyming slang "be on one's Tod Sloan," referring to a once-famous American horse jockey who fell into disrepute in the early 20th century and died penniless and alone. Primarily heard in UK. *To be quite honest, after a hectic week of work, I much prefer being on my tod than spending the weekend around a bunch of people. Mary's been on her tod ever since Rupert broke up with her last week.*

be on pins and needles To be anxious and tense. The phrase likely derived from the tingling sensation (called "pins and needles") that occurs when blood flow returns to a numb limb. A: *"Why is Carrie pacing?"* B: *"She's waiting for the doctor to call with her test results, so she's been on pins and needles all day."*

be on Queer Street To be disoriented, as from a blow to the head. Primarily heard in US. *That boxer was on Queer Street after being knocked out in the ring—he couldn't even remember his name!*

be on red alert To be very attentive and ready to take action. This term is often applied to soldiers. *We're safe here—the soldiers patrolling the border are on red alert. As soon as I heard my window break in the middle of the night, I was on red alert to fight off an intruder.*

be on relief To be receiving assistance, financial or otherwise, from publicly or privately funded agencies (most often government-run) due to a certain level of hardship, poverty, or need. *It was really disheartening having to be on relief these past six months, but it was the only thing that kept our family afloat after I lost my job. Some people are very critical of those who have been on relief for extended periods of time.*

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be on short leash See [be on a short leash](#).

be on song To be performing very well. Primarily heard in UK. *After that terrible rehearsal, it's a miracle that the band was on song during the concert. It seems that their goalie is on song again after that serious injury last season.*

be on speaking terms See [be \(not\) on speaking terms](#).

be on (the) air To be broadcasting live, as on television or radio. *OK everyone, we're on the air in five minutes! Please try to control your language—we can't have any cursing while we're on air.*

be on the anvil To be in a formative but immature or unready state; to be in the midst of being prepared, discussed, planned, etc., but not yet ready. *The details of the proposed merger are still on the anvil, but we should see something ready before the end of the summer. There are a couple of projects that have been on the anvil since the new manager came on board, but nothing has taken any definite shape as yet.*

be on the back burner To be a low priority; to get less or little thought or attention; to have been postponed or suspended. *Work stuff will be on the back burner for a while once my son is born. I think that painting the house should be on the back burner until we decide on what furniture we want to buy.*

be on the back foot To be in a position of disadvantage, retreat, or defeat. *A large portion of our funding was cut at the last minute, so this project has been on the back foot from the get-go. The once-dominant airline company has been on the back foot ever since several no-frills competitors entered the market.*

be on the ball slang To be attentive, knowledgeable, and quick to take action. *I'm so glad that my assistant is always on the ball because I'm too scatterbrained to manage my schedule on my own. I can't believe Molly got that report done so quickly—she's really on the ball.*

be on the blink 1. slang Of a machine, to be acting strangely or

malfunctioning. *Our washer is on the blink, so I'm on my way to the laundromat. Mom called the repairman because our TV is on the blink again.*

2. slang Of a person, to be drunk. *Do you remember last night at the bar at all? You were really on the blink!*

be on the breadline To be very poor, as if one could (or does) rely on food donations to survive. A "breadline" is a line of people seeking food distributed by a charitable or government agency. *If I don't make a big sale this week, my family will be on the breadline. Sure, we have money now, but my grandmother grew up in a family that was on the breadline and lived in public housing.*

be on the brink of (doing something) To be on the verge of doing something or of having some imminent event happen, especially that which is bad or disastrous. *The company is still doing business, but ever since the recession hit they've been on the brink of closing down. The crew is so maddened by the cuts to their pay that everyone is on the brink of quitting.*

be on the bum To not be working correctly or properly; to be out of order; broken. *My car has been on the bum ever since I let my brother borrow it for the weekend. I think our washing machine is on the bum—these clothes are all sopping wet and don't smell clean!*

be on the cards To be very likely or certain to happen, occur, or take place. *They've played very well, but it doesn't look like a championship title is on the cards for this team today. A: "Is anything on the cards for tomorrow?" B: "No, it's looking like a pretty slow Saturday for me."*

be on the case 1. To be working diligently on a particular task. *Yes, there is a problem with my car, and my mechanic is on the case. 2.* To be investigating something. *When my youngest thinks her older brother is doing something suspicious, she is on the case—she's the best spy I could have asked for! The system crashed overnight, but IT is on the case, so it should be back up soon.*

be on the crest of a wave To be experiencing a particularly successful period. *Right after I got married, I got a big promotion at work, so I'm really on the crest of a wave at the moment!*

be on the dole To be or begin receiving assistance, financial or otherwise, from publicly or privately funded agencies (usually run by the government) due to a certain level of hardship, poverty, or need. *It was really*

disheartening having to be on the dole these past six months, but it was the only thing that kept our family afloat after I lost my job. Some people are very critical of those who have been on the dole for extended periods of time.

be on the edge of (something) To be very close to doing something or of having some imminent event happen, especially that which is bad or disastrous. *The company is still doing business, but ever since the recession hit, they've been on the edge of closing down. The crew are so maddened by the cuts to their pay that everyone is on the edge of mutiny.*

be on the expensive side See [be \(a bit\) on the expensive side](#).

be on the fiddle To engage in deceitful, fraudulent, or dishonest means of obtaining money. *My career will be over if anyone ever finds out I was on the fiddle during my time as the company treasurer. Politicians will always be on the fiddle in any government, looking for ways to use their positions of power to earn a bit more money.*

be on the fritz 1. slang Of a machine, to be acting strangely or malfunctioning. *Our washer is on the fritz, so I'm on my way to the laundromat. Mom called the repairman because our TV is on the fritz again.*
2. slang Of a person, to be drunk. *Do you remember last night at the bar at all? You were really on the fritz!*

be on the front foot To be in an advantageous position, especially over an opponent; to be in an aggressive or attacking state or position. *The defending champions started the first half of the match truly on the front foot, but they've started losing momentum here in the second half. The senator was on the front foot during the debate, remaining on the attack the whole way through.*

be on the game slang To engage in prostitution; to regularly have sex for money. (Used especially in reference to women.) *A large number of prostitutes are on the game from a young age as the victims of sex trafficking.*

be on the gravy train To be in a state, position, or job where one makes an excessive amount of money without expending much or any effort. *I'll be on the gravy train once I get paid from the settlement of the lawsuit! My brother has been on the gravy train ever since he married his wife, whose family owns one of the largest oil companies in the world.*

be on the heavy side See [be \(a bit\) on the heavy side](#).

be on the hook **1.** To be held responsible (for something); to be obliged or committed (to something). *I would think very carefully signing your name to those documents. If something goes wrong in the company, it could be you who's on the hook. I'm on the hook for nearly half a million dollars after my partner skipped town with the company's pension fund!* **2.** To be in a continually and/or indefinitely delayed condition or state. *The suspect has been on the hook in the interrogation room for about 12 hours now. We're keeping him guessing in the hopes that he'll let some information slip.*

be on the horn **1.** To make use of or speak (to someone) on the telephone. *Don't disturb me, kids, I'm on the horn to your father at the moment. After our dreadful meal that night, I was on the horn to the manager the very next morning.* **2.** dated To be lustful or sexually excited, especially of a man; to have an erection. *Sarah became quite embarrassed when she noticed that her date was on the horn in the middle of the movie.*

be on the horns of a dilemma To struggle to choose between two problematic or unappealing options. *I'm really on the horns of a dilemma here: do I say no to this great job opportunity, or do I accept it and move away from my family?*

be on the hush To be in a state of secrecy or minimal public knowledge; to be known only by a select few people. *I need to tell you some important news, but it has to be on the hush for a while. This is on the hush, but I just found out John and Tracey are getting married soon!*

be on the hush-hush To be in a state of secrecy or minimal public knowledge; to be known only by a select few people. *I need to tell you some important news, but it has to be on the hush-hush for a while. Apparently it's on the hush-hush, but I just found out John and Tracey are getting married soon!*

be on the large side See [be \(a bit\) on the large side](#).

be on the level To be honest, trustworthy, and genuine. *My daughter's fiance is a very respectable fellow, and his actions are always on the level.*

be on the line **1.** To be in a state of jeopardy or uncertainty. *I'm afraid that my scholarship is on the line now that I've been accused of plagiarizing a paper.* **2.** To be speaking or waiting on the telephone. *Mr. Parker, when you're ready, Louise in Sales is on the line. I've been on the line for an hour,*

and still no one has answered.

be on the lines of (something) To be approximately or imperfectly similar to something; to be very like something, but not quite the same. *Well, this sketch is on the lines of what I have in mind for the new kitchen, but there are a few tweaks you need to make before it's right.*

be on the lookout Watching for something or someone. *Be on the lookout for my email! It will have all the instructions you need for the project.*
A: "What are you guys doing?" B: "We're on the lookout for mom's car, so we can tell dad to stop working on her surprise gift when she gets here."

be on the loose To be roaming and acting freely. This phrase can be used humorously to describe someone deemed an uninhibited annoyance, or it can be applied literally to people or animals that need to be contained. *I'm not letting my kids go out at night while that burglar is still on the loose. My mother is on the loose this week because she's off from work, so expect at least five phone calls a day.*

be on the make 1. To be increasing or advancing towards great financial or social success. *Steve: "I hear John's company is really on the make these days!" Dave: "Yeah, they're really up-and-coming in the real estate market."*
2. To be very eagerly seeking wealth, success, or improved social status, often at the expense of others. *Ever since graduation, Thomas has been on the make, using anyone he knows or can exploit to further his career.* 3. To be seeking sexual partners or activity; to be making sexual advances or propositions. *John turns into a real slime ball when he gets drunk and is out on the make.*

be on the march 1. To be literally marching or walking, as of an army. *Enemy forces are on the march, and we expect them to arrive by morning. We've got to be on the march soon if we hope to reach the camp by sundown.*
2. To be making progress or gaining momentum. *Your new initiative is on the march—I heard the boss talking about it this morning! The new education bill is on the march—it looks like it will be approved without much resistance.*

be on the mend To be in good health again after a period of injury or illness. *Jill is happy to be on the mend after her hospital stay. Yes, I was sick earlier this week, but I'm on the mend now.*

be on the money See [be \(right\) on the money](#).

be on the piss See [be \(out\) on the piss](#).

be on the pull To be seeking sexual partners or activity; to be hoping or trying to have sexual intercourse. Primarily heard in UK. *I was out on the pull last Friday night, but I was too drunk to find any luck.*

be on the radar (screen) To be considered important or noteworthy; within the spectrum of (someone's) awareness, attention, or consideration. *If you want this issue to be on the radar of mainstream America, you have to frame it as something that will hit people in their wallets. The band was hugely popular in the '80s, but they haven't been on the radar screen in the last decade or so.*

be on the ragged edge To be close to encountering or experiencing something (such as an outcome or emotional state). Primarily heard in US. *After taking exams all week, I am on the ragged edge of exhaustion. The board has been on the ragged edge of discord ever since learning about the chairman's scandalous conduct.*

be on the rampage To be causing great destruction, disruption, or chaos; to be behaving very violently or aggressively. *Many ancient artifacts were destroyed while enemy forces were on the rampage in the holy city. Our teacher was on the rampage this morning, screaming at the kids for their misbehavior.*

be on the razzle See [be \(out\) on the razzle](#).

be on the right lines To be progressing in a way that is likely to succeed. *I think we're really on the right lines with this new environmental initiative. After all of those failed experiments, our team is finally on the right lines now.*

be on the right track To be progressing in a way that is likely to succeed. *I think we're really on the right track with this new environmental initiative. After all of those failed experiments, our team is finally on the right track now.*

be on the rocks 1. Literally, to have become stuck on rocks in the water, as of a ship. *Our ship is on the rocks now, after crashing during that violent storm.* 2. To be in jeopardy and likely to end or fail. Typically used in reference to romantic relationships. *Did you hear that Bill and Maria are on the rocks? Of course their marriage is on the rocks, they fight all the time!* 3.

To suffer financial hardship, often suddenly. *I was on the rocks pretty soon after I lost my job. You need to make sound financial decisions to keep your company from being on the rocks.* **4.** To contain ice, as of an alcoholic beverage. *That drink's on the rocks, so it's not the one I ordered.*

be on the ropes To be in a vulnerable position and nearing failure or collapse. The phrase comes from boxing, in which a boxer may use the ropes around the ring for support. *That team is definitely on the ropes—they're losing 10-1! Now that everyone knows he embezzled money from the company, his career is on the ropes.*

be on the run 1. To be fleeing the police or other authorities, typically after having committed a crime. *The police have been unsuccessful in their search of the city, so the suspects must be on the run.* **2.** To be involved in constant activity. *I'm sorry I didn't call you back, I was really on the run today.* **3.** To be in a vulnerable position. *This team is on the run—will they really come back from a five-goal deficit?*

be on the same wavelength To be in agreement; to think or behave similarly. *I was surprised that we became friends so quickly, but we're just always on the same wavelength.*

be on the sick list To be ill or unwell; to be indisposed due to poor health. *Jim's been on the sick list for the last month. If he doesn't get better soon, we're going to have to replace him!*

be on the side of the angels To behave in a kind or charitable way, or to support such actions. *With war tearing apart the country, being on the side of the angels can cost you your life.*

be on the skids To be in jeopardy and likely to end or fail. *Of course their relationship is on the skids, they fight all the time! Our project is on the skids because the committee pulled their funding.*

be on the square To act and speak honestly, without hiding information. *My daughter's fiance is a very respectable fellow, and his actions are always on the square.*

be on the table To be available or put forward, as for consideration, acceptance, discussion, etc. *I wouldn't wait too long to accept the job offer—it might not be on the table for very long. Before this meeting begins, we'd like to have assurances that the possibility of restoring holiday bonuses is*

going to be on the table.

be on the threshold of (something) To be about to do something; to be about to happen. *I can't believe that my little girl is actually on the threshold of marriage. I'm confident that our team is on the threshold of a major scientific breakthrough.*

be on the tip of (one's) tongue To be close to being remembered, as if one is nearly about to say the thing trying to be recalled. *Her name is on the tip of my tongue. Just give me a minute, I'll remember it.*

be on the wagon To maintain one's sobriety; to abstain from alcohol. *Jim's on the wagon again, so he doesn't want to go to the bar with us tonight.*

be on the warpath slang To be overtly angry and/or looking for retribution. The phrase is potentially offensive, as it references a Native American war practice. *I'd avoid the boss if I were you—he's on the warpath and screaming at everyone he sees.*

be on the wing To be flying. This phrase is typically reserved for living things (such as birds or insects), rather than airplanes and other machines that can fly. *When eagles are on the wing, you can clearly see their field marks.*

be on the wrong end of (something) To have an unfavorable or problematic relationship with something and thus endure negative consequences or effects. *Unless you want to be a police suspect, you can't be seen with me, now that I'm on the wrong end of the law.*

be (on) the wrong side of (an age) To be older than a certain age. *Why is she dressing like a teenager when she is clearly the wrong side of 40? I'm sore after every workout these days, so I'm definitely on the wrong side of 30!*

be on the wrong track To be progressing in a way that will likely fail or be unsuccessful. *All of these protestors think that we're really on the wrong track with this new environmental initiative. Considering all of our failed experiments, our team must be on the wrong track.*

be on thin ice See [be \(walking\) on thin ice](#).

be on tight leash See [be on a tight leash](#).

be on to a good thing slang To be in a favorable or enjoyable situation. *I think I'm on to a good thing with my new job because I can work*

from home as much as I want. Your new boyfriend seems really sweet—I think you two are onto a good thing.

be on to (someone) 1. To have knowledge, be suspicious, or be aware of someone's actions, behavior, or intention. *You'd better tread carefully, I'm on to you now. The police are on to us! Everybody run!* 2. To be in contact with someone at a given point in time. *I'll be on to you tomorrow about the details of our meeting. I was on to John yesterday about where he wants to go for his birthday.*

be on to (something) To discover, realize, or be in the process of doing something of great importance, value, or insight. *Great work on this essay, Lindsay. I really think you're on to something here. Scientists now believe they may be on to a cure for cancer.*

be on tod See [be on \(one's\) tod](#).

be on top of the world See [be \(sitting\) on top of the world](#).

be on track To progress or develop as planned, scheduled, or expected. *Everyone in our entire department is on track to meet their sales quotas for the year. The project was on track before the boss up and quit, but who knows when we'll get it finished now!*

be on uppers See [be \(down\) on \(one's\) uppers](#).

be on welfare To be receiving assistance, financial or otherwise, from publicly or privately funded agencies (usually run by the government) due to a certain level of hardship, poverty, or need. *It was really disheartening having to be on welfare these past six months, but it was the only thing that kept our family afloat after I lost my job. Some people are very critical of those who have been on welfare for extended periods of time.*

be one age with (someone) dated To be of the same or roughly equivalent age as someone else. Primarily heard in Ireland. *I had absolutely no idea that Mrs Shelby was one age with her husband; she looks so much younger!*

be one brick short of a (full) load To be not very intelligent or of questionable mental capacity. This expression can appear in many different forms and variations (e.g., "a few sandwiches short of a picnic," "one card shy of a full deck," etc.). *He says he's going to start a business selling bees as pets—I think he may be one brick short of a load. The new manager is nice*

enough, but he's one brick short of a full load, if you ask me.

be one card short of a full deck To be not very intelligent or of questionable mental capacity. This expression can appear in many different forms and variations (e.g., "a few sandwiches short of a picnic," "one brick short of a load.," etc.). *He says he's going to start a business selling bees as pets—I think he may be one card short of a full deck. The new manager is nice enough, but he's one card short of a full deck, if you ask me.*

be one card shy of a (full) deck To be not very intelligent or of questionable mental capacity. This expression can appear in many different forms and variations (e.g., "a few sandwiches short of a picnic," "one brick short of a load.," etc.). *He says he's going to start a business selling bees as pets—I think he may be one card shy of a full deck. The new manager is nice enough, but he's one card shy of a deck, if you ask me.*

be one flesh To join together with another person in marriage. Taken from the biblical verse regarding marriage, "And the two shall become one flesh." It can also refer to sexual intercourse in general, which is meant in Judeo-Christian beliefs to be withheld until after marriage. *I am blessed to have been one flesh with my wife for nearly 30 years. Many people choose to wait until they are married to be one flesh with someone.*

be one in a million To be regarded as very rare and excellent or spectacular. *Your new boyfriend is one in a million. I can't believe he spent the weekend with your entire family and actually enjoyed himself. This opportunity is one in a million—you have to take it!*

be one in the eye for To be a disappointment or misfortune for someone. Typically used to describe how one is negatively impacted by someone else's actions. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *Jenny's success at her new company is one in the eye for her old boss. I'm your mother—of course your bad grades are one in the eye for me!*

be one of a kind To have no equal; to be very unique. *This opportunity is one of a kind—you have to take it! This design is one of a kind, as the artist only ever made one. Not many people have so much talent at such a young age. This kid is truly one of a kind.*

be one over (the) eight To be thoroughly inebriated. Primarily heard in UK. *I think someone should drive Jerry home, he's one over the eight. I guess I was making something of a show of myself, but I was having too much*

fun to realise that I was one over eight.

be one sandwich short of a picnic To be not very intelligent or of questionable mental capacity. It can appear in many different forms and variations (for example: a few bricks shy of a load, a few cards shy of a full deck, etc.) *He says he's going to start a business selling bees as pets. I think he may be one sandwich short of a picnic.*

be one step ahead To outmaneuver or evade someone or something. *That crook hasn't been arrested yet because he's always one step ahead of the cops. I've been working extra hard so that I'm one step ahead of the new girl threatening to take my job.*

be one's bag See [be \(not\) \(one's\) bag](#).

be one's brother's keeper See [be \(not\) \(one's\) brother's keeper](#).

be one's department See [be \(not\) \(one's\) department](#).

be (one's) for the asking To be available for one to easily obtain or achieve. *With your famous parents, any job is yours for the asking. Some of us, though, actually have to apply for jobs.*

be (one's) for the taking To be available for one to easily obtain or achieve. *With your famous parents, any job is yours for the taking. Some of us, though, actually have to apply for jobs. Our probable valedictorian has been pretty distracted lately, so I think the title is yours for the taking.*

be (one's) last resort To be the only remaining thing or person that may help one or be of any use after all other options have been exhausted. *I didn't really want to ask Mr. Stadler to write my college recommendation, but he's my last resort at this point.*

be (one's) own man/woman/person To act, think, or work independently; to not accept or be swayed by outside influences. *You can't just accept everything you read in the media—you have to be your own man. When I was younger, I would do anything my friends were doing, but I'm my own person now. You won't be able to manipulate her—she's really her own woman.*

be (one's) own master To not be subject to or controlled by others, especially at work or at home. *I have to be my own master, so I couldn't work in a big company like you and have to answer to a boss.*

be (one's) own worst enemy To do things that complicate one's life and/or keep one from success; to be self-destructive or self-sabotaging. *Of course Tommy started skipping school again—he's his own worst enemy. She always sabotages a relationship when it's going really well because she's her own worst enemy.*

be (one's) pigeon To be one's area of expertise or responsibility. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *I can't approve expense reports, but Betty can—that's her pigeon.*

be (one's) strong point To be something, such as a subject, activity, or field, at which someone is particularly skilled or adept. *Working with computers was never my strong point, so this receptionist position is going to be a real challenge for me. Movie trivia is one of Sam's strong points, so I think we should ask her to be on our pub quiz team.*

be one's strong suit See [be \(someone's\) strong suit](#).

be (one's/the) main squeeze **1.** slang To be one's romantic partner. Primarily heard in US. *Who's your main squeeze these days? Someone new? Leia is his main squeeze—they've been dating for a few months now.* **2.** slang To be the most important person in a particular area. *Stewart just got promoted, so he's now the main squeeze in our department.*

be oneself To be in one's most natural, comfortable, sincere, and ingenuous state of mind and being. *You should always try to be yourself with those you care about. I told her to just be herself during the interview.*

be only a matter of time To be an inevitability or eventuality; to be or seem sure to happen at some point in the future. *With your reckless spending behavior, it's only a matter of time before you go broke.*

be onto a winner To be progressing in a way that is likely to succeed. *I think we're onto a winner with this new environmental initiative—the whole company has really embraced it. After all of those failed experiments, our team is finally onto a winner now.*

be open to (something) To be receptive to or welcoming of something that comes from outside of oneself. *You should really try to be more open to suggestions if you want to create the best product possible. I'm open to any ideas as to the best way forward.*

be our funeral See [be \(someone's\) funeral](#).

be out for blood To seek vengeance in an especially hostile or belligerent manner. This phrase is often used hyperbolically, although it can refer to physical violence. *I'd avoid the boss if I were you—he's out for blood and screaming at everyone he sees. Some neighborhood kids beat me up last night, and now my brother is out for blood.*

be out for the count To be unconscious or in a deep sleep. Likened to a boxer who has been knocked out. *I didn't even hear you come in last night—I was so tired that I was out for the count as soon as my head hit the pillow. On his 21st birthday, Mike's friends gave him so much to drink that he was out for the count by 10 PM. The rowdy customer was out for the count when the bouncer punched him in the head.*

be out for/after (someone's) scalp To seek vengeance in an especially hostile or belligerent manner. This phrase is often used hyperbolically, although it can refer to physical violence. Primarily heard in US. *I'd avoid the boss if I were you—he's thinks that blunder was your fault, so he's out for your scalp. I got robbed by some punk last night, and now my brother is after the kid's scalp.*

be out in force To be present in large numbers (and thus be or seem like a powerful or daunting presence). *Protestors are out in force at city hall today.*

be out in left field To be or seem uncommon, unpopular, or otherwise strange. *Well, that suggestion is certainly out in left field! How did you come up with that one? Sure, my aunt is really wacky and out in left field, but I love her!*

be out like a light **1.** To be sleeping very soundly. *Don't worry, the vacuum won't wake him—he's out like a light. I didn't even hear you come in last night—I was so tired that I was out like a light as soon as my head hit the pillow.* **2.** To fall asleep quickly. *I didn't even hear you come in last night—I was so tired that I was out like a light as soon as my head hit the pillow.* **3.** slang To be very drunk. *Do you remember last night at the bar at all? You were out like a light!*

be out of action **1.** To be ill or injured and thus unable to do one's normal activities. *I was out of action there for a while, but I'm feeling much better after my hospital stay. Our new defenseman does have a broken leg, so he'll be out of action for months.* **2.** Of a machine, to be not working at all, or

malfunctioning in some way. *Our washer is out of action, so I'm on my way to the laundromat. Mom called the repairman because our TV is out of action again.*

be out of bounds **1.** Literally, to be beyond a designated boundary. *No, that catch doesn't count because the player was out of bounds. I'm sorry, sir, I didn't realize we were out of bounds here. We'll get back on the trail now.* **2.** To act in an inappropriate or unacceptable way. *That reporter's questions about my personal life were completely out of bounds!* **3.** To be forbidden or not allowed. *I love going to the gym, but exercise is out of bounds until my ankle heals more.*

be out of fix **1.** To be out of order; to not be functioning properly or at all. *My dad's favorite hobby was heading out to the shed with his tools to work on some old piece of machinery that's out of fix.* **2.** To be in disarray or disorder; to be in a state of disarrangement. *The poor woman's house has been out of fix ever since her husband passed away.*

be out of house and home To be evicted; to no longer have someplace to live. *If my wife loses her job like so many of her co-workers, we'll be out of house and home for sure. Several hundred students may suddenly be out of house and home after the university-owned apartment building failed to pass its annual health and safety inspection on Friday.*

be out of humour To be in an irritable, grouchy, or unhappy mood; to feel unwell, displeased, or in poor spirits. Primarily heard in UK. *I think something is bugging John because he's been rather out of humour lately. I think you should get to bed earlier because you're always so out of humour in the morning.*

be out of it **1.** To be sedate, confused, or disoriented; to be, feel, or seem disconnected from reality. *I was really out of it after working that 16-hour shift on Saturday. I think something is bugging John because he's been really out of it lately. It's like he's walking around in a haze.* **2.** To be heavily intoxicated by drugs or alcohol, especially to the point of becoming unconscious, nonsensical, or out of control. *I think someone might have spiked Jack's drink with some kind of drug because he's really out of it all of a sudden. Jane is a lightweight. Only one or two beers and she's totally out of it.* **3.** To not be aware of or knowledgeable about something; to not be included or participating in something. Said especially of a particular trend,

group, or activity. *My dad is so out of it. Doesn't he know that wearing socks with sandals looks ridiculous? Everyone's been playing this new Japanese card game at school, but I'm out of it because I can't afford all the accessories for it.*

be out of kilter **1.** To be out of equilibrium; to not be straight, level, or aligned properly; to be in a state of chaos or confusion. *I've been out of kilter ever since I got that blow to the head during football practice. The economy is still out of kilter in many countries across Europe, even as the global economy has started to recover.* **2.** To not work correctly or properly; to be out of order; to be out of w(h)ack. *It sounds like your car's engine is a bit out of kilter. I'd recommend taking it to a mechanic before you go for any long drives.*

be out of line **1.** Literally, to not be correctly positioned in a line with other people or things. *Adjust that frame on the left—it's out of line with the other pictures on the wall. I was only out of line for a minute! Can't you let me back in?* **2.** To act in an inappropriate or unacceptable way. *That reporter was out of line when he asked questions about my personal life. I'm sorry about last night, I was out of line when I made those demands.* **3.** To be inconsistent (with something else). *That car service's exorbitant rates are out of line with others in the industry.* **4.** To be outside of one's skills or interests. In this usage, a noun or pronoun is used between "in" and "line." *My brother is really studious, so sports are out of his line, as they interfere with his studying.*

be out of (one's) brain To be heavily intoxicated by drugs or alcohol, especially to the point of becoming unconscious, nonsensical, or out of control. Primarily heard in UK. *I think someone might have spiked Jack's drink with some kind of drug, because he's out of his brain all of a sudden. Jane always gets really violent when she's out of her brain like that. I had to take my brother away from the party because he was out of his brain on LSD.*

be out of (one's) depth To be in a field or situation that exceeds one's knowledge or ability. *Of course she's out of her depth with 25 employees reporting to her—she had hardly any supervisory experience before you gave her the job! I asked Alex to consult on this project because it's a bit out of my depth.*

be out of (one's) element To be uncomfortable in a certain situation,

typically because one lacks experience or familiarity with it. *She usually just orders takeout, so she's really out of her element in the kitchen. I know you're out of your element in this new school, but you'll make friends soon, and things will get better. I asked Alex to consult on this project because I'm out of my element here.*

be out of (one's) face To be heavily intoxicated by drugs or alcohol, especially to the point of becoming unconscious, nonsensical, or out of control. *I think someone might have spiked Jack's drink with some kind of drug because he's out of his face all of a sudden. Jane always gets really violent when she's out of her face like that. I had to take my brother away from the party because he was out of his face on LSD.*

be out of (one's) hair To no longer be pestering or annoying to one; to not be one's responsibility or burden any longer. *The kids are out of my hair for a few hours so I can go and get a relaxing massage by myself. Once these auditors from the IRS are out of our hair, we can get back to business as usual.*

be out of (one's) hands To be no longer within one's control. *I submitted my application, so it's really out of my hands now. Now that the jury is deliberating, the case is out of our hands.*

be out of (one's) head 1. slang To be crazy. *He's out of his head if he thinks this plan is going to work! After yet another sleepless night, I'm starting to feel like I'm out of my head.* 2. slang To be very intoxicated from drugs or alcohol. *You were really out of your head last night! How do you feel this morning? A: "Do you remember anything you said to me at the party?" B: "Not at all—I was out of my head last night."*

be out of (one's) league To be a poor match for someone, often because someone or something is considered superior. Although it can be used in other situations, this phrase is very often applied to romantic partners that are not similarly attractive or wealthy. *I can't believe that average-looking guy is dating a supermodel—she is totally out of his league! I've only been working in IT for a few months, so that advanced position is really out of my league.*

be out of (one's) mind slang To be crazy. This phrase can be followed by "with" and the cause of the craziness. *He's out of his mind if he thinks this plan is going to work! After yet another sleepless night, I'm starting to feel*

like I'm out of my mind with exhaustion.

be out of (one's) shell To be less shy or reticent and more sociable, outgoing, or enthusiastic. *Samantha was quite a quiet girl growing up, but she's really been out of her shell since leaving for college. Jack is actually a very funny, engaging guy once he's out of his shell.*

be out of (one's) skull To be heavily intoxicated by drugs or alcohol, especially to the point of becoming unconscious, nonsensical, or out of control. *Jane always gets really violent when she's out of her skull like that. I had to take my brother away from the party because he was out of his skull on LSD.*

be out of (one's) tree slang To be crazy. *After yet another sleepless night, I'm starting to feel like I'm out of my tree. He's out of his tree if he thinks this plan is going to work!*

be out of order **1.** To be unavailable for use, typically because the item or machine in question is broken. *According to the sign on the door, this restroom is out of order. Our washer is out of order, so I'm on my way to the laundromat.* **2.** To not be in the correct sequence. *OK, the pages of this report are definitely out of order—page four is followed by page seven. That's not how the song goes, so those verses must be out of order.* **3.** To act in an inappropriate or unacceptable way. *That reporter was out of order when he asked questions about my personal life.*

be out of place To not be suited to or blend with a certain group or setting. *That modern addition to the school is very out of place with all of the older buildings on campus. I know you're out of place in this new school, but you'll make friends soon, and things will get better.*

be out of pocket **1.** To not have much money. *I get paid next week, so can we go out to dinner then? I'm just out of pocket right now.* **2.** To be unavailable, typically because one is away from one's phone or desk. *Janet is out of pocket right now, but I can give her a message.*

be out of sorts To be in an irritable, grouchy, or unhappy mood; to feel unwell, displeased, or in poor spirits. *I think something is bugging John because he's been rather out of sorts lately. I think you should get to bed earlier because you're always so out of sorts in the morning.*

be out of square **1.** Literally, to not be at or form right angles (as or of a

square). *Are you blind? The foundation to this house is completely out of square!* **2.** By extension, to not be in agreement or alignment; to be faulty or not in proper order. *Environmentalists are claiming that the study on climate change, backed largely by the oil industry, is completely out of square with the truth. Everything about this project has been out of square from the beginning—I think it's time we just started the whole thing over.*

be out of step 1. To lack understanding or information on a current topic or issue. *Making a sexist statement like that just proves how much he is out of step with the views of modern society.* **2.** To disagree with or clash with those whom one is supposed to work with. *The chairman is out of step with the rest of the committee—that's why they want to oust him. He'll never get the nomination because he's too out of step with the rest of his party.*

be out of the ark To be very outdated or old-fashioned. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *You can't wear a dress like that, at least until you're 80. Come on, it's clearly out of the ark!*

be out of the picture To no longer be a part of a situation. (Note that this absence can be caused by death.) *I'm going to study in the library, so that all of the distractions in my room are out of the picture. I can't ask her out until her disapproving brother is out of the picture, so let me know when he leaves the party. I overheard some of the employees at George's funeral saying that they can take over the company now that he is out of the picture! How tasteless!*

be out of the question To be impossible and/or impermissible. This phrase is often used to halt further consideration or discussion of a request. *In this family, dating is out of the question until you're 18, and that's that. I'm sorry, but getting a huge project like this done in three days is just out of the question.*

be out of the way 1. To be very distant or remote. *His new house is really out of the way—it will take us hours to get there.* **2.** To not be along the planned route. In this usage, a possessive pronoun can be used in place of "the." *We can't stop at the bookstore today because it's out of the way, and we have a lot of errands to run. I can't go to her house tonight, it's totally out of my way.* **3.** To be somewhere where something is not a physical impediment. In this usage, a possessive pronoun can be used in place of "the." *Your books need to be out of the way so I can run the vacuum. I'm so glad that those*

boxes are finally out of my way, and I can actually move around the kitchen.

4. To be completed, finished, or resolved. Often said of something unpleasant. *I'll be very happy when this required course in British Literature is out of the way and I can get back to the American poets I love. Now that the financial details are out of the way, let's see which cars you can afford.*

5. To be strange or unusual. *It's out of the way for my little boy to want to sleep all day, so he must not be feeling well.*

6. slang To be dead. This phrase can also be used as a euphemism for being murdered. *Now that George is out of the way, we'll be able to take over the company. Frankie needs to be out of the way before he goes to the cops and tells them all about us.*

7. slang To be drunk. *Do you remember last night at the pub at all? You were out of the way!*

be out of the woods See [be \(not\) out of the woods](#).

be out of this world **1.** To be extraordinary. This phrase is most often applied to enjoyable things (especially food), but it can describe unpleasant ones as well. *If you're having dinner at Janine's, then you're in for a real treat—her cooking is out of this world! That car service's exorbitant rates are out of this world. Can't we just take a taxi?* **2.** To be intoxicated. *Do you remember last night at the bar at all? You were really out of this world! I'm not sure what I took, but I was definitely out of this world at the concert.*

be out of touch **1.** To lack understanding or awareness of modern beliefs or developments. *Making a sexist statement like that just proves how much he is out of touch.* **2.** To lack understanding or awareness of other people's needs or concerns. *Slashing the company's insurance policy shows that the CEO is totally out of touch.* **3.** To not have communicated with someone recently. *Oh, how is Cara? We've been out of touch lately.* **4.** Of a person, to be unavailable for communication. *I have a flight to catch, so I'll be out of touch for a few hours.*

be out of touch with (someone or something) **1.** To lack understanding or information on a current topic or issue. *Making a sexist statement like that just proves how much he is out of touch with the views of modern society. I hadn't gotten the latest report before the meeting, so I was totally out of touch with the situation.* **2.** To lack understanding or awareness of other people's needs or concerns. *Slashing the company's insurance policy shows that the CEO is totally out of touch with the needs of his workers.* **3.** To not have communicated with someone recently. *Oh, how is Cara? I've*

been out of touch with her lately.

be out of tree See [be out of \(one's\) tree](#).

be out of your brain See [be out of \(one's\) brain](#).

be out of your depth See [be out of \(one's\) depth](#).

be out of your element See [be out of \(one's\) element](#).

be out of your face See [be out of \(one's\) face](#).

be out of your hair See [be out of \(one's\) hair](#).

be out of your hands See [be out of \(one's\) hands](#).

be out of your head See [be out of \(one's\) head](#).

be out of your league See [be out of \(one's\) league](#).

be out of your line See [be out of line](#).

be out of your mind See [be out of \(one's\) mind](#).

be out of your shell See [be out of \(one's\) shell](#).

be out of your skull See [be out of \(one's\) skull](#).

be out of your way See [be out of the way](#).

be out on a limb To have done or said something that lacks evidence or support. *Her hypothesis is really out on a limb—the facts don't support it at all. That politician is out on a limb after publicly questioning the views of his party.*

be out on (one's) ear To have been removed from a place or situation, often unceremoniously. *After 10 years of loyal service to that company, I'm out on my ear just because the new manager doesn't like me.*

be out on (one's) feet **1.** To be near to the point of collapse or unconsciousness (as due to exhaustion or injury) but still remaining on one's feet; just short of being asleep or unconscious. *Doctors in training are expected to endure an unbelievable amount of stress and exhaustion. Surely it is counterproductive forcing them to attend each of their patients while they're out on their feet.* **2.** To be all but or as good as defeated; still functioning, but past the point of usefulness or productivity. *The company has managed to remain open, but truth be told, it's really been out on its feet for the last year.*

be (out) on the piss rude slang To go out and drink alcohol. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *My friends and I were out on the piss last night, so I hardly remember anything at all.*

be (out) on the razzle slang To go out for a fun night of celebrating and/or socializing. Primarily heard in UK. *We were out on the razzle last night for Valerie's birthday, that's why we're all exhausted today.*

be out on the tiles To be at bars, clubs, parties, etc., and having an enjoyable time, often to the point of excess. Primarily heard in UK. *When I was in university, I was out on the tiles nearly every night. Now that I have a full-time job, I just can't manage that anymore! There's nothing I enjoy more than getting together with my friends on a Friday and being out on the tiles!*

be out on the town To be out for a fun night of celebrating and/or socializing. *We were out on the town last night for Valerie's birthday, that's why we're all exhausted today. Since we're usually home with the kids, my husband and I are very excited to be out on the town tonight.*

be out there To be somewhat unusual, unconventional, crazy, or eccentric. *Our manager's ideas for improving productivity are really out there. My uncle Jerry is a little out there, but he's a really sweet guy.*

be out to lunch **1.** Literally, to have left one's desk or job to go eat lunch. *Janet is out to lunch right now, but I can give her a message.* **2.** slang To be crazy. *Don't listen to a word he says, he's out to lunch. You're out to lunch if you think that plan will work.* **3.** slang To be oblivious or inattentive and thus behave in silly or strange way. *Did I just say that two plus two equals five? Wow, I'm really out to lunch today. I hardly ever get any of my messages because my receptionist is perpetually out to lunch.*

be over (someone or something) **1.** To no longer have strong emotions about someone or something; to be unenthusiastic about someone or something. *I was really looking forward to learning about the inner workings of a computer, but it's actually so boring that I am really over it at this point! Everyone thinks Jack's boyfriend is so hilarious, but I'm so over him and his annoying jokes.* **2.** To accept, feel better about, move on from, or come to terms with something or some romantic relationship that has failed or turned out badly. *John and Amy broke up nearly a month ago, but I don't think he's over her yet. It really bummed me out failing my driving test like that, but I'm over it now.*

be over the hill slang To be past one's youth. Although often associated with age 40, this phrase is not tied to a specific age. *Now that I'm over the hill, I'm sore for days after I work out. I'm not looking forward to my next birthday because I'll officially be over the hill.*

be over the hills and far away To be at some distant, remote point or location. *Rather than focusing on the here and now, John's ideas for the future are always over the hills and far away. The men are all over the hills and far away finding work, meaning us women must raise the children and mind the homes on our own.*

be over the hump slang To have endured and surpassed the most difficult or unpleasant part of a task or situation. Primarily heard in US. *I had a hard time adjusting to my new job, but I'm over the hump now that it's been a few months. We're finally over the hump with this research. All that's left to do are citations.*

be over the moon To be extremely happy. *I've been over the moon ever since I got engaged—I just can't stop looking at my ring!*

be over the top To be or be seen as excessive. *A massive birthday party with princesses and pony rides is a little over the top for a one-year-old, don't you think? She hardly knew my grandfather, so her bawling at the funeral was definitely over the top. That movie was intentionally over the top, and I think it worked—especially when that guy fought the bear.*

be own man See [be \(one's\) own man/woman/person](#).

be own master See [be \(one's\) own master](#).

be own worst enemy See [be \(one's\) own worst enemy](#).

be packed (in) like sardines To be very tightly or snugly packed together, especially in a small space. *We didn't want to take more than one car, so we had to be packed like sardines in Jeff's little sedan for the four-hour drive to Moab. Having a concert in our friends café was such a good idea! Sure, we were packed in like sardines, but everyone had a great time.*

be packing (heat) To have one or more firearms, especially handguns, currently on one's person. *I wouldn't go near that guy if I were you. I hear he's packing! I make sure I'm always packing heat when I go through this part of town.*

be paid-up member See [be a \(fully\) paid-up member of something](#).

be par for the course To be normal or typical (especially when it is a source of annoyance or frustration). This phrase comes from golf, in which "par" is the number of strokes that it should take a player to get the ball into a particular hole on a golf course, or the total number of strokes one should take in a round or game. *Of course we're not getting raises again this year—that's just par for the course.*

be part of life's rich pageant See [be \(all\) part of life's rich pageant](#).

be part of life's rich tapestry See [be \(all\) part of life's rich tapestry](#).

be part of the furniture slang To be viewed as part of the surroundings because one has been in a particular job or place for a long time. *I can't envision the company without Bill. I mean, the man has been here for 40 years—he's part of the furniture!*

be past it 1. To have overcome a problem or difficulty in a relationship or situation. *Yes, we had issues with communication early in our marriage, but we're past that now, thanks to couples counseling.* **2.** slang To be past one's youth and thus deemed too old to do certain things Primarily heard in UK. *If you ask me, a middle-aged man should not be wearing leather pants. He's past it! That player is definitely past it—he hasn't had a good season in years.*

be past (the/one's) sell-by date 1. Literally, to be past the date by which an edible item should be sold before it spoils. *That milk is definitely past the sell-by date—it's curdled!* **2.** By extension, to be past the peak of one's abilities or career. *The company is forcing my mother to retire because they think she's past her sell-by date. That player is definitely past his sell-by date—he hasn't had a good season in years.*

be penny-wise and pound-foolish To be so concerned with saving money that one ignores larger problems and ultimately ends up spending more. *I know you don't want to pay for this expensive course of treatment, but when ignoring your health lands you in the hospital, you'll see that you were penny-wise and pound-foolish.*

be pie-eyed 1. slang To be drunk. *Do you remember last night at the bar at all? You were pie-eyed!* **2.** To stare wide-eyed in awe. *The witnesses on the street were all pie-eyed as the van exploded into flames.*

be pigeon See [be \(one's\) pigeon](#).

be pipped at the post To be defeated or overcome by someone by a very narrow margin or at the final, crucial moment, especially in a race, competition, or athletic event. Primarily heard in UK, Australia, Ireland. *The favoured runner held the lead for the majority of the race, but he was pipped at the post by a relatively unknown competitor in the final 100 metres. It appears the current MP has been pipped at the post, being narrowly defeated by the youngest person to ever serve in parliament.*

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be pissed off To be very disgruntled, angry, or outraged. *John was so pissed off when he found out that someone else had been given the promotion instead of him. Of course I'm pissed off about the test! Now I'm going to have to take it again this summer.*

be pissing in(to) the wind To be doing something totally pointless, fruitless, or futile; to be wasting one's time doing something that will not or cannot come to pass. *To be perfectly honest, I feel like voting is just pissing in the wind, so I just don't bother. My mom and dad were pissing into the wind for years trying to get my brother to take his studies seriously; in the end, he dropped out anyway to pursue a career in music.*

be plain sailing To be smooth, uninterrupted, and/or easy, especially as of progress, travel, or development. *Now that we've gotten that problem figured out, the project should be plain sailing from here on! We've got about 13 hours of driving ahead of us, but it looks like most of it is plain sailing.*

be played like a fiddle To be skillfully manipulated by someone to suit their own needs, ends, or benefits. *I was played like a fiddle by that travelling salesman. Now what am I going to do with all this junk that he convinced me to buy? Can't you see that his flattery is totally insincere? You're being played like a fiddle!*

be pleased as punch See [be \(as\) pleased as punch](#).



be plugged into (something) To be directly or very closely involved in, attuned to, or enthusiastic about something. *My wife has a lot of friends who are plugged into various performance arts around the city. I've been really plugged into the heavy metal scene ever since college.*

be PO'd To be very disgruntled, irritated, angry, or outraged. ("PO'd" being a euphemistic abbreviation of "pissed off.") *John was so PO'd when he found out that someone else had been given the promotion instead of him. Of course I'm PO'd about the test! Now I'm going to have to take it again this summer.*

be poles apart To be very different in behavior or views; to be in opposition. *Unfortunately, the two sides are still poles apart in their negotiations. My sister and I are very close now, but we were poles apart growing up and fought all the time.*

be potty about (something) To be very excited or enthusiastic (about something). Primarily heard in UK. *I'm absolutely potty about her latest novel!*

be prepared 1. To remain in a state of preparedness for any unexpected or uncertain occasion that may arise. Popularized by the Boy Scouts of America, who use the phrase as their motto. *It's a good thing I always carry a spare bicycle tube when I cycle to work. Like the Boy Scouts say, always be prepared!* **2.** To always carry a prophylactic (condom) or other means of preventing pregnancy or sexually transmitted infections, should an unexpected sexual encounter arise. A euphemistic appropriation of the motto of the Boy Scouts of America, "Be prepared." *When you begin dating someone new, you should always be prepared!*

be pulled down a notch (or two) To have one's ego or pride reduced or damaged; to be humbled or humiliated. *I hope that pompous oaf has been pulled down a notch or two after losing his court case. If Sarah keeps acting like a spoiled brat to everyone, she's going to be pulled down a notch some day.*

be pulled down a peg (or two) To have one's ego or pride reduced or damaged; to be humbled or humiliated. *I hope that pompous oaf has been pulled down a peg or two after losing his court case. If Sarah keeps acting like a spoiled brat to everyone, she's going to be pulled down a peg some day.*

be pulled out of her ass See [pulled out of \(one's\) ass](#).

be punch-drunk 1. Of a boxer, to be disoriented from a particularly heavy punch or too many blows to the head. *That boxer was punch-drunk after being knocked out in the ring—he couldn't even remember his name!* 2. To be disoriented from exhaustion. *I'm punch-drunk after taking exams all week long. Of course he's punch-drunk—he's been driving for 12 hours straight!*

be pure as the driven snow See [be \(as\) pure as the driven snow](#).

be pushing up (the) daisies slang To be dead. This phrase alludes to one having been buried underground. *I'll be pushing up the daisies long before taxes in our city go down. You'll be pushing up daisies when mom finds out that you dented her brand-new car.*

be put behind bars To be arrested and held in prison; to be serving time in prison. *I hear Mike's uncle has been put behind bars again. I wonder what he did this time! Sir, I'm afraid your son has been put behind bars on a charge of drunk driving.*

be put in (one's) place To be humbled or have one's dignity lowered (by someone); to be made aware that one is not as important, respected, influential, etc., as one thinks. *John was really put in his place by the teacher, who scolded him so harshly that he burst into tears. I'd say that the billionaire CEO has been put in his place after the guilty verdict at his trial.*

be put out of business To be caused or forced to cease carrying on commercial trading or transactions. *Our bookstore has been a part of the neighborhood for nearly 50 years, but we're being put out of business by these new electronic books that you can download. I hear that Mike's company has been put out of business due to allegations of insider trading.*

be put out of humour old fashioned To be put in an irritable, grouchy, or unhappy mood; to be made to feel unwell, displeased, or in poor spirits. Primarily heard in UK. *I must say, I was put quite out of humor to have been reprimanded like that in front of my colleagues. My wife is always being put out of humour by the cold weather in this part of the country.*

be put out of sorts old fashioned To be put in an irritable, grouchy, or unhappy mood; to be made to feel unwell, displeased, or in poor spirits. *I must say, I was put quite out of sorts to have been reprimanded like that in*

front of my colleagues. My wife is always being put out of sorts by the cold weather in this part of the country.

be put through the hoop To be subjected to some ordeal, difficulty, trial, or punishment; to undergo an unpleasant experience. *Between my mother's bout with cancer, Jenny losing her job, and the bank threatening to foreclose on the house, our family has really been put through the hoop this year. Jake wasn't a great fit for the military, and he was constantly being put through the hoop for disobedience.*

be put through the mangle To be subjected to some ordeal, difficulty, trial, or punishment; to undergo an unpleasant experience. *Between my mother's bout with cancer, Jenny losing her job, and the bank threatening to foreclose on the house, our family has really been put through the mangle this year. Jake wasn't a great fit for the military, and he was constantly being put through the mangle for disobedience.*

be put through the wringer To be subjected to some ordeal, difficulty, trial, or punishment; to undergo an unpleasant experience. *Between my mother's bout with cancer, Jenny losing her job, and the bank threatening to foreclose on the house, our family has really been put through the wringer this year. Jake wasn't a great fit for the military, and he was constantly being put through the wringer for disobedience.*

be put to rights To be restored to or arranged in the proper, natural, or original state or condition. *I never worry about keeping my hotel room tidy, because it'll be put to rights after I leave anyway. That new assistant is completely useless. This entire contract is a sloppy mess, and now it has to be put to rights before Monday.*

be put to the sword To be slain or executed, especially in or as a consequence of war. *Scores of villagers were put to the sword by the merciless invaders, and those who survived were left with a ravaged, empty township.*

be putty in (one's) hands To be easy to control or bend to one's wishes. (Putty is a very malleable material.) *Oh, come on, Julia is putty in our hands—we can definitely get her to help us with this prank.*

be quick off the mark To be quick to react or take action. *You have to be quick off the mark if you're going to be an emergency responder.*



be quick on the draw **1.** Literally, to be very quick at drawing one's gun in readiness to shoot it. *The gunfighter was so quick on the draw that he often shot his enemies before they reached their own gun.* **2.** By extension, to understand, anticipate, or react to a given situation or circumstance very quickly. *You have to be quick on the draw if you want to get ahead in the world of business. Faced with criticism by environmentalists, the company's PR rep was quick on the draw and pointed out its important role in job creation for the local community. John is quick on the draw to defend himself when criticized.*

be quids in slang To be able to profit or gain from something. ("Quid" is a slang term for the British pound.) Primarily heard in UK. *We'll be quids in if that company buys our software!*

be quiet A command to stop talking or making any noise. Often (but not exclusively) said as a harried imperative. *Be quiet! Do you want them to hear us? Kids, please be quiet—your mother has a headache.*

be quiet as a mouse See [be \(as\) quiet as a mouse](#).

be quite something To be particularly noteworthy, remarkable, interesting, special, or impressive. *Wow, this new car of yours is quite something!* A: *"I hope we get a chance to meet the band after the concert."* B: *"Yeah, now that would be quite something!"*

be rained off To be delayed, postponed, or canceled due to the rain. Primarily heard in UK. *I was really looking forward to the football match this weekend, but it was rained off in the end. Spectators are to be aware that there will be no refunds issued if the event is rained off.*

be rained out To be delayed, postponed, or cancelled due to the rain. *I was really looking forward to the football match this weekend, but it was rained out. Spectators are to be aware that there will be no refunds issued if the event is rained out.*

be raring to go To be eager and ready to take action. *Are you ready yet? The rest of us are raring to go! After taking a break from my research over the weekend, I was raring to go on Monday morning.*

be ready to roll To be eager and prepared to take action. Often said when one is ready to leave a certain place. Primarily heard in US. *Are you ready yet? The rest of us are ready to roll! After taking a break from my*

research over the weekend, I was ready to roll on Monday morning.

be (really) something To be particularly noteworthy, remarkable, interesting, special, or impressive. *Wow, this new car of yours is really something!* A: *"I hope we get a chance to meet the band after the concert."* B: *"Yeah, now that would be really something!"*

be rid of To separate oneself from something or someone else. *I'm so glad to be rid of that project. It had so many parts and felt like a burden for weeks! Thank God we're finally rid of our houseguests and can go back to living our normal lives!*

be riding high To be very successful or happy at the current period in time. *Our business has been riding high ever since we launched this very popular new product. I'm riding high on the news that I got into my first choice school!*

be right as rain See [be \(as\) right as rain](#).

be (right) on the money To be accurate or correct. *I think her assessment of the situation is right on the money. I won the contest because my guess was on the money.*

be right there To be very close to arriving at the location of the listener (or recipient of the message). It typically indicates that one is actively en route, and can be used as a standalone set phrase. *I'm around the corner, so I'll be right there. I hear you knocking. Be right there!*

be (right) up (one's) arse rude slang To be driving too close to another car. Primarily heard in UK. *Why is this guy right up my arse when I'm already going over the speed limit?*

be right with you To help, serve, or meet with you (typically a waiting customer) momentarily. The phrase can stand alone or be preceded by a noun and the verb "will." *Ah, there's a customer at the counter. Be right with you, ma'am! Thank you all for your patience. Someone will be right with you.*

be ripe for the picking To be in an ideal position or at the perfect stage to be utilized, benefited or profited from, taken advantage of, exploited, etc. (Alludes to fruit being at the right stage to be harvested.) *Assert our brand early and aggressively enough, and this new market will be ripe for the picking. I heard that massive company just dropped their current PR team—that contract is ripe for the picking! This land is ripe for the picking if we can*

get the locals to sign over the rights to it.

be ripped to shreds 1. To be severely or thoroughly criticized, upbraided, or condemned. A: *"Have you heard anything about this movie we're about to see?"* B: *"Well, it was ripped to shreds by critics, but I still think it's going to be great."* I hear John's going to be ripped to shreds at his performance review with the bosses tomorrow. 2. To be utterly or severely damaged, ruined, or thrown into disarray. *Enjoy the tranquility and order of your house now, because once you have kids, it's going to be ripped to shreds. Sarah was ripped to shreds in her first match as an amateur boxer.*

be rolling in dough To be exceptionally wealthy; to have large amounts of money to spend. *I hear her father is rolling in dough, so I wouldn't be too worried about her future. Once we get this plan underway, we'll be rolling in dough in no time!*

be rolling in dough To be exceptionally wealthy. "Dough" is slang for money, with the image being that of one literally rolling around in piles of cash. *I hear her father is rolling in dough, so I wouldn't be too worried about her future. Once we get this plan underway, we'll be rolling in dough in no time!*

be rolling in it To be exceptionally wealthy. "It" refers to money, with the image being that of one literally rolling around in piles of cash. *I hear her father is rolling in it, so I wouldn't be too worried about her future. Once we get this plan underway, we'll be rolling in it in no time!*

be rolling in money To be exceptionally wealthy; to have large amounts of money to spend. *I hear her father is rolling in money, so I wouldn't be too worried about her future. Once we get this plan underway, we'll be rolling in money in no time!*

be rolling in wealth To be extremely rich; to enjoy the benefits or luxuries of great wealth. *The corrupt politicians and businessmen of this country are rolling in wealth while the greater majority struggle to feed our families. It is time we took action! My girlfriend's family has been rolling in wealth for years. I don't know what I can offer her that she doesn't have already!*

be rotten to the core To be entirely bad, evil, or corrupt. *The defense attorney refused to take the case when he realized the criminal was rotten to the core, unrepentantly boasting about his heinous crimes. That company is*

just rotten to the core—I wouldn't be surprised if all the employees were embezzling money!

be run off (one's) feet To be exceptionally busy, especially to an exhausting or exasperating degree; to be made to work very hard and very quickly. *We have three parties of 40 scheduled for the dining room this evening, so all of our floor staff are going to be run off their feet. With three young kids, it's hard to remember a time when I wasn't run off my feet.*

be running on empty To continue to operate with no or very little enthusiasm, energy, or resources left. *I've been painting the house for four hours every night after work, and I am seriously running on empty at this point. We were running on empty by the time our team made it to the championship round.*

be running on fumes To be continuing to operate with no or very little enthusiasm, energy, or resources left. *I've been painting the house for four hours every night after work, and I am seriously running on fumes at this point. We were running on fumes by the time our team made it to the championship round.*

be rushed off (one's) feet To be exceptionally busy, especially to an exhausting or exasperating degree; to be made to work very hard and very quickly. *We have three parties of 40 scheduled for the dining room this evening, so all of our servers are going to be rushed off their feet. With three young kids, it's hard to remember a time when I wasn't rushed off my feet.*

be sacrificed on the altar of See [sacrifice \(something\) on the altar of](#).

be scared shitless rude slang To be completely terrified. *I was scared shitless when I woke up to the sounds of an intruder in my house.*

be scattered to the four winds To be dispersed across a wide area. *Our family has been scattered to the four winds now that all of our kids are in college in different states.*

be second to none To be the best; to have no rival. *Of course my daughter will go to Harvard—it's second to none! The owner is a famous pastry chef, so the desserts here are truly second to none.*

be seeing you See [\(I'll\) be seeing you](#).

be set aback To be startled, astonished, shocked, or disconcerted. (A less

common variant of "be taken aback.") *All of us were a bit set aback to learn that John was moving to England next month. I must admit that I was set aback when I heard we weren't receiving our bonuses this year.*

be set in cement To be firmly or permanently established; to be unalterable or not subject to change. *The healthcare law looks promising, but we'll have to wait until it's set in cement before we know exactly what it will do.*

be set in concrete To be definitely and permanently decided or planned. *We might get brunch next weekend, but nothing is set in concrete yet.*

be set to rights To be restored to or arranged in the proper, natural, or original state or condition. *I never worry about keeping my hotel room tidy, because it'll be set to rights after I leave anyway. That new assistant is completely useless. This entire contract is a sloppy mess, and now it has to be set to rights before Monday.*

be several bricks short of a (full) load To be not very intelligent or of questionable mental capacity. This expression can appear in many different forms and variations (e.g., "a few sandwiches short of a picnic," "one card shy of a full deck," etc.). *He says he's going to start a business selling bees as pets—I think he may be several bricks short of a load. The new manager is nice enough, but he's several bricks short of a full load, if you ask me.*

be several cards short of a (full) deck To be not very intelligent or of questionable mental capacity. This expression can appear in many different forms and variations (e.g., "a few sandwiches short of a picnic," "one brick short of a load.," etc.). *He says he's going to start a business selling bees as pets—I think he may be several cards short of a deck. The new manager is nice enough, but he's several cards short of a full deck, if you ask me.*

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ask me.

be shacked up with (someone) 1. To be living or sharing accommodations with someone while having a casual sexual relationship with him or her. *I haven't seen my sister in weeks. I hear she's been shacked up with some guy from Oklahoma these days. I was shacked up for a while with a woman I met downtown, but I've been on my own for the last couple of months.* 2. To temporarily share accommodations with someone. A: "Do you have a place to stay while you're in town for the wedding?" B: "Yeah, I'm shacked up with my brother and his fiancée for the weekend."

be shaken up See [shaken up](#).

be short on looks See [short on looks](#).

be shortlisted To be placed on a final list (a shortlist) of people or things that are being considered for something, such as an award or a position of employment. *I was so shocked to hear that my story was shortlisted for the fiction award! Well, I was shortlisted for the job, but in the end they hired somebody else.*

be shot 1. To be physically, mentally, or emotionally exhausted. *After two hours in the gym and another hour swimming, I was shot by the time I got home. I'm already pretty shot from writing essays, and I still have another one to write for tomorrow.* 2. To be in a bad condition or totally destroyed. *I wish I could have the repairs finished sooner, but I'm afraid your engine's shot. Between dealing with mounting debt, my four children, and my recent divorce, my nerves are pretty shot at the moment.* 3. To be filmed. *The surprise independent hit was shot on a budget of less than \$100,000.* 4. To be wasted, spent, or used up, typically money or resources. *I can't believe my entire budget for a week in Las Vegas was shot in the first day!*

be shot to hell See [be \(all\) shot to hell](#).

be shot to pieces 1. slang To be in poor condition. *After dropping my phone so many times, the screen is shot to pieces. I'm sorry, what's your name again? My memory is shot to pieces anymore.* 2. slang To have failed or gone awry, as of an idea or plan. *We really need to regroup now that our proposal is shot to pieces after the meeting with the CEO.*

be shown the ropes To be taught how to do or perform a job, task, or activity; to have explained or demonstrated how something is done. *I had*

never worked on a ranch before, but I was shown the ropes by a friend of mine. This is Samantha, our new intern. Make sure she's shown the ropes by the end of the week.

be sick 1. To be ill or generally unwell. *I was really sick last week and had to miss several days of work. I don't think I'll come out to the party, I'm a bit sick.* **2.** To be nauseated. *I'm going to be sick driving around all these winding mountain roads.* **3.** To vomit. Primarily heard in UK. *After drinking an entire bottle of vodka, Jim was sick all over his shoes.* **4.** To be repelled or disgusted by something. *I'm sick thinking about how much we have to pay for our medical insurance.*

be sick and tired of (something) To be or become exceedingly wearied by, bored of, or exasperated with something. *I'm so sick and tired of doing my boss's errands. If something doesn't change soon, I'm going to quit! I was all gung-ho about this graduate program when I first began, but I must admit that I've been sick and tired of these boring lectures lately.*

be sick as a dog See [be \(as\) sick as a dog](#).

be sick as a parrot See [be \(as\) sick as a parrot](#).

be sick of (something) To be thoroughly tired of or exasperated by something. *I am so sick of all these political campaign ads. They're on all the time, and every year they get nastier and nastier.*

be sick to death of (something) To be or become exceedingly wearied by, bored of, or exasperated with something. *I'm sick to death of doing my boss's errands. If something doesn't change soon, I'm going to quit! I was all gung-ho about this graduate program when I first began, but I must admit that I've been sick to death of these boring lectures lately.*

be silent as the grave See [be \(as\) silent as the grave](#).

be (sitting) in the catbird seat To be in a powerful position. The phrase likely refers to the catbird's preference for high tree branches (which keep predators at bay). Primarily heard in US. *As the CEO's assistant, you are definitely sitting in the catbird seat. I know you were hoping to be elected president over Joe, but, as vice president, you're in the catbird seat if he resigns.*

be sitting on a gold mine To have immediate access to a plentiful amount of something valuable or desirable, especially something that one has

not yet profited from. *Who knew that my grandfather was sitting on a gold mine of priceless antiques all these years? If your social networking site is attracting millions of new users every month, then you guys are definitely sitting on a gold mine.*

be (sitting) on (one's) tail To follow close behind someone or something. *Why is this guy sitting on my tail when I'm already going over the speed limit? The cops are definitely on our tail now—we have to turn ourselves in!*

be (sitting) on top of the world To be very happy. *I was on top of the world when I found out that I'd gotten an A on my hardest exam. Cathy has been sitting on top of the world ever since she got that big promotion at work.*

be sitting pretty To be in an ideal living situation (typically because one is financially comfortable), or in an advantageous position. *With all the money you inherited from Aunt Myrtle, you'll be sitting pretty for the rest of your life. I'll be sitting pretty for the rest of the semester if I'm able to ace this test.*

be six feet under slang To be dead. This phrase alludes to one having been buried underground. *I'll be six feet under long before taxes in our city go down. You'll be six feet under when mom finds out that you dented her brand-new car.*

be skating on thin ice To be doing something very risky or dangerous that could result in imminent disaster or ruin. *I hope you realize that you'll be skating on thin ice if you decide to gamble your employees' retirement funds on such a dodgy investment.*

be skin and bone See [be \(all\) skin and bone\(s\)](#).

be sleeping at the switch To be failing to attend to one's responsibilities or duties; to be inattentive to that which is important or for which one is responsible. *Johnson was supposed to make sure the paperwork went through before the deadline, but it looks like he was sleeping at the switch. Our goalkeeper is such a nincompoop. We would have won that match if he hadn't been sleeping at the switch!*

be sleeping at the wheel To be failing to attend to one's responsibilities or duties; to be inattentive to that which is important or for

which one is responsible. *Johnson was supposed to make sure the paperwork went through before the deadline, but it looks like he was sleeping at the wheel. Our goalkeeper is such a nincompoop. We would have won that match if he hadn't been sleeping at the wheel!*

be sleeping with the fishes gangster cliché To be murdered and have one's body disposed of in a river, lake, or ocean. *Don't worry, boss, that no-good snitch will be sleeping with the fishes before sunrise.*

be sloshed to the gills To be thoroughly inebriated; to be drunk to the point of incoherence, senselessness, or the loss of self-control. *I hate being in New Orleans during Mardi Gras—an appalling number of people are sloshed to the gills!*

be slow off the mark To be slow to react or take action. *He's too slow off the mark to be an effective emergency responder. You were a little slow off the mark on your last line. Come in a little bit sooner next time.*

be slow on the uptake See [be \(a little\) slow on the uptake](#).

be smashed to smithereens To be broken apart or otherwise destroyed into tiny, fragmentary pieces. "Smithereens," first appearing in English in 1829 as "smiddereens," is likely derived from the Irish word "smidirín" or "smidiríní," meaning "fragment." *I wish I could still go visit our old family home, but it's already been smashed to smithereens by the demolition crew. The village was smashed to smithereens by the typhoon's gale-force winds.*

be snatched from the jaws of death To be rescued at the last moment from near or certain death. *The drowning fishermen were snatched from the jaws of death by a passing cruise ship.*

be snowed under To be very busy or overwhelmed with something. This phrase evokes the image of being buried under an avalanche. *I'd love to go out to dinner tonight, but I'm totally snowed under at the office right now. Kate's not coming tonight because she's snowed under with research for her thesis.*

be snug as a bug in a rug See [be \(as\) snug as a bug in a rug](#).

be so bold as to To do something that is (or could be seen as) surprising, daring, and perhaps inappropriate. *That girl just got here but was so bold as to push her way to the front of the line! I can't be so bold as to ask my boss*

for a raise.

be soaked through To be extremely or thoroughly wet, especially through multiple layers. *Oh, you poor thing, you're soaked through! Come in out of the rain and sit down by the fire this instant! I was soaked through after Daniel pushed me into the pool. I wish I hadn't left my bag outside. Now my books are all soaked through!*

be soaked to the bone To be extremely or completely wet, especially through one's clothing. *Oh, you poor thing, you're soaked to the bone! Come in out of the rain and sit down by the fire this instant! I was soaked to the bone after Daniel pushed me into the pool.*

be soaked to the skin To be extremely or completely wet, especially through one's clothing. *Oh, you poor thing, you're soaked to the skin! Come in out of the rain and sit down by the fire this instant! I was soaked to the skin after Daniel pushed me into the pool.*

be sober as a judge See [be \(as\) sober as a judge](#).

be soft on (someone) 1. To treat someone delicately, gently, or leniently; to not criticize, punish, or berate someone too harshly. *You should be soft on Bill, it's his first day in the office. You're too soft on those kids. They need more discipline or they'll get out of control!* 2. To be romantically interested in or infatuated with someone. *I think John's soft on Samantha, I hope he asks her out on a date!*

be sold a pup slang To have bought something that is ultimately worthless. Primarily heard in UK. *I'm sorry, but that's definitely not an authentic Louis Vuitton bag. You've been sold a pup, my friend.*

be solid as a rock See [be \(as\) solid as a rock](#).

be (someone's) call To be ultimately left up to someone to decide. *I don't really care what movie we see—it's your call. I think we should use the extra money to invest in some new computer upgrades, but it's the boss's call in the end.*

be (someone's) funeral A (usually humorous) threat indicating that if someone does or doesn't do something, it will bring about negative consequences. *OK, fine, don't do what mom said. It's your funeral! If Billy goes in my room when I'm not here, it'll be his funeral.*

be (someone's) huckleberry dated To be well or perfectly suited to

someone's job, need, or purpose. Primarily heard in US. *You need someone to go break your brother out of jail? Buddy, I'm your huckleberry.*

be (someone's) strong suit To be something, such as a subject, activity, or field, at which someone is particularly skilled or adept. *Working with computers was never my strong suit, so this receptionist position is going to be a real challenge for me. Movie trivia is one of Sam's strong suits, so I think we should ask her to be on our pub quiz team.*

be something See [be \(really\) something](#).

be sorry Regret (something). Often used in the phrase, "you'll be sorry." *OK, fine, don't do what mom said—you'll be sorry! If you go in my room when I'm not here, you'll be sorry!*

be sound as a dollar See [be \(as\) sound as a dollar](#).

be spitting in(to) the wind To be doing something totally pointless, fruitless, or futile; to be wasting one's time doing something that will not or cannot come to pass. *To be perfectly honest, when I vote, I feel like I'm spitting in the wind, so I usually don't bother. If you're trying to lose weight without changing your diet, you're spitting into the wind.*

be spoiled for choice To have an abundance of suitable or ideal options from which to choose, such that it may be difficult to make a decision. Primarily heard in US. *Between video games, television, and the Internet, kids these days are spoiled for choice when it comes to their entertainment. Our hotel was right in the midst of the city's finest restaurants, so whenever we wanted something to eat, we were spoiled for choice.*

be spoiling for Enthusiastic/eager for something. Often use in the phrase "be spoiling for a fight." *Come on, don't engage with that drunken fool, he's spoiling for a fight!*

be spoiling for a fight To be argumentative and/or combative. *My mother is spoiling for a fight when she makes critical comments like that—don't even listen to her. Oh, he's just spoiling for a fight because he hasn't slept much in the past week.*

be spoilt for choice To have an abundance of suitable or ideal options from which to choose, such that it may be difficult to make a decision. Primarily heard in UK. *Between video games, television, and the Internet, kids these days are spoilt for choice when it comes to their entertainment.*

Our hotel was right in the midst of the city's finest restaurants, so whenever we wanted something to eat we were spoiled for choice.

be spoon-fed **1.** Literally, to have food inserted into one's mouth by another person. *My mother had to be spoon-fed for a while after her stroke. No, my daughter is off the bottle now—she's spoon-fed.* **2.** By extension, to be helped excessively by someone else (usually to the recipient's detriment). *Those students are lazy because they are always spoon-fed the answers by their teacher. The actress got so flustered in front of the camera that she had to be spoon-fed her lines. How unprofessional!*

be spot on To be exactly right; to be perfectly accurate. *Mr. Lynch's analysis of the company is spot on, if you ask me. I suggest we follow whatever advice he offers. Yes, those directions you gave me were spot on, thank you!*

be squashed (in) like sardines To be very tightly or snugly squashed together, especially in a small space. *We didn't want to take more than one car, so we had to be squashed like sardines in Jeff's little sedan for the four-hour drive to Moab. Having a concert in our friend's café was such a good idea! Sure, we were squashed in like sardines, but everyone had a great time.*

be staring (one) in the face **1.** To be an unavoidable situation or issue. *I know you don't want to pay for this expensive course of treatment, but if you keep ignoring your health, a hospital stay will be staring you in the face.* **2.** To be very obvious, especially suddenly. *Thanks to all of those failed experiments, the solution is finally staring me in the face! Unfortunately, the solution—to break up—had been staring us in the face all along.*

be stark raving mad To be totally crazy. *Don't listen to a word he says, he's stark raving mad! You're stark raving mad if you think that plan will work.*

be stiff as a board See [be \(as\) stiff as a board](#).

be still in the game To remain a contender for success despite setbacks or difficulties. *Our competitors may have carved away a lot of our market, but we're still in the game!*

be still my beating heart An exclamation that something is too exciting or overwhelming for one to bear; literally, that it is causing one's

heart to beat too fast. In modern usage, it is almost always used sarcastically to imply that something is actually mundane, uninteresting, or unappealing. Usually shortened to "be still my heart." *You want me to go shopping with you? Oh, be still, my beating heart! No, thank you. He said the majority of the work I'd be doing for him would entail—be still, my beating heart—copying text from one source to another.*

be still my heart An exclamation that something is too exciting or overwhelming for one to bear; literally, that it is causing one's heart to beat too fast. In modern usage, it is almost always used sarcastically to imply that something is actually mundane, uninteresting, or unappealing. *You want me to go shopping with you? Oh, be still my heart! No, thank you. He said the majority of the work I'd be doing for him would entail—be still my heart—copying data from one source to another.*

be storming mad To be exceptionally or uncontrollably angry. *I was storming mad after those mean things Chris said to my mother.*

be streets ahead To be superior by a large margin. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *Based on the boss's praise, it sounds like I'm streets ahead of everyone else in the department. My sister's such a talented artist that her work is just streets ahead of the other entries in the competition.*

be (strictly) for the birds slang To be frustrating, annoying, or pointless. Primarily heard in US, Australia. *Driving is strictly for the birds when you live in a big city—unless you like sitting in traffic! I miss my usual shift—night work is for the birds.*

be strong as an ox See [be \(as\) strong as an ox](#).

be strong point See [be \(one's\) strong point](#).

be struck dumb To be rendered speechless or dumbfounded, as due to a great surprise or shock. *We were all struck dumb by my father's announcement that he was resigning from the company.*

be stubborn as a mule See [be \(as\) stubborn as a mule](#).

be stuck in a groove See [be in a groove](#).

be (stuck) in a rut To become seemingly trapped or stuck in a mundane, non-changing pattern of life, work, and/or personal behavior. *I had so many ambitions when I first graduated from college, but now I feel like I'm in a rut. We're stuck in a rut—let's move abroad for the summer and shake*

things up!

be stuck in a time warp To remain unchanged from a time in the past, especially in an antiquated or obsolete way. ("Time warp" is sometimes hyphenated.) *This town is so entrenched in its backwards ideals and moral values, like it's stuck in a time warp or something! There's nothing digital in the house—no computers, no smartphones, just a typewriter and a single rotary telephone. Talk about being stuck in a time-warp!*

be stuffed like a turkey To be or feel extremely full from eating a lot of food. *My grandmother is the best cook around. I'm always stuffed like a turkey whenever I leave her house! We were all stuffed like a turkey after Diana's amazing meal.*

be stuffed to the gills To be completely full or teeming; to have no room to spare. *I've got so many meetings and deadlines these days that my schedule is stuffed to the gills! Her mind was stuffed to the gills with ideas for her new book.*

be swept off (one's) feet To become very quickly or suddenly enamored with or greatly admiring of someone; to be so thoroughly impressed or charmed by someone as to fall greatly in love with them. *I think the reason Jane gets so suddenly invested in new relationships is because she loves being swept off her feet. I was completely swept off my feet when I met my late wife, so now, I can't imagine life without her.*

be swimming with the fishes gangster cliché To be murdered and have one's body disposed of in a river, lake, or ocean. (A less common variant of "be sleeping with the fishes.") *Don't worry, boss, that no-good snitch will be swimming with the fishes before sunrise.*

be tailor-made 1. Of clothing, to have been made specifically for someone by a tailor (and thus fit very well). *Wow, they did a great job with the alterations—that gown looks like it was tailor-made for you!* 2. By extension, to be ideally suited for someone or something. *I've never seen a happier couple than Tom and Anna—it's like they were tailor-made for each other! Don't worry, that math course is tailor-made for students majoring in the arts, so you're not expected to know advanced formulas or anything.*

be taken aback See [taken aback](#).

be taken as read To be plainly accepted as true, fact, or general

knowledge without being verified or investigated first. *It's a shame that it's always taken as read by parents and politicians that video games are no more than idle entertainment. In certain parts of the country, it is taken as read that a divine intelligence created the universe.*

be taken at face value To be accepted only based on the way someone or something appears or seems, without being verified or investigated first. *It's important that the current period of economic growth is not taken at face value by the government, as there is still a tremendous amount of work that needs to be done. The best salespeople are the ones who are taken at face value by their customers.*

be taken by surprise To be happened upon when one is not ready, prepared, or on guard; to be shocked or startled by someone or something. *I was taken completely by surprise when you showed up at my office this afternoon for lunch. I wish you would have called ahead! The enemy encampment was taken by surprise when our troops descended upon them just before daybreak.*

be taken down a notch (or two) To have one's ego or pride reduced or damaged; to be humbled or humiliated. *I hope that pompous oaf has been taken down a notch or two after losing his court case. If Sarah keeps acting like a spoiled brat to everyone, she's going to be taken down a notch some day.*

be taken down a peg (or two) To have one's ego or pride reduced or damaged; to be humbled or humiliated. *I hope that pompous oaf has been taken down a peg or two after losing his court case. If Sarah keeps acting like a spoiled brat to everyone, she's going to be taken down a peg some day.*

be taken for granted 1. To be considered innately true, real, or correct; to be anticipated as always being available or at hand. *The plenitude of our natural resources has been taken for granted by people for most of human history. I guess we had taken for granted that our kids would stick around this town and take care of us when we get older.* 2. To be underestimated or undervalued; to not be properly appreciated or recognized. *I've decided to go out and start my own business, because I'm sick of being taken for granted in this huge corporation.*

be taken ill To become ill or unwell, especially quickly or unexpectedly. *Mrs. Smith was taken ill last night and an ambulance had to be called to*

bring her to the hospital. I was taken ill after someone spiked my drink with alcohol.

be taken in by (someone) 1. To be fooled, swindled, cheated, or beguiled (by someone or something). *It galls me how many people are taken in by companies' claims that "the customer matters most." You spent \$1,000 on some cure-all pill you bought off the Internet? How could you be taken in by that scam?* 2. To be adopted, looked after, or given foster care (by someone or something), often in an unofficial or informal manner. *Nearly 200 abused animals are taken in at this shelter alone each year. My younger brother and I were taken in by our aunt and uncle after our parents were arrested.*

be taken to task (by someone) To be scolded, rebuked, reprimanded, or held accountable (by someone). *I was taken to task by the headmaster for disrupting class again. It's not entirely fair that the bankers are the only ones being taken to task for the economic collapse, when a great many politicians are to blame as well.*

be taken to the cleaners (by someone) 1. To have a lot or all of one's money taken, swindled, or cheated (by someone). *I was taken to the cleaners by the IRS after they found out I hadn't been declaring my freelance work on my tax returns. I made such a big deal about going to the poker tournament that I couldn't bear to tell my husband that I'd been taken to the cleaners.* 2. To be soundly defeated or bested; to lose by a wide margin. *The young team's inexperience showed on the field today, as they were taken to the cleaners by the veteran squad.*

be taken under the wing of (someone) To come under the protection, tutelage, nurture, or care of someone. *I was really nervous starting my master's degree, but I was lucky enough to be taken under the wing of one of the top professors in the university. Our parents died when we were quite young, so my sister and I were taken under the wing of our grandmother for most of our lives.*

be tall in (one's)/the saddle To be or remain proud, stoical, or august in one's manner or composure. *Even after two years of a losing war, the general was still tall in his saddle before his troops. I'll have nothing to do with your schemes or plot. One day, you're going to be locked up and lose everything, and I'll be tall in the saddle when you do.*

be tarred and feathered 1. Literally, to be coated with tar and bird feathers as a form of public punishment and shaming (one that is no longer carried out). *The thief was tarred and feathered in the public square before being paraded through the town strapped to a wooden cart.* 2. By extension, to be severely criticized, reprimanded, or excoriated, especially in a public and humiliating manner. *After this economic collapse, everyone is demanding that the heads of the bank be tarred and feathered, but I'd be willing to bet that they'll just get a slap on the wrist.*

be ten a penny To be very common, ordinary, or widespread. *At first they were quite novel and interesting, but now these little organic cafés are getting to be ten a penny. Trashy crime novels like his are ten a penny, but at least he's doing what he loves.*

be thankful for small mercies To appreciate small or minor benefits, advantages, or opportunities one is afforded, particularly in the midst of an otherwise difficult, frustrating, or unfortunate situation or circumstance. *My car's air conditioning stopped working two hours into my cross-country road trip across America. The radio still works, though, so I guess I should be thankful for small mercies. Our son's accident left him without the use of his right eye; we're just thankful for small mercies that he still has the use of his left one.*

be that as it may A set phrase that acknowledges a previous statement as true but ultimately unable to override some fact or sway one's thoughts on the matter. *Yes, my daughter made a mistake. But be that as it may, this punishment is much too severe. I'm sure that he really does need help with this project. Be that as it may, I just can't stay any later at work tonight.*

be the bee's knees To be exceptionally great, excellent, or high-quality. *Have you ever tried the pistachio gelato at this place? It's absolutely the bee's knees! I'm so crazy about the girl I've started seeing. I think she's the bee's knees, and I don't care who knows it!*

be the best of a bad bunch To be slightly better or more desirable than anything or anyone else in a group, even though none of the available options are desirable. *To be honest, none of the apartments we can afford looked very nice, but this place seems to be the best of a bad bunch. I don't care for Mary's new college friends. She's still the best of a bad bunch, but she's become a real troublemaker since meeting them.*

be the best of a bad lot To be slightly better or more desirable than anything or anyone else in a group, even though none of the available options are desirable. *To be honest, none of the apartments we can afford looked very nice, but this place seems to be the best of a bad lot. I don't care for Mary's new college friends. She's still the best of a bad lot, but she's become a real troublemaker since meeting them.*

be (the) bomb To be excellent, extremely entertaining, or of very high quality. *This steak I ordered is bomb! I'm not usually a fan of action films, but that one was the bomb!*

be the business To be exceptionally great, excellent, high-quality, or skillful. Primarily heard in UK, Ireland. *Have you ever tried the pistachio gelato at this place? It's the absolute business! I'm so crazy about the girl I've started seeing. I think she's the business, and I don't care who knows it! Wow, this singer is really the business, isn't she?*

be the butt of the joke To be the object of an insulting or mocking joke. *I like hanging out with my brother and his friends, even though I'm always the butt of his jokes. Due to their disastrous advertising campaign last month, the company has been the butt of many jokes on the Internet lately.*

be the cat's whiskers To be highly enjoyable, desirable, or impressive, especially in a fancy or elaborate way. *Tom's new Cadillac is really the cat's whiskers! Boy, that singer last night was the cat's whiskers, wasn't she?*

be the chief cook and bottle washer To be involved in many aspects of a particular situation. *Because so many people have left our department recently, I'm the chief cook and bottle washer, doing every little task that comes up.*

be the day hell freezes over To be an impossible or incredibly unlikely point or event in the future. *The day that a Democrat like him gets elected in a blue-collar Republican town like this will be the day hell freezes over.*

be the dead spit of (someone) To look exactly like someone else. Primarily heard in UK. *Wow, you are just the dead spit of your mother! I was about to call you by her name.*

be (the) devil's advocate To argue against or attack an idea,

argument, or proposition—even if one is in favor of it—for the sake of debate or to further examine its strength, validity, or details. Refers to the "Advocatus Diaboli," a person employed by the Catholic Church to argue against the canonization of a saint (and therefore help determine if that person is truly worthy of sainthood). *I'm all for universal health care, but I'll be devil's advocate in asking how the government intends to fund such a massive undertaking. Tom is always the devil's advocate in any given conversation because he loves picking apart other people's arguments.*

be the end of (one) To cause one's ruin, breakdown, downfall, or demise. Often (but not always) used facetiously or lightheartedly. *I hate this class, I swear it will be the end of me! My kids are such a handful, sometimes I think they'll be the end of me! If you keep smoking cigarettes, it may well be the end of you.*

be the end of the world See [be \(not\) the end of the world](#).

be the exception that proves the rule To contradict a rule and thus confirm that the rule exists. A: "We're always told to get eight hours of sleep, but I usually feel really groggy when I sleep that much." B: "Well, I guess you're the exception that proves the rule."

be the last word in (something) To be the most modern or advanced version of something. *Yes, our building is undergoing renovations at the moment, but we have all the latest technology. I can assure you that this machine here is the last word in brain scans.*

be the life and soul of the party To be the main source of fun, energy, and enthusiasm at a social event. *Bill is definitely the life and soul of the party—he's currently trying to get everyone up to dance!*

be the light of (one's) life To be the most beloved person in one's life. *Eva has been the light of my life every day of our 75-year marriage.*

be the living end To be exceptional. This phrase can be used both positively and negatively. *When I was a teenager, I saw that band at least 20 times. I just thought they were the living end! If she is so mad at me that she won't come to my wedding, then that is the living end!*

be the main squeeze See [be \(one's/the\) main squeeze](#).

be the making of (one) To be a positively transformative event in one's life. *He used to be irresponsible with money, but buying a home was the*

making of him—he's never been late with a single payment! In many ways, surviving that internship was the making of me.

be the marrying kind See [be \(not\) the marrying kind](#).

be the model of See [be \(a/the\) model of](#).

be the pits To be particularly bad, unfortunate, or awful, especially of a situation or outcome. *Well, this is the pits. I absolutely cannot believe such a huge thunderstorm came through just as we were getting our picnic set up. I was so excited about this job when I first started. I wish I would have known it'd be the pits.*

be the spice of life To be that which makes life interesting, exciting, enjoyable, or worthwhile. From the proverb "variety is the spice of life," meaning that having many different experiences is what makes life interesting. *My witty friend likes to say that sarcasm is the spice of life for her. In romantic fiction, however, misunderstandings and mishaps are the spice of life!*

be the tip of the iceberg To be only a small, often unrepresentative portion of something much larger or more complex that cannot yet be seen or understood. *If Congress doesn't vote to extend the debt limit, a government shutdown will be the tip of the iceberg in terms of what the country will have to deal with. With mobile apps, you have to account for replay value, monetization, ad revenue, and how much the players will spread the game to their friends. Making a fun game is really just the tip of the iceberg!*

be the toast of (some place) To be someone who is especially well liked, regarded, or admired in a certain place. *The young entrepreneur has been the toast of Silicon Valley ever since his revolutionary tech innovation went public. I hope you enjoy being the toast of London now, because such fame is always fleeting.*

be the toast of (the town) To be someone who is especially well-liked, regarded, or admired in a certain place. *The young entrepreneur has been the toast of the town ever since his revolutionary tech innovation went public. I hope you enjoy being the toast of London now, because such fame is always fleeting.*

be the way to go To be the best or most suitable decision, option, or method. *It's clear to me now that a public referendum is the way to go. I don't*

really care for bananas; apples are the way to go!

be the wrong side of See [be \(on\) the wrong side of \(an age\)](#).

be theirs for the asking See [be \(one's\) for the asking](#).

be theirs for the taking See [be \(one's\) for the taking](#).

be themselves See [be oneself](#).

be there or be square A humorous phrase said to encourage someone to attend an event, indicating that their absence would make them "square"—the opposite of cool. *Hey, I'm having a party on Saturday night—be there or be square!*

be thick as a brick See [be \(as\) thick as a brick](#).

be thick as a shit See [be \(as\) thick as a shit](#).

be thick as a short plank See [be \(as\) thick as a short plank](#).

be thick as thieves See [be \(as\) thick as thieves](#).

be thick as two short planks See [be \(as\) thick as two short planks](#).

be thin as a rail See [be \(as\) thin as a rail](#).

be thin as a rake See [be \(as\) thin as a rake](#).

be thin as a stick See [be \(as\) thin as a stick](#).

be thrilled to bits To be ecstatic; to be very pleased and excited. A: *"I really hope Mary enjoys her surprise birthday party."* B: *"I'm sure she'll be thrilled to bits!"* I was thrilled to bits to hear that I'd been selected for a literary award in New York City.

be thrilled to death To be ecstatic; to be very pleased and excited. A: *"I really hope Mary enjoys her surprise birthday party."* B: *"I'm sure she'll be thrilled to death!"* I was thrilled to death to hear that I'd been selected for a literary award in New York City.

be thrilled to pieces To be ecstatic; to be very pleased and excited. A: *"I really hope Mary enjoys her surprise birthday party."* B: *"I'm sure she'll be thrilled to pieces!"* I was thrilled to pieces to hear that I'd been selected for a literary award in New York City.

be thrown in the deep end To be prompted or forced to begin doing something very complex and/or unfamiliar, especially suddenly and without

guidance, assistance, or preparation. *I had never worked in sales before, I was just thrown in the deep end! We were thrown into the deep end the first day of class when the lecturer asked us to write a 2,000-word essay on one of Shakespeare's plays. Those who go the furthest in life are the ones willing to be thrown in at the deep end when a great opportunity arises.*

be thrown off balance **1.** To be made unsteady, such that one may fall. *I was thrown off balance on my roller skates when that dog rushed by me and knocked into my legs.* **2.** To be confused, upset, or taken aback (by something). *I was rather thrown off balance when Jenny said she wanted to have a baby.*

be tied to (one's) mother's apron strings To be controlled or dominated by one's mother. *I'm worried that my husband will forever be tied to his mother's apron strings—he's a grown man but still does every little thing she asks! Can you make a decision on your own, or are you tied to your mother's apron strings?*

be tied (up) in knots To be confused, anxious, worried, and/or upset (about something). *I've been tied up in knots trying to come up with a good topic for my term paper, but I just can't think of anything! James is tied in knots over how to break up with Daniel, but I think he just needs to bite the bullet and just do it.*

be tight-arsed rude slang To be overly concerned with small, insignificant details. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *I asked Molly to proofread our proposal because she's so tight-arsed that she'll definitely notice the slightest mistake!*

be tight-assed rude slang To be overly concerned with small, insignificant details. Primarily heard in US. *I asked Molly to proofread our proposal because she's so tight-assed that she'll definitely notice the slightest mistake!*

be tipping (it) down To be raining very heavily. Primarily heard in UK. *We have a football match scheduled for tomorrow, but if it keeps tipping down like it is today, I'm sure that it will be cancelled. Looks like it's tipping it down outside again. I guess I won't be cycling to work this morning.*

be tired and emotional To be drunk. (A semi-polite or humorous euphemism.) Primarily heard in UK. *I might be mistaken, but did it seem to you like Sean's father was a bit tired and emotional at the picnic? You must*

excuse me, I'm a bit tired and emotional just now. I think I'd best be going home to bed.

be tired to death of (something) To be or become exceedingly wearied by, bored of, or exasperated with something. *I'm tired to death of doing my boss's errands. If something doesn't change soon, I'm going to quit! I was all gung-ho about this graduate program when I first began, but I must admit that I've been tired to death of these boring lectures lately.*

be toast To be in serious trouble; to be ruined, finished, or defeated. *If mom and dad find out we took their car out last night, we're toast! Down by 45 points with only two minutes left in the game, it's pretty safe to say that the home team is toast at this point.*

be toes up 1. To be deceased. *My poor old dad has been toes up for five years today, but I still miss him like crazy! When I'm toes up, I don't want my funeral to be a somber occasion—I want people to smile and remember the good times we all had together!* **2.** To be completely non-functioning, non-operational, incapacitated, or destroyed. *It looks like after nearly 80 years of struggling to stay open, the family business is going to be toes up very shortly. I'm just writing this email to let you know that your website has been toes up for the last 12 hours or so.*

be too clever by half To be too contrived or arrogant in one's cleverness or intelligence, to the point of being irritating to others. Primarily heard in UK. *I think every adolescent goes through a stage of being too clever by half, thinking of themselves as the only person who has things really figured out. The phones people use these days are all too clever by half—I can barely even use them to make phone calls!*

be torqued off To be particularly irritated, frustrated, or exasperated (by something). *It's no use being torqued off over the professor's teaching style; you just have to adapt and do as well as you can. I was pretty torqued off to hear that yet another local grocery store was being bought out by the huge supermarket chain.*

be touch-and-go To be unstable or apt to change. *Their engagement has been so touch-and-go that I'm not sure they'll ever get married. Nancy's condition has been touch-and-go since the surgery, but the doctor is optimistic that she'll make a full recovery.*

be touching cloth semi-vulgar slang To have a very urgent or desperate

need to defecate. (Refers jokingly to one's feces protruding into one's underpants.) *Boy, it's a good thing we got home when we did—I was touching cloth on the way here!*

be touching cotton semi-vulgar slang To have a very urgent or desperate need to defecate. (Refers jokingly to one's feces protruding into one's underpants.) *Boy, it's a good thing we got home when we did—I was touching cotton on the way here!*

be tough as old boots See [be \(as\) tough as old boots](#).

be trapped in a time warp To remain unchanged from a time in the past, especially in an antiquated or obsolete way. ("Time warp" is sometimes hyphenated.) *This town is so entrenched in its backwards ideals and moral values, like it's trapped in a time warp or something! There's nothing digital in the house—no computers, no smartphones, just a typewriter and a single rotary telephone. Talk about being trapped in a time-warp!*

be turfed To be ejected, evicted, or otherwise forcibly removed (from someplace). Primarily heard in UK. *The drunkard was turfed after he started a fight with another customer in the bar. I just found out that we're being turfed at the end of the month because the landlord wants to move back into the house himself.*

be turfed out To be ejected, evicted, or otherwise forcibly removed (from someplace). Primarily heard in UK. *The drunkard was turfed out of the bar after he started a fight with another customer. I just found out that we're being turfed out at the end of the month because the landlord wants to move back into the house himself.*

be two a penny To be very common, ordinary, or widespread. *At first, they were quite novel and interesting, but now these little organic cafés are getting to be two a penny. Trashy crime novels like his are two a penny, but at least he's doing what he loves.*

be ugly as sin See [be \(as\) ugly as sin](#).

be under a microscope To be under close inspection or intense scrutiny. *After I got that official reprimand at work, it feels like I'm under a microscope with my boss. The country's surveillance methods have been under a microscope lately, after news sources learned that it had been eavesdropping on its own citizens' communications.*

be under par To be below average; to be not as good as desired, required, or expected. *This essay you turned in on Friday is really under par, Stevens. Has something been distracting you from your studies recently? Our food was rather uninteresting, and the service was really under par. I honestly don't understand why this restaurant is so popular! I'm a bit under par this morning, boss. I don't think I can make it in to work today!*

be under (someone's) spell To be influenced or controlled by someone because one finds him or her fascinating, enchanting, or seductive. *Our son has never acted out like this before. I think he must be under his new friend's spell or something. Such was the magnitude of the duchess's beauty that countless men have been under her spell.*

be under (someone's) wing To be protected, tutored, nurtured, or cared for by someone. *I was nervous starting an internship at my uncle's company, but it definitely made it easier being under his wing. Our parents died when we were quite young, so my sister and I were under our grandmother's wing for most of our lives.*

be under the cosh To be contending with a difficult or stressful situation; to experience pressure or difficulty. Primarily heard in UK. *Local businesses have been increasingly under the cosh by the austerity measures imposed by the government after the economic crash. Manchester United has really been under the cosh in this second half. I don't think they've left their own side of the pitch more than a handful of times.*

be under the microscope To be under close inspection or intense scrutiny. *After I got that official reprimand at work, it feels like I'm under the microscope with my boss. The country's surveillance methods have been under the microscope lately, after news sources learned that it had been eavesdropping on its own citizens' communications.*

be under the pump To be under pressure to perform, succeed, or achieve results. Primarily heard in UK. *The fast-food giant has been under the pump in the last few years, as sales and market share continue to slide. An ageing batsman, I was under the pump to show that I still had what it takes to be a great cricket player.*

be under the spell of (someone) To be influenced or controlled by someone because one finds him or her fascinating, enchanting, or seductive. *Our son has never acted out like this before. I think he must be under the*

spell of that new friend of his. Such was the magnitude of her beauty that countless men have been under the spell of the duchess.

be under the wing of (someone) To be protected, tutored, nurtured, or cared for by someone. *I was really nervous starting my master's degree, but I was lucky enough to be under the wing of one of the top professors in the university. Our parents died when we were quite young, so my sister and I were under the wing of our grandmother for most of our lives.*

be up against it To have or be likely to face serious problems, stresses, or difficulties. *Each year, more and more families are up against it going into the holiday season. Sorry I haven't been in touch recently, I've just really been up against it in work the last few weeks.*

be up and down 1. To be alternately happy and sad, as due to depression or a traumatic event. *My dad's been quite up and down ever since he lost his job at the factory. I was really confused as to why I was so up and down after having my baby, until my doctor told me about the baby blues. 2.* To go back and forth between success and failure. *Things were a bit up and down in the first few years of the business, but now we're seeing stable profit growth each month.*

be up arse See [be \(right\) up \(one's\) arse](#).

be up (one's) ass rude slang To be driving too close to another car. Primarily heard in US. *Why is this guy up my ass when I'm already going over the speed limit?*

be up the duff slang To be pregnant. *You two have only been married for a couple of months, I can't believe you're up the duff already!*

be up the pole To be pregnant. *You two have only been married for a couple of months, I can't believe you're up the pole already!*

be up the spout slang To be pregnant. *You two have only been married for a couple of months, I can't believe you're up the spout already!*

be up the stick To be pregnant. *You two have only been married for a couple of months, I can't believe you're up the stick already!*

be up to ninety To be extremely busy or overworked; to have many things to contend with at once. Primarily heard in Ireland. *Sorry I haven't been in touch, but between work and our new baby, I've just been up to ninety lately! We're up to ninety in here, Mary! Could you take this order out to*

table 10 straight away, please?

be up with the chickens To be awake at a particularly early hour, especially at or before sunrise (i.e., the hour when chickens wake). *No, thank you, I won't have another drink. I have to be up with the chickens tomorrow. Ma is up with the chickens every day to prepare breakfast for the farmhands.*

be up with the crows To be awake, out of bed, and active at a particularly early hour of the morning. Primarily heard in Australia. *I don't know how he does it, but my husband is up with the crows every single morning. I won't have another pint, thanks. I have to be up with the crows tomorrow, so I'd better head home soon.*

be up with the lark To be awake, out of bed, and active at a particularly early hour of the morning. (Sometimes written as "up with the larks.") *I don't know how he does it, but my husband is up with the lark every single morning. I won't have another pint, thanks. I have to be up with the larks tomorrow, so I'd better head home soon.*

be waiting in the wings To be ready and available to help or replace someone. Actors traditionally wait in the wings of the theater before stepping on stage. *My assistant is waiting in the wings to take my job once I retire. We'll be waiting in the wings, so just signal us if you need anything during your speech.*

be (walking) on thin ice To be doing something very risky or dangerous that could result in imminent disaster or ruin. *I hope you realize that you'll be on thin ice if you decide to gamble your employees' retirement funds on such a dodgy investment. You're walking on thin ice by continuing to come in late. If the boss notices, you'll be fired.*

be water off a duck's back See [be \(like\) water off a duck's back](#).

be well away **1.** slang To be totally absorbed in something, such as a task or conversation. Primarily heard in UK. *Oh wow, I didn't realize I'd been cleaning for so long—I was really well away!* **2.** slang To be drunk. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *Do you remember last night at the pub at all? You were well away!* **3.** slang To be asleep. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *I didn't feel tired at all until I sat down. Before I knew it, I was well away on the couch, and my husband had to wake me up!*

be well in (with) To have a friendly relationship with a powerful or

important person and, usually, benefit from it in some way. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *Now that I'm well in with the CEO, I'm sure I can get you a job at our company.*

be well up on See [be \(not\) well up on \(something\)](#).

be well versed in (something) To be very knowledgeable about, skillful in, or competent at something. *John is well versed in lying, so he's always able to talk his way out of trouble. You should talk to my friend Ana, she's very well versed in the ins and outs of income tax.*

be whistling Dixie slang To have an unrealistic, usually overly optimistic, view of something. "Dixie" was an anthem of the Confederacy, the losing side of the US Civil War. Primarily heard in US. *You're whistling Dixie if you think we're making the playoffs this year.*

be whistling in the dark To be sure of a particular outcome when all evidence points to the contrary. *Based on the polls, he's whistling in the dark if he thinks he's going to unseat the incumbent. He never pays any attention to you, so you're whistling in the dark if you think he's really going to ask you out on a date.*

be white as a sheet See [be as white as a sheet](#).

be white as snow See [be \(as\) white as snow](#).

be wide open 1. To have many possible outcomes or options available. *With so many outstanding teams in the playoffs this year, the field is wide open. Now that you have your degree, the future's wide open to you!* **2.** slang In sports, to be far away from defenders and available to easily receive a pass. *Come one, pass it to me, I'm wide open! Didn't you see that your receiver was wide open?* **3.** slang To be overrun with crime. *Our city used to be wide open, until the new police commissioner and started getting criminals off the streets.*

be wide open to (something) To be a likely target of anger, criticism, or judgment. *You will be wide open to discipline if you keep coming into work late. Because I'm an artist and all of my siblings are doctors, I'm always wide open to criticism at family functions.*

be wise to (someone or something) To be fully aware or cognizant of someone or something, especially if he, she, or it is suspicious, illegal, or malicious in nature or intention. *We'd better watch our step—I*

think the police are wise to us! I'm wise to your scheme, and I'll find a way to make sure you can never put it into action!

be wise to (someone/something) To be aware of some secret or hidden (and usually nefarious) behavior or undertaking. *Now that I've been teaching for a few years, I'm wise to kids who try to cheat on their tests. The cops might be wise to our scheme, so we're going to lay low for a while.*

be worth (one's) while Of an action, to be beneficial and not a waste of one's time. *I was reluctant to do research at a different library, but it turned out to be totally worth my while, as they had a ton of books on my topic! Staying up late tonight won't be worth my while because then I'll be exhausted the whole rest of the week.*

be written all over (one's) face Of one's emotions or inner thoughts, to be evident by one's facial expression. *Jenny said she wasn't scared before we went into the haunted house, but terror was written all over her face. John said nothing, but his response was written all over his face.*

be yours for the asking See [be \(one's\) for the asking](#).

be yours for the taking See [be \(one's\) for the taking](#).

be yourself See [be oneself](#).

a beached whale potentially offensive An extremely large or obese person. *I really need to start exercising again. I've turned into a beached whale!*

beam down To be sent to Earth via teleportation, as in stereotypical portrayals of aliens coming to Earth from their spaceship. This humorous phrase usually suggests that one is crazy. *Did he just beam down from outer space? There's no way that plan will work!*

Beam me up, Scotty Get me out of here! Take me away! This phrase comes from the TV show *Star Trek*, in which it was used (with slightly different wording) as a command to be brought back onto the starship *Enterprise* via a form of teleportation, often when faced with a dangerous situation. *As screaming preschoolers ran all around me, all I could think was, "Beam me up, Scotty!"*

beam up 1. To teleport someone or something, as in the stereotypical portrayals of aliens returning to their spaceship from Earth. *In this new sci-fi movie, ordinary people get beamed up to an alien spaceship.* 2. To die. *The*

old man down the street is back in the hospital, and his family is worried that he'll beam up this time.

beam with pride To smile broadly and radiantly due to pride in something or someone. *I was simply beaming with pride when my son was awarded his college diploma.*

bean counter A derogatory term used to describe someone who obsesses over trivial and insignificant expenditures in an attempt to save money. *As soon as the staff learned they had to purchase their own office supplies, they knew it was a result of the finance department's new bean counter tightening the company's purse strings.*

bean queen **1.** gay slang A Hispanic or Mexican homosexual male. *I like hanging out with fellow bean queens, because we can relate to each other through our culture and our sexual identification.* **2.** gay slang A non-Hispanic homosexual male who is primarily attracted to Hispanic men. Note: Discretion must be used with both instances of this term since it can be construed as being either a pejorative or in celebration of self-identification. *I do tend to date mostly Hispanic men, so I suppose you could call me a bit of a bean queen.*

bear a grudge (against someone) To remain angry with someone about past slights or misdeeds. *Although our disagreement happened months ago, Lily still won't talk to me—clearly, she's bearing a grudge. My sister-in-law bore a grudge against me for years after she found out that I said her wedding dress was ugly.*

bear a hand **1.** To contribute or assist; lend a hand. *Jim is great, he's always willing to bear a hand with any housework that needs doing.* **2.** chiefly nautical An imperative to help with, work on, or do something quickly and at once. *Bear a hand, men! We don't want to be here all day.*

bear a resemblance to (someone/something) To share similarities, especially in appearance, with someone or something else. *Wow, you really bear a resemblance to your mother! I was about to call you by her name. These two pieces of music certainly bear a resemblance to each other—it's a little suspicious, if you ask me.*

bear arms To possess a weapon. *The demonstration is in defense of the right to bear arms. We need to be careful, as some people in the crowd could be bearing arms.*

bear away the bell To win. The phrase alludes to horse racing, in which the winning horse was once awarded a small bell. *I heard that you might bear away the bell at the science fair! Congratulations—it would be a well-deserved victory.*

bear down (on) **1.** Literally, to press down hard on a surface or item. *I bore down on the eraser, but I still couldn't fully erase my drawing. Really bear down on the bandage there—more pressure will slow the bleeding until we get to the hospital.* **2.** To put forth one's maximum effort toward something. *If you want to get a passing grade this semester, you'll really need to bear down on your studies.* **3.** To move closer to someone or something, usually in an intimidating or frightening way. *I'm going over the speed limit, so I have no idea why this car is bearing down on me. We ducked into a store to avoid the angry man who'd been bearing down on us.*

bear false witness To lie about or misrepresent the truth about some event, person, or thing. In common usage, it usually refers to perjury (telling a lie while under oath in a court of law) or to the Ninth Commandment of the Old Testament, from which the phrase is taken: "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor." *Even if it is a small lie and seems harmless, if you bear false witness under oath, you may end up going to jail yourself.*

bear fruit **1.** Literally, to produce fruit, as of certain trees and plants. *Now that the tree in our backyard is bearing fruit, the kids love picking apples from it.* **2.** By extension, to yield desired results. *Donna is convinced that this plan will bear fruit if we just keep working on it, but it's been a year—the rest of us are officially skeptical.*

bear his breast See [bare \(one's\) breast](#).

bear his teeth See [bare \(one's\) teeth](#).

bear hug A strong and often immobilizing type of embrace. *Jane was so excited to see her dad for the first time since his military deployment, she ran to him, wrapped her arms around him, and gave him a long bear hug.*

bear in mind (that) To remember and consider something when making a decision or before taking action. This phrase is often used as an instruction. *Before you ask for a raise, bear in mind that the company isn't doing well financially right now. Bearing in mind that you got excellent grades this semester, your father and I are willing to extend your curfew.*

bear necessities See [bare necessities](#).

bear off (of something) To turn or veer off of a road. This phrase is often given as an instruction to someone who is driving. *Now bear off of this road and then take the highway entrance to the right.*

bear (one's) cross To cope with a burden or challenging situation. *I'm sure it's not easy to live with such a serious illness, but she bears her cross with such humor and grace.*

bear (one)self To behave in a particular way. *I need to bear myself bravely if I want to overcome this fear. I know you guys aren't thrilled about going to Great-Aunt Mildred's, but please try to bear yourselves politely.*

bear out To support or prove a claim or idea. *If you didn't do anything wrong, then the investigation will bear out your innocence.*

bear testimony to (something) To support or prove a claim or idea, often by one's (or something's) physical presence. *If you didn't do anything wrong, then the investigation will bear testimony to that. The many students on campus these days bear testimony to the school's successful rebranding efforts. The beautiful homes and vibrant gardens bear testimony to the rebirth of this neighborhood.*

bear the bell To lead. The phrase alludes to the practice of having the leading farm animal in a flock wear a bell. *I'll bear the bell then—come on, everyone, follow me!*

bear the brunt (of something) To suffer the worst part of an unpleasant or problematic situation. *When our system crashed, the call center employees bore the brunt of our customers' anger. Because I came home late, my sister bore the brunt of our mother's frustration about her job.*

bear the burden (of something) To endure something distressing, painful, stressful, or emotionally or physically taxing, especially for the sake of others. *Our mother bore the burden of this farm for 53 years until the day she died. My partner quit his job to stay home with the baby, so I have to bear the burden of earning enough to pay the mortgage.*

bear the palm To win. Palm leaves were formerly used as symbols of victory. *I heard that you might bear the palm at the science fair! Congratulations—it would be a well-deserved victory.*

bear the sight of (someone or something) To tolerate, accept, or endure someone or something. (Most often used in a negative formation.) *I don't know how you bear the sight of that horrible receptionist every day. He's just so mean and unpleasant! I can't bear the sight of my mother-in-law, but there are a few occasions each year where I can't avoid having to spend time with her. I absolutely cannot bear the sight of shellfish. Just being near it is enough to make me gag!*

bear (up)on (something) To impact or affect something or someone. *How does my lateness bear upon you? You weren't here on time either! Don't worry, our lawyers have told us that this information won't bear on the merger.*

bear watching To warrant one's attention. *Because this situation is so fluid, it bears watching over the next few hours.*

bear with (something/someone) To remain patient and attentive, especially during a lengthy or problematic situation that may cause one to want to quit or leave prematurely. Often used as an imperative. *I'm moving a little slower these days, so please bear with me. We don't want to see this great school close down, so we're begging the teachers to bear with it, in spite of all the uncertainty. Bear with us while we deal with these technical issues.*

bear witness to (something) To support or prove a claim or idea by one's (or something's) physical presence. *The many students on campus these days bear witness to the school's successful rebranding efforts. The beautiful homes and vibrant gardens bear witness to the rebirth of this neighborhood.*

beard (one) in (one's) den To confront risk or danger head on, especially for the sake of possible personal gain. The phrase is a variation of the Biblical proverb "beard the lion in his den." *OK, who is going to beard the boss in his den and tell him that the deal isn't happening?*

beard the lion To confront risk or danger head on, especially for the sake of possible personal gain. Refers to a proverb based on a Bible story from I Samuel, in which a shepherd, David, hunts down a lion that stole a lamb, grasps it by the beard, and kills it. *Risks very often don't turn out well, but if you don't face them and beard the lion, you will never achieve the success you truly desire.*

beard the lion in his den To confront risk or danger head on, especially for the sake of possible personal gain. Refers to a proverb based on a Bible story from I Samuel, in which a shepherd, David, hunts down a lion that stole a lamb, grasps it by the beard, and kills it. *A risk very often doesn't turn out well, but if you don't face it and beard the lion in his den, you will never achieve the success you truly desire.*

bearer of bad news Literally, someone who delivers bad news. The bearer often identifies as such as an introductory warning that they have bad news to deliver. *I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but I'm afraid your grandfather passed away late last night. We were celebrating our teacher's absence until Susie, the bearer of bad news, told us that the principal was coming to give us our exam.*

bearing a grudge See [bear a grudge \(against someone\)](#).

beast of burden A domesticated animal used by humans to carry or pull heavy loads. *Camels have been used by people as beasts of burden for thousands of years because of their size, strength, and ability to travel long distances with minimal need for food and water.*

beast with two backs A couple engaged in sexual intercourse, referring to the exposure of each partner's back when embraced in the missionary or standing position. Usually used in the phrase "make the beast with two backs." *I have my suspicions that, in secret, they are making the beast with two backs.*

beat See [be beat](#).

beat a dead horse To continue to focus on something—especially an issue or topic—that is no longer of any use or relevance. *We've all moved on from that problem, so there's no use beating a dead horse.*

beat a (hasty) retreat To leave a place or situation quickly. *I beat a hasty retreat when I saw my ex-boyfriend walk into the party. When the rain started, everyone on the field beat a retreat indoors.*

beat a path to (one's) door To visit someone in large numbers or a crowd. *I'm supposed to try to woo the ex-CEO of that company, but I'm pretty sure every other recruiter in town has beat a path to his door already.*

beat (about/around) the bush To speak vaguely or euphemistically so as to avoid talking directly about an unpleasant or sensitive topic. *Don't*

beat around the bush—just tell me the truth. Why are you beating around the bush? Are you leaving our company?

beat against (something/someone) To repeatedly strike a person or thing. *Quit beating against the door, I'm coming! The rain has been beating against our roof for hours, and I'm starting to worry that we'll have a leak. The hiker had frostbite after the freezing wind beat against his cheeks for days.*

beat all To be beyond the bounds of imagination or belief, as in a surprising, shocking, or amazing occurrence. *Well that beats all! I wasn't expecting to have you here for Christmas!*

beat all hollow See [beat \(someone or something\) all hollow](#).

beat at To attempt to strike a person or thing. *I beat at that bug with a broom, but I was too scared to get close enough to actually hit it.*

beat back To force a person or thing to retreat. *How are we going to beat back the approaching troops? Beating back feelings of fear has allowed me to follow my dreams.*

beat Banaghan **1.** obsolete To be beyond the bounds of imagination or belief, as of a surprising, shocking, or amazing occurrence. Primarily heard in Ireland. *The dog figured out how to open the latch on the fence, and the cows took off after him! This beats Banaghan, to be sure.* **2.** obsolete To tell amazing, imaginative stories. Primarily heard in Ireland. *That auld fellow looks to be a sailor type; sure, he's been beating Banaghan to us all evening long.*

beat Banagher **1.** obsolete To be beyond the bounds of imagination or belief, as of a surprising, shocking, or amazing occurrence. Primarily heard in Ireland. *The dog figured out how to open the latch on the fence, and the cows took off after him! This beats Banagher, to be sure.* **2.** obsolete To tell amazing, imaginative stories. Primarily heard in Ireland. *That auld fellow looks to be a sailor type; sure, he's been beating Banagher to us all evening long.*

beat down **1.** To exhaust or discourage someone. In this usage, a person's name or pronoun is used between "beat" and "down." *The long winters here just beat me down. I miss the warmth of the sun! I think working three jobs has finally beaten Alicia down—all she does these days is come home and*

sleep. **2.** To strike someone or something repeatedly. *That bully is always beating down on the smaller kids in our class. Just yesterday, he gave Joey a bloody nose. The rain has been beating down on our roof for hours, and I'm starting to worry that we'll have a leak.* **3.** To strike something so violently as to cause its collapse. In this usage, a noun can be used between "beat" and "down." *I'm coming! Geez, you're going to beat the door down!* **4.** To strike something repeatedly in order to flatten it. *That chicken needs to be thinner before we add the bread crumbs, so beat down on it some more.*

beat feet To run or flee quickly from a scene or situation; that is, to beat one's feet on the ground rapidly (as in the act of running). *We're going to have to beat feet out of here if that alarm goes off!*

beat her up See [beat up](#).

beat it 1. Go away; leave me alone. Usually used as an imperative. *Beat it, little brother—I've got things to do. What are you kids doing on my lawn? Beat it!* **2.** To leave a place quickly. *We need to beat it before the cops get here!*

beat off 1. To send away; to force to retreat. Despite the connotation of "beat," this phrase is often used hyperbolically and does not have to reference violent action. *Because their house is in such a great location, they have been beating off a lot of interested buyers. I somehow managed to beat off the intruder with a baseball bat. Your daughter is so pretty—it's only a matter of time until she's beating off the suitors!* **2.** vulgar slang To masturbate. Typically said of males. A: "Why is he all embarrassed today?" B: "Oh, his crush walked in on him beating off. How horrifying is that?"

beat on (something) To strike something repeatedly. *Quit beating on the door, I'm coming! I've been beating on at that nail and still can't get it to go into the wall. How much longer will your little sister beat on the piano tonight? I'm getting a headache from all that racket.*

beat (one) at (one's) own game To defeat or triumph over someone by using their own strengths, techniques, or tactics to one's own advantage. *He thinks that, because he's so much bigger than me, I won't want to fight with my fists, but I'm so quick that I'll be able to beat him at his own game. The senator keeps saying her policies are the will of the people, but if we can get an accurate poll of her constituency, we can beat her at her own game.*

beat (one) hollow To defeat an opponent easily and/or by a wide margin. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *The final score was 17-1? Wow, we really beat that team hollow!*

beat (one) to the punch To do or obtain something before someone else does. The phrase is thought to have originated from boxing. Primarily heard in US. *I was going to suggest that idea to the boss today, but unfortunately one of my co-workers beat me to the punch.*

beat (one) to within an inch of (one's) life To deliver a very violent and prolonged physical attack. This phrase can be used both literally and hyperbolically. *Our neighbor is in the hospital because a burglar beat him to within an inch of his life. I'm worried that the captain of the football team will beat me to within an inch of my life if he finds out that I'm secretly seeing his girlfriend. If you ever scare me like that again, I'll beat you to within an inch of your life, I swear!*

beat (one's) brains out 1. To put forth one's maximum effort. *I've been beating my brains out trying to get a passing grade this semester, so failing by two measly points is incredibly frustrating. Don't beat your brains out trying to please these people—they'll never appreciate it. 2. To violently attack someone, physically or verbally. *I'm worried that the captain of the football team will beat my brains out if he finds out that I'm secretly seeing his girlfriend. As if I didn't feel bad enough after losing the case, my boss beat my brains out for it once I got back to the office.**

beat (one's) breast To publicly express emotions or views that one does not actually feel or support. *During election season, all the candidates beat their breasts about how much they love our communities—and then they get into office and slash community initiatives.*

beat (one's) gums To talk repeatedly and/or lengthily but without impact. *I constantly beat my gums about dirty dishes in the sink, and the kids still never clean up after themselves!*

beat (one's) head against a stone wall To attempt, continuously and fruitlessly, to accomplish some task or achieve some goal that is or seems ultimately hopeless. *I feel like I've been beating my head against a stone wall trying to understand this math equation. Some people are never going to agree with you on this, so it's no use beating your head against a stone wall to try and convince everyone.*

beat (one's) head against a/the wall To attempt continuously and fruitlessly to accomplish some task or achieve some goal that is or seems ultimately hopeless. *Some people are never going to agree with you on this, so it's no use beating your head against a wall trying to convince everyone. I feel like I've been beating my head against the wall trying to understand this math equation.*

beat (one's) meat vulgar slang To masturbate. A term only applied to men. A: "Why is he all embarrassed today?" B: "Oh, his crush walked in on him beating his meat. How horrifying is that?"

beat (oneself) up To continually criticize or question oneself, usually about something that one cannot change. *Oh, honey, I know you're upset about failing the driver's license test, but try not to beat yourself up too much. I've been really beating myself up about that fight I had with my mom. I wish I could take back a lot of the things I said.*

beat out To outperform or best someone in order to win or achieve something. *You beat out a lot of very qualified candidates for this internship.*

beat (someone) down to size To humble someone. The phrase can be used for both verbal and physical confrontations. *Someone needs to beat these new interns down to size—they refused to stuff envelopes! The whole class gathered to watch the fight in the schoolyard because someone was finally beating the big bully down to size!*

beat (someone or something) all hollow To totally outdo or defeat (someone or something). Primarily heard in UK, Australia. A: "Did you guys win today?" B: "We sure did! We beat them all hollow: 10-0!" *I worked so hard on this project and beat it all hollow—everyone else's looked so bad compared to mine!*

beat (someone) to a pulp To deliver a violent and prolonged physical attack, often to the point of injury. *I can't believe that skinny kid beat the bully to a pulp! His nose was totally gushing blood!*

beat (someone) to it To do or obtain something before someone else does. *I was going to suggest that idea to the boss today, but unfortunately one of my co-workers beat me to it. Tim wanted the last turkey leg, but his brother beat him to it.*

beat (someone) to (something) 1. To do or obtain something

before someone else does. *I was going to suggest that idea to the boss today, but unfortunately one of my co-workers beat me to it. Tim's older cousins usually beat him to the best parts of the turkey, but this year he got first pick.*

2. To reach a destination before someone else does. *They beat us to the restaurant, so they're going to get a table. If you run your fastest, no one will be able to beat you to the finish line.*

beat (someone) to the draw To do, find, or accomplish something quicker than someone else is able. An allusion to drawing one's weapon in a duel. *I had a perfect chance to score a goal, but their defender beat me to the draw and stole the ball away.*

beat (someone/something) into (something) **1.** To force someone to do something, as by violence or threats. *Don't worry, boss—we'll beat him into silence before he can go to the cops.* **2.** To put forth effort so that someone learns or remembers something. *I stayed up all night, beating these physics equations into my head. Do I have to beat it into you guys? Clean up after yourselves!* **3.** To deliver a violent physical attack, often to the point of injury. A hyperbolic description of the beaten person's state (often "a pulp") typically follows "into." *I can't believe that skinny kid beat the bully into a pulp!* **4.** To stir a substance until it changes state, as while cooking. *You need to beat the eggs into a fluffy texture.* **5.** To add a substance into a mixture. *OK, now beat the butter into the cake batter.*

beat (someone's) brains in To strike or assault someone violently and severely, typically on the head, such that it may cause the person severe injury or death. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *I warned her that I was going to beat her brains in if she didn't stop insulting me. They left him to die after nearly beating his brains in.*

beat (something) out of (someone/something) **1.** To aggressively get something (often information) from someone, either through interrogation or physical violence. *Let me do the questioning—I'll beat the truth out of that witness. Luckily, a teacher came along before the bully could beat my lunch money out of me.* **2.** To repeatedly strike an object to remove something from it, usually in an attempt to clean it. *I tried beating the dust out of that rug, to no avail.*

beat (something) to death To linger over or discuss something so long and to such a tedious and laborious extent that the subject is no longer of

any interest or relevance. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *I think we should move on to another topic before we beat this one to death. The film's rhetorical message has been beaten to death by everyone you talk to.*

beat swords into ploughshares To abstain from destructive activities, such as war and violence (symbolized by swords), in favor of peaceful, constructive activities (symbolized by ploughshares, a farming implement). The phrase comes from the Bible. *We must beat swords into ploughshares so that our children can inherit a peaceful world.*

beat the bishop vulgar slang To masturbate. A term only applied to men. A: *"Why is he all embarrassed today?"* B: *"Oh, his crush walked in on him beating the bishop. How horrifying is that?"*

beat the bush See [beat \(about/around\) the bush](#).

beat the bushes (for someone or something) To search for someone or something exhaustively and at great length. *I've been beating the bushes for a bigger apartment, but there's nothing out there I can afford!*

beat the clock To take action or finish a task before a deadline. *We have to get these pages to the printer by 8, so work faster, people—we've got to beat the clock! Somehow, they were able to beat the clock and get to their seats before the bride walked down the aisle.*

beat the crap out of (someone) To strike or assault someone violently and severely. Chiefly informal and colloquial. *Hey, watch it, pal, or I'll beat the crap out of you! Two guys mugged me and then beat the crap out of me last night.*

beat the drum (for) To voice one's support for something. *Quit beating the drum for that applicant—he is simply not qualified for the job. At first the legislation didn't seem to have much support, but recently I've seen some people beating the drum online.*

beat the Dutch obsolete To surpass expectation, imagination, or belief. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *Look at the fanfare, the fireworks, the massive crowd! This celebration truly beats the Dutch!*

beat the gun To take action or finish a task before a deadline. This phrase comes from sporting events in which gunfire was sometimes used to indicate the end of a contest. *We have to get these pages to the printer by 8, so work faster, people—we've got to beat the gun! I think they beat the gun*

with that goal—there was still time left on the clock.

beat the heat To find ways of staying cool and comfortable in very warm weather. *The best part of summer vacation is having all that ice cream to help beat the heat.*

beat the hell out of (someone) **1.** To deliver a violent and prolonged physical attack. This phrase can be used both literally and hyperbolically. *Our neighbor is in the hospital because a burglar beat the hell out of him. I'm worried that the captain of the football team will beat the hell out of me if he finds out that I'm secretly seeing his girlfriend. If you ever scare me like that again, I'll beat the hell out of you, I swear!* **2.** To defeat an opponent decisively. *The final score was 17-1? Wow, we really beat the hell out of that team!*

beat the (living) daylight out of (someone) **1.** To deliver a violent and prolonged physical attack. *Our neighbor is in the hospital because a burglar beat the daylight out of him. I'm worried that the captain of the football team will beat the living daylight out of me if he finds out that I'm secretly seeing his girlfriend. Oh, my boyfriend knows that I would beat the living daylight out of him if he ever lies to me about something that serious.* **2.** To defeat an opponent decisively. *The final score was 17-1? Wow, we really beat the living daylight out of that team!*

beat the pants off (of) (someone) slang To defeat an opponent decisively. Despite using the word "pants," this phrase does not involve literally stripping off someone's clothes. *The final score was 17-1? Wow, we really beat the pants off that team!*

beat the rap slang To escape punishment or blame for a crime or misdeed. Primarily heard in US. *With the right lawyer, you can definitely beat the rap and avoid any jail time. Celebrities always seem to be able to beat the rap after they get arrested. Don't think you're beating the rap this time, young man. You're grounded for a month.*

beat the socks off (of) (someone) slang To defeat an opponent decisively. Despite using the word "socks," this phrase does not involve literally stripping off someone's clothes. *The final score was 17-1? Wow, we really beat the socks off that team!*

beat the stuffing out of (someone) To strike or assault someone violently and severely. Likened to the cotton stuffing of a stuffed animal

being knocked out of it by severe blows. *Hey, watch it, pal, or I'll beat the stuffing out of you! Two guys mugged me and then beat the stuffing out of me last night.*

beat the system To succeed by avoiding or breaking the rules, either those of life in general or of a specific structure or organization. *Celebrities always seem to be able to beat the system and do whatever they want, no matter how ridiculous or even illegal it may be. These access cards aren't supposed to work after 9 PM, but I found a way to beat the system.*

beat the tar out of (someone) 1. slang To deliver a violent and prolonged physical attack. This phrase can be used both literally and hyperbolically. Primarily heard in US. *Our neighbor is in the hospital because a burglar beat the tar out of him. I'm worried that the captain of the football team will beat the tar out of me if he finds out that I'm secretly seeing his girlfriend. If you ever scare me like that again, I'll beat the tar out of you, I swear!* 2. slang To defeat an opponent decisively. Primarily heard in US. *The final score was 17-1? Wow, we really beat the tar out of that team!*

beat their brains in See [beat \(someone's\) brains in](#).

beat their brains out See [beat \(one's\) brains out](#).

beat their breast See [beat \(one's\) breast](#).

beat their gums See [beat \(one's\) gums](#).

beat their head against a wall See [beat \(one's\) head against a/the wall](#).

beat them at their own game See [beat \(one\) at \(one's\) own game](#).

beat them down See [beat down](#).

beat them down to size See [beat \(someone\) down to size](#).

beat them hollow See [beat \(one\) hollow](#).

beat them into See [beat \(someone/something\) into \(something\)](#).

beat them to See [beat \(someone\) to \(something\)](#).

beat them to a pulp See [beat \(someone\) to a pulp](#).

beat them to it See [beat \(someone\) to it](#).

beat them to the draw See [beat \(someone\) to the draw](#).



beat them to within an inch of their life See [beat \(one\) to within an inch of \(one's\) life](#).

beat themselves up See [beat \(oneself\) up](#).

beat time To demonstrate the tempo and rhythm of a piece of music via metronomic actions of the body, such as clapping one's hands, tapping one's feet, nodding one's head, etc. *I can't help but beat time whenever I hear a song come on the radio. I always wanted to play an instrument, but I'm not good at beating time.*

beat to death See [beat \(something\) to death](#).

beat to the punch See [beat \(one\) to the punch](#).

beat up **1.** verb To deliver a violent physical attack. In this usage, a person's name or pronoun is often, but not always, used between "beat" and "up." *The captain of the football team swore he would beat me up if I ever talked to his girlfriend again. I can't believe that skinny kid beat up the school bully!* **2.** verb To defeat an opponent easily and/or by a wide margin. In this usage, the phrase is often followed by "on." *The final score was 17-1? Wow, we really beat up on that team! I got beat up by a much more highly ranked opponent in the first round.* **3.** verb To criticize someone harshly and/or continually. In this usage, the phrase is often followed by "on." *Mom, I know you're disappointed in Stephanie's grades, but quit beating up on her—she feels bad enough as it is. I haven't made many sales this year, so I expect to get beat up in my performance review.* **4.** verb To damage or wear out from heavy use. *I'm afraid I tend to beat up my shoes really quickly.* **5.** adjective Showing signs of wear or damage, as from heavy use. The phrase is typically hyphenated before a noun. *Can we throw away these beat-up old notebooks already? The old car looks really beat up, but it runs pretty well.*

beat your meat See [beat \(one's\) meat](#).

beating a dead horse See [beat a dead horse](#).

beating a hasty retreat See [beat a \(hasty\) retreat](#).

beating about the bush See [beat \(about/around\) the bush](#).

beating at See [beat at](#).

beating back See [beat back](#).

beating Banaghan See [beat Banaghan](#).

beating Banagher See [beat Banagher](#).

beating it See [beat it](#).

beating off See [beat off](#).

beating on See [beat on \(something\)](#).

beating one's brains out See [beat \(one's\) brains out](#).

beating out See [beat \(something\) out of \(someone/something\)](#).

beating out See [beat out](#).

beating the drum See [beat the drum \(for\)](#).

beating the rap See [beat the rap](#).

beating the system See [beat the system](#).

beating their head against a wall See [beat \(one's\) head against a/the wall](#).

beating them down See [beat down](#).

beating them down to size See [beat \(someone\) down to size](#).

beats all See [beat all](#).

beats into See [beat \(someone/something\) into \(something\)](#).

beats me See [\(it\) beats me](#).

beautiful people Stylish, glamorous, and often wealthy people admired by others. *I wish we were as cool as them—man, they are really the beautiful people.*

beauty is in the eye of the beholder An approximation of beauty will differ greatly between different people. *You may not like my new jacket, but beauty is in the eye of the beholder. I don't think Annabelle's boyfriend is that attractive, but beauty is in the eye of the beholder, I guess.*

beauty is only skin deep Physical attractiveness does not equate to substance or character. *Of course that gorgeous model didn't tip you—beauty is only skin deep, after all.*

beauty mark A small, dark facial mole (or an artificial one, created with cosmetic makeup) that may be considered a mark of attractiveness. *I have always wished that I had Marilyn Monroe's beauty mark on my lip.*

beauty queen A woman who has won, or looks as if she could win, a beauty pageant. *When that beauty queen walked in, everyone's heads turned.*

beauty sleep Sleep that helps one to look refreshed and attractive. Usually said humorously. *Can you guys be quiet down there? I'm trying to get my beauty sleep! You look tired, Joe. What's the matter, didn't get your beauty sleep last night?*

beauty spot A small, dark facial mole (or an artificial one, created with cosmetic makeup) that may be considered a mark of attractiveness. *I have always wished that I had Marilyn Monroe's beauty spot on my lip.*

beaver away To work industriously and at great length at some task, project, or goal. Likened to a beaver working ceaselessly on a dam. *She's been beavering away for years to earn her law degree, and after all that work, she finished first in her class. I brought you some lemonade, since you've been beavering away planting flowers in the back yard all day!*

because of Due to. This phrase typically precedes the reason that something else has happened. *I just found out that the event has been canceled because of the snow.*

beck and call A phrase indicating one's compliance or obedience. Most often used in the phrase "at (someone's) beck and call." *Do you really think I'll do anything you say? I'm not at your beck and call! A: "How can we get to the mall this weekend?" B: "Oh, my sister will take us—she's been at my beck and call ever since I caught her sneaking in past curfew!"*

beckon to (someone) To wave or signal to another person to come. *I think it's safe to go over there now—the guard just beckoned to us.*

Becky with the good hair A mysterious mistress referred to in the Beyonce song "Sorry" who ignited widespread speculation as to her true identity. *Will we ever know who Becky with the good hair is?*

become of (someone) Happen to. *I haven't seen my childhood best friend in years. I wonder what became of her.*

become one flesh To join together with another person in marriage. Taken from the biblical verse regarding marriage, "And the two shall become one flesh." It can also refer to sexual intercourse in general, which is meant in Judeo-Christian beliefs to be withheld until after marriage. *My longtime girlfriend and I finally got engaged, and we will become one flesh this*

summer. Many people choose to wait until they are married to become one flesh with someone.

become reconciled with (someone or something) To forgive, accept, or make peace with someone, something, or some situation. *I haven't spoken to my brother in 10 years, but I still hope to become reconciled with him some day.*

becoming on (someone) Attractive on someone, as of clothing or other wearable items. *That gown is so becoming on you, my dear. My daughter has hazel eyes, so olive green is very becoming on her.*

bed and board 1. A place to sleep and get daily meals, or the cost of such. *Well, the job doesn't pay very much but it provides bed and board, so I'm saving most of the money I earn. Transportation was free, but bed and board set me back \$700.* **2.** The house as a symbol of the duties and sanctity of marriage. *He left bed and board after 10 years of marriage.*

bed blocker A derogatory term for a person in a hospital, typically an older patient, who is unable to live alone but no longer needs hospital treatment, thus occupying a bed that more needy patients might otherwise use. Primarily heard in UK. *The nursing staff is starting to gripe about all the bed blockers.*

bed down 1. To get into bed and go to sleep. *After taking exams all week, I can't wait to bed down tonight.* **2.** To put someone, typically a baby or child, into bed. *Please be quiet, I just bedded down the baby.* **3.** To provide someone with a bed or the space and materials for sleeping. *If it gets late, we can just bed down Tony and Gina in the spare bedroom.* **4.** To cover or secure something as a means of protection. *With this storm coming, we have to be sure to bed down our crops.*

bed in To establish a harmonious and efficient concomitance. *Sometimes after installing new software, you just need a period of time to bed in with the computer before you're used to it again.*

a bed of roses An easy, comfortable situation. *After John complained about his long, tiring day at work, his father turned to him and said, "You didn't think your new job in construction was going to be a bed of roses, did you?"*

bedazzle 1. Literally, to blind; to be overwhelming to the eyes. *I stepped*

on stage and was immediately bedazzled by all the lights—I couldn't see the audience at all. **2.** By extension, to impress or intrigue someone so much that they cannot see any flaws. *He is so bedazzled by his girlfriend that he doesn't see how controlling she is.* **3.** slang To embellish something with sparkly decorations like glitter, gems, and crystals. *I think the girls will like these boring white sneakers once I bedazzle them.*

beddy-bye A baby-talk expression for going to sleep, or that it is time to go to sleep; bedtime. *Aw, you're so sleepy, let's go beddy-bye!*

bedeck with (something) To decorated or embellish with. *I want this whole room bedecked with lights for the Christmas party. During the 1960s, many girls bedecked their hair with flowers.*

bedroom community A community in which most people commute to jobs elsewhere (and thus usually only come home to sleep during the work week). *Since I'm still in school, I'm not sure I want to live in a town that's such a bedroom community—I want to be able to spend time with people during the day when I'm not in class.*

bedroom eyes A sultry, suggestive gaze or facial expression. *You know I can't resist when you look at me with those bedroom eyes!*

a bee in (one's) bonnet An obsession, often with something that is strange or a source of agitation. *Ever since the blizzard last year, dad has had a bee in his bonnet about moving to a warmer climate. It seems that Mike still has a bee in his bonnet over the criticism he got in the staff meeting.*

beef **1.** noun A source of disagreement; a feud. *What is her beef with me? I'm always nice to her! The beef between the two rappers escalated with the latest diss track.* **2.** noun A charge against someone. *I'm fine with you working late, but you didn't call and let me know in advance. That's the beef here! The beef is that you were seen robbing an old lady in the park.* **3.** noun A strapping, muscular man. *I got some of the beefs in facilities to help me move that furniture out of my office.* **4.** noun An episode of flatulence. *His beef had us all scrambling to open a window!* **5.** verb To pass gas. *Open a window—somebody beefed in here!* **6.** verb To complain. *Of course Marjorie is beefing about how I left dishes out in the kitchen—she's not happy unless everything is perfectly put away.*

beef to (the) heel Chubby or fat, especially in the legs. Usually said of women, it comes from the longer phrase "beef to the heel like a Mullingar

heifer," referring to cattle bred in Mullingar, a town in County Westmeath, Ireland. Primarily heard in Ireland. *I think I need to go on a diet, I've gotten beef to the heel since my pregnancy. I don't know what's wrong with other men, I like a woman who's a bit beef to heel.*

beef to (the) heel like a Mullingar heifer Chubby or fat, especially in the legs. Usually said of women, it refers to cattle bred in Mullingar, a town in County Westmeath, Ireland. Primarily heard in Ireland. *I think I need to go on a diet, I've gotten beef to the heel like a Mullingar heifer since my pregnancy. I don't know what's wrong with other men, I like a woman who's beef to heel like a Mullingar heifer.*

beef to the hoof Chubby or fat, especially in the legs. Usually said of women, it comes from the longer phrase "beef to the heel like a Mullingar heifer," referring to cattle bred in Mullingar, a town in County Westmeath, Ireland. Primarily heard in Ireland. *I think I need to go on a diet, I've gotten beef to the hoof like a Mullingar heifer since my pregnancy. I don't know what's wrong with other men, I like a woman who's beef to hoof.*

beef up To increase something, often in strength. *With all these protestors here, we definitely need to beef up security. My boyfriend has been going to the gym every day for months in hopes of beefing up his frame. We need to beef up our services in order to rival our competitors' more comprehensive offerings.*

beefcake A man displayed or photographed for having an attractive, muscular physique, or one who has these qualities in general. *I always buy the fire station's charity calendar because I love looking at the beefcakes in their firefighter outfits.*

beefed out 1. Portrayed as being exaggeratedly muscular, as of a person (typically male) or an image thereof. *The guys in these advertisements are so beefed out that it just looks unrealistic.* 2. Strengthened, updated, or improved upon in a robust way. *Jenny spends a lot of time and money getting her old Ford Mustang all beefed out.*

beeline it for (some place) To head directly and quickly toward something or some place. Taken from the full phrase "make a beeline for something." *I knew the boss was angry, so when I saw her come in, I beelined it for the break room.*

been around (the block) To have experience, either in a particular

area or in one's life overall. *Yes, the new hire is young, but she's been around the block. She was managing a whole department at a prominent PR firm before she came here. Your aunt might seem boring these days, but she's been around—she went to Woodstock as a teenager!*

been there To have done or experienced something before. This is a set phrase that can be used without a subject. A: *"I got back to my car a mere three minutes after the meter expired, and I still got a parking ticket!"* B: *"Ugh, been there."* Don't worry so much about failing a test, we've all been there.

been there, done that A set phrase used to acknowledge that one has done or experienced something before, either as a form of dismissal or of empathy. *Whitewater rafting? Been there, done that. Let's do something more extreme!* A: *"I got back to my car a mere three minutes after the meter expired, and I still got a parking ticket!"* B: *"Ugh, been there, done that."*

been there, done that, bought the T-shirt A jocular, sarcastic, or condescending expression of familiarity and/or boredom with a certain situation or thing. Refers to buying a T-shirt as a souvenir from a tourist destination as a memento. *Oh, you're going to Paris this summer? Been there, done that, bought the T-shirt.*

been there, done that, got the T-shirt A jocular, sarcastic, or condescending expression of familiarity and/or boredom with a certain situation or thing. Refers to buying a T-shirt as a souvenir from a tourist destination as a memento. *Oh, you're going to Paris this summer? Been there, done that, got the T-shirt.*

been to the rodeo Experienced with a certain situation, especially referring to potential cons or deceitful situations. *Don't think I'll fall for that old trick; I've already been to the rodeo and back, you know.*

been to the wars Injured, damaged, decrepit, or appearing as such, as one might be who has fought in a war. Can be said of a person or a thing. This is a less common version of the phrase "been in the wars," meaning the same thing. Primarily heard in UK. *How old is that junky computer of yours? It looks like it's been to the wars! That must have been one heck of a fight. You look like you've been to the wars!*

beer and skittles See [\(all\) beer and skittles](#).

beer goggles The perception that potential mates are more sexually attractive than one might think when sober, due to intoxication after consumption of alcohol (not necessarily beer). *Cheryl always gets beer goggles when she drinks and then brings home some real losers.*

beer me 1. Bring, get, or hand me a beer. *I'm not driving tonight, so beer me, dude!* 2. Bring, get, or hand me something. *Yo, beer me the remote real quick so I can turn on the other game.*

beer muscles An inflated notion of one's strength, ego, or bravado due to excess consumption of alcohol (not necessarily beer). *When he drinks, Jeff always gets beer muscles and wants to fight every guy in the bar. I tend to get beer muscles when I drink too much, and I find myself trying some new outrageous physical feat to show off to my friends.*

beer up slang To drink large quantities of beer. *You really beered up at the bar last night—do you remember anything at all?*

bee's knees See [be the bee's knees](#).

the bee's knees dated slang Something or someone highly enjoyable, desirable, or impressive, especially in a fancy or elaborate way. *Tom's new Cadillac is really the bee's knees! Boy, that singer last night was the bee's knees, wasn't she?*

before last Before the last such time period. This phrase is usually used with quantities of time, such as years, months, and weeks. *I can't believe that Aunt Marie is in the hospital. I just talked to her the week before last, and she was totally fine! I got my degree the year before last.*

before long Soon. *I only planned to sweep the floor, but before long I was cleaning the whole room. I know Jon can be prickly sometimes, but he's really a good guy, and I'll think you'll come to like him before long.*

before (one) can blink Quickly or suddenly. *I'm not far from your house, so I'll be there before you can blink.*

before (one) can say Jack Robinson Quickly or suddenly. (The true identity of Jack Robinson is unknown.) *I'm not far from your house, so I'll be there before you can say Jack Robinson.*

before (one) could blink Quickly or suddenly. *Before I could blink, a deer darted out in front of my car, and I had to slam on my brakes.*

before (one's) time Predating one's tenure or birth. A: *"Have you ever seen this show?"* B: *"No, sorry, it's before my time."* I don't know how that project was organized—it was before my time.

before (one's) time Before one's tenure or before one was born. A: *"Have you ever seen this show?"* B: *"No, sorry, it's before my time."* I don't know how that project was organized—it was before my time.

before (one's) very eyes Happening or unfolding right in front of one or while one is watching. *Someone smashed into my parked car right before my very eyes. Each day, right before our very eyes, we see signs of poverty and need.*

before the wind 1. With great haste, as one might do with the wind at one's back. *Stacey is incredibly fast, she's always running before the wind.* 2. chiefly nautical Moving in the same direction as the wind, so as to travel more quickly. *Try to keep us before the wind if you can, we want to complete the journey in the best time possible.*

before you can say "knife" Very quickly. *I'll have the files done before you can say "knife."*

before you know it Quickly or suddenly. *I'm not far from your house, so I'll be there before you know it. Before you know it, you'll be graduating, so start thinking about your future now.*

beg for (someone/something) To plead or ask earnestly for something or someone. *Our kids have been begging for a dog for years, and we're finally getting them one. I tried to calm my little cousin down and distract her, but she still begged for her mama all night.*

beg of To plead with someone for something. This phrase often suggests a certain intensity or desperation from the speaker. A noun can be used between "beg" and "of." *Oh, please come with me tonight, I beg of you. I can't possibly go alone. Can I beg a few dollars of you? I forgot my wallet at home today.*

beg off To ask to be excused from an obligation or invitation. A noun can be used between "beg" and "off." *She had to beg off that project when she realized that it interfered with her normal duties. I begged the dinner party off last night because I was feeling ill.*

beg on bended knee To beg or plead for something submissively and

with dramatic earnestness. Refers to kneeling before someone from whom one must beg for mercy or favor. *After five years, I'm ready to beg on bended knee for a promotion. We have to remain strong in the eyes of the world. We cannot beg on bended knee for help from our allies.*

beg (something) from (someone) To plead or ask someone earnestly for something. *I forgot my wallet at home today, so I had to beg some money from my friends for lunch.*

beg the question 1. To provoke a specific question (which typically follows this phrase). *If he has a great job but is always broke, it begs the question of where the money is going?* **2.** To assume or believe that something is true when its veracity is unverified. *My opponent in this debate has again begged the question, assuming his premise to be true without evidence.*

beg to differ To politely disagree with someone else. *I'm sorry, headmaster, but I beg to differ. Students at this school should have more access to financial aid and scholarships, not less. He thinks that the evening was a disaster, but I beg to differ—I saw plenty of guests enjoying themselves!*

beg, borrow, or steal To acquire or accomplish something by any means necessary or available. *I don't care if you have to beg, borrow, or steal to get it, I want that car and I want it now! I'm in such a jam, I can't even beg, borrow, or steal the money I need to pay my rent this month.*

beggar (all) description To defy attempts at description; to be difficult or impossible to describe or explain. *My mother loves decorating for Christmas, so during the holidays, her house is fit for Santa himself. It truly begs description. My boss's incompetence is astounding. It truly begs all description.*

beggar's bush Ruin or devastation. *Unless you want to end up at beggar's bush, you better watch how much money you're spending.*

beggars can't be choosers You must accept that which is given to you, especially if you don't have the means to acquire it yourself. *That dress wasn't exactly what I would have picked for myself, but, hey, it was free, and I'm broke right now. Beggars can't be choosers.*

begin by (doing something) To start by taking a particular action

(which is named after "by"). *We will begin by stretching. I began by checking out all the library books I would need for my research.*

begin to see daylight To realize that one is approaching the end of a project or task. *When I scheduled my thesis defense, I began to see daylight after two years of hard work.*

begin to see the light To start to understand something, especially something that one was previously confused about or skeptical of. *Tutoring helped me begin to see the light about these physics equations. I used to wonder why people disliked Lydia, but I began to see the light after I caught her making fun of me.*

begin with (someone or something) To start with someone or something; to have someone or something be the first in a series. *Let's begin with stretching and then we'll move on to cardio. You'll all have time to share about your summer vacations, but Caroline, we'll begin with you.*

beginner's luck That which is said (usually enviously or due to skepticism) to bring an inexperienced person success. *Don't get too excited about hitting a home run in your first game, little brother—it was definitely just beginner's luck. A: "Did you just see her get a strike? She's never even bowled before!" B: "Beginner's luck."*

beginning of the end 1. The start of a decline. *We didn't realize it at the time, but not having any interest in Valentine's Day was the beginning of the end for us—we broke up a month later. We all rushed to grandpa's bedside after his nurse warned us that it was the beginning of the end. 2. The first in a series of closing events. *Senior prom is really the beginning of the end—graduation isn't that far away anymore.**

beguile (someone) into (doing something) To entice someone to do what one wants through some form of cunning, trickery, or charm. *Oh, I am going to that gala, even if I have to beguile one of my co-workers into taking me. I can't believe that salesman beguiled us into buying such an overpriced appliance.*

beguile (someone) out of (something) To swindle something from someone. *That con man beguiled us out of thousands, I'm ashamed to say.*

beguile (someone) with (something) To captivate someone with

something. *Peter beguiled the audience with the exciting tales of his world travels.*

behind bars In jail or prison. *I hear Mike's uncle is behind bars again. I wonder what he did this time! Sir, I'm afraid your son has been put behind bars on a charge of drunk driving.*

behind closed doors In secret. *You can't tell anyone what happens behind closed doors here—it's classified information. What I do behind closed doors is none of your business! Sure, they seem happy together, but who knows what happens behind closed doors.*

behind in (something) Not having progressed as much as one would like or is necessary. *I'm a little behind in my work right now, but I should have that report done by the end of the week. I'm going to be in debt for the rest of my life—I keep falling further and further behind in paying off my student loans.*

behind its time **1.** Out of date, antiquated, or obsolete. *Your pocket watch looks charming, but it's a little behind its time.* **2.** Falling behind more recent advances (e.g., in one's field of work or study). *Many consider his essay on genetics to be rather behind its time.* **3.** Late; behind schedule. *The train is really behind its time.*

behind (one's) back In one's absence. The phrase typically suggests wrongdoing or deceit. *I can't believe you were gossiping about me behind my back! Tom will be upset that we already made the decision behind his back.*

behind (one's) time **1.** Old fashioned or antiquated, as in manner, beliefs, style, etc. *I love grandpa, but he is really behind his time when it comes to what constitutes an acceptable relationship. The filmmaker seems to be as behind his time as the films he makes.* **2.** Later than expected, scheduled, or is appropriate. *The driver is always arriving behind his time to collect us.*

behind schedule Not having progressed as much as is necessary to meet a particular deadline. *I'm so far behind schedule that I'll never get this report done by Friday. Thanks to the flu, I'm now behind schedule in my party preparations.*

behind the bit equestrian Of a horse, having the head tucked toward the rider as a means of avoiding the pull of the bit (the bridle equipment placed in

the horse's mouth). *This colt is so stubborn, it has been behind the bit each time I've tried to ride him this morning.*

behind-the-counter In a pharmacy, not requiring a prescription but requiring a pharmacist's discretion to purchase, as of drugs or medical devices. *Please be aware that all behind-the-counter purchases require identification so the pharmacist can verify your age before purchase.*

behind the curve Not up to date or current in some area. Often said of politicians. *Can you believe he made that sexist remark about women in the workplace? Wow, he's really behind the curve!*

behind the eight ball In a challenging situation; at a disadvantage. An "eight ball" is one of the numbered balls used in the game of pool, and the last one supposed to be hit into a pocket. If the eight ball is accidentally hit into a pocket prematurely, the player will lose, and it therefore needs to be avoided. *If we don't leave early tomorrow, we'll be behind the eight ball, and I doubt we'll reach the cabin by dusk. Because I got the flu, I'm behind the eight ball with my Christmas shopping.*

behind the scenes Without being widely known or attracting attention. Referring to the private portion of a venue, operation, or production, as opposed to the public part. *Let's have a round of applause for all the people who worked behind the scenes to give us such a great event! Sure, they seem happy together, but who knows what happens behind the scenes. I can't believe we're going to get a behind-the-scenes tour of the castle!*

behind the times 1. Behaving in an outdated or unpopular way. *Of course grandpa doesn't have a cell phone—he's behind the times, as usual.* 2. Lacking the latest information on a particular subject. *Wait, Joe and Mara broke up? Wow, I'm behind the times!*

behind the wheel 1. Driving a vehicle (and thus literally sitting behind the steering wheel). *Don't worry, Katie's behind the wheel, and she hasn't been drinking tonight. I'm so excited to finally be behind the wheel of my own car!* 2. In charge. *With Jim behind the wheel, I'm not sure this team will have the leadership it needs.*

behind time Later than expected, scheduled, or is appropriate. *Go ahead and begin the meal without us, we're running a little behind time. We're sorry for being a little behind time with our takeoff, ladies and gentlemen. We should be departing shortly.*

behind you! Watch out! A warning shouted in times of danger or to indicate one's presence behind someone. *I yelled, "Behind you!" as soon as I saw the masked man reach for the unsuspecting woman's purse. All chefs know to say "behind you" when they're passing other chefs on the line.*

beholden to (someone) Indebted or under obligation to someone, or feeling that one is under such an obligation. *Never accept loans from anyone you don't know or trust personally; you don't want to be beholden to the wrong person. Please, I am beholden to you for the kindness you have shown my family.*

behoove (one) to (do something) To be a beneficial action for one to take. *It behooves him to give his boss two weeks' notice so that he maintains a good professional relationship with her. It would behoove you to call your mother before she hears about your pregnancy from someone else.*

being that Since or because; for the reason that. Chiefly informal and colloquial. *Being that the local council decided not to grant us a full license, the concerts have all been canceled. I thought you might like an ice cream cone, being that you said you were too hot earlier.*

belabor the point To talk about or emphasize something more than is necessary, usually to the listener's boredom or annoyance. *A: "I don't mean to belabor the point, but I'm just worried that there won't be enough food at the party." B: "Yeah, we know, you've said that 10 times now." I'm only belaboring the point because we still haven't reached a decision.*

belch out To expel, often violently. *You can't see far into the distance with all of the smoke being belched out by the factories along the river.*

belch up To expel in an upward direction. *You can't see far into the distance with all of the smoke being belched up from the factories along the river.*

belemnite battlefield In paleontology, an area containing a high concentration of fossilized belemnites (properly, belemnitida), an extinct order of cephalopods that existed in the Mesozoic era. *I was lucky in my first year as a professional paleontologist to stumble upon a huge, undiscovered belemnite battlefield.*

Belgravian 1. Literally, of, referring, or belonging to Belgravia, a wealthy district in central London. Primarily heard in UK. *Those Belgravian*

apartments will always be far above our means, but they are lovely to dream about anyway. **2.** By extension, highly fashionable, elite, or belonging to an aristocratic lifestyle. Primarily heard in UK. *Oh please, you live such a Belgravian life. You wouldn't know what it means to work for a living.*

Belieber slang A fan of pop singer Justin Bieber. *My ears are ringing from the screams of the Beliebers hoping to get a glimpse of Justin Bieber leaving his hotel.*

believe in (someone or something) **1.** To have confidence in one's or someone else's abilities. *I don't usually believe in myself, so I'm trying to think more positively these days. I'm sure you'll do great in the interview—I believe in you!* **2.** To be convinced of the existence of something. *My little girls believe in unicorns, magic spells, all that fun stuff. She says she doesn't believe in ghosts, so send her into the haunted house.* **3.** To subscribe to the tenets of something or value its perceived merits. *I believe in democracy, which is why I vote in every election. If you don't believe in this process, you shouldn't be participating in it.*

believe it or not A set phrase used before a statement that may seem shocking or untrue. It is often used humorously or sarcastically. *Believe it or not, the longer route is actually quicker because there's less traffic. I'm not a chef, believe it or not, so if you want something else for dinner, make it yourself!* A: "Did you really make the basketball team?" B: "Believe it or not, I did!"

believe me A set phrase used to emphasize one's statement as true. *I love kids, but watching 20 of them at once is no picnic, believe me! Believe me, it gets cold in here at night, so you might want to get an extra blanket.*

believe nothing of what you hear, and only half of what you see Be cautious about accepting something without evidence. A: "Wait, Stacy's getting the promotion? I heard they were giving it to Greg." B: "Yeah, well, believe nothing of what you hear, and only half of what you see."

believe (one's) eyes Believe that whatever one is seeing is real. Often used in the negative, such as "can't believe my eyes." *Oh, I can't believe my eyes! Are you really throwing the ball in the house right now? Did you really buy me a new car? I can hardly believe my eyes!*

believe (something) of (someone) To accept that a statement

about someone is true. *I can't believe these lies of Cheryl—I have always known her to be a very reputable businesswoman.*

believe you me A set phrase used to emphasize one's statement as true. *I love kids, but watching 20 of them at once is no picnic, believe you me! Believe you me, it gets cold in here at night, so you might want to get an extra blanket.*

bell out To curve outward in appearance like the shape of a bell. *Graphs of population densities in major cities usually bell out, with the highest numbers in the center and a steady decrease into surrounding areas. Vintage-style jeans bell out at the end, which is why they call them bell bottoms.*

bell the cat To undertake or agree to perform a risky, dangerous, or impossible job or task. It comes from a fable (often and likely incorrectly attributed to Aesop) called "Belling the Cat," in which a group of mice decide that one will harness a bell to a murderous cat so that its jingle will warn them of its presence, though none want to take on the dangerous role. *Someone has to bell the cat and tell the boss we aren't going to come in to work on Saturdays anymore. Who's going to bell the cat and tell mom we wrecked her car?*

bellow out 1. To yell something. *The security guard was bellowing out instructions to all the cars pulling into the parking lot.* 2. To expel something. *You can't see far into the distance with all of the smoke being bellowed out by the factories along the river.*

bells and whistles Additional features, perhaps trendy or fancy ones, that are not required for an object's proper functioning. *This darn car has so many bells and whistles that I can't figure out how to open the gas tank! Do you have any cell phones with fewer bells and whistles? I really don't need anything fancy.*

belly laugh An often uncontrolled, loud, and hearty laugh. *The old man let out a giant belly laugh when he saw his young granddaughter spill an entire bowl of spaghetti on her head.*

belly out To flare out in the wind, as of fabric. *The sails bellied out in the afternoon breeze.*

belly up 1. Defunct. The phrase likely refers to how dead fish float. *Oh, that idea went belly up when the CEO criticized it. Once news of the*

embezzlement scandal broke, the company went belly up. **2.** To walk up to something. It is often used in the expression "belly up to the bar," which does not necessarily refer to an actual bar. *Come on, just belly up to the bar! Push through that crowd in the lobby so we can get to the check-in desk today!* **3.** Drunk. *Do you remember last night at the bar at all? You were really belly up!*

belly up to the bar To walk up to something (not necessarily an actual bar). *Come on, just belly up to the bar! Push through that crowd in the lobby so we can get to the check-in desk today!*

belong to (someone or something) **1.** To be a member of something, such as a team or club. *My daughter belongs to the debate team at school. I belong to the gym on Main Street if you ever want to come work out with me.* **2.** To be one's possession. *No, that coat belongs to Rachel—mine has a hood. Who do these headphones belong to?*

belong under (something) To be properly categorized under a certain status, heading, or title. *When you files these documents, they belong under "July 2008." What heading does that paragraph belong under? That department always belonged under the CFO, they're just making it official now.*

below average Subpar. *You'll never get into a top college with below average grades like these.*

below (one's) breath Quietly. Often used to describe an aside that one has muttered. *What did you just said below your breath? Come on, say it to my face! He's always saying things below his breath, and it gets on my nerves! Why can't he just speak up with some confidence?*

below par Below average; not as good as desired, required, or expected. *This essay you turned in on Friday is really below par. Has something been distracting you from your studies recently? Our food was rather uninteresting, and the service was really below par. I honestly don't understand why this restaurant is so popular!*

below the belt Unfairly targeted at one's weakness or vulnerability. The phrase refers to boxing, in which hitting an opponent below the waist is prohibited. *I know she really wants the promotion, but telling the boss about my personal problems was below the belt.*

below the salt In or at a position of low or common standing, rank, regard, or repute. The term is derived from the social hierarchy of nobility in medieval times, in which salt, a precious commodity then, was set in the middle of the dining table. Those of high noble rank were seated "above the salt," that is, closer to the lord and lady of the house, while those in lower social standing were seated "below" it. *Robert's tech firm bankrupted last month, so I guess he's back to sitting below the salt with us again. I know it makes me a snob, but I just consider these big summer blockbusters to be rather below the salt.*

belt a drink down To drink something, often an alcoholic beverage, quickly. *He belted a drink down and ordered another before we'd gotten three steps away from the bar.*

belt and braces A multipronged, perhaps excessively cautious, approach to try to ensure a particular outcome. Primarily heard in UK. *Even though I'd set the alarm clock in my room, I still asked the front desk for a wake-up call. I felt I had to go belt and braces to ensure that I'm not late for the big meeting tomorrow morning.*

belt down (something or someone) 1. To anchor or fasten something or someone in place. *You need to belt down the shed in the backyard before the big storm. Can you please belt down the baby in her highchair?* 2. To drink something, often an alcoholic beverage, quickly. *He belted down a drink and ordered another before we'd gotten three steps away from the bar.*

belt out 1. To sing or talk loudly or forcefully. A noun can be used between "belt" and "out." *I was amazed when that young girl walked into the audition and flawlessly belted out a Whitney Houston song without the slightest hesitation. The security guard belted instructions out at us as we pulled into the parking lot.* 2. To strike someone violently. *I belted out the intruder with a baseball bat, and he was still unconscious when the police arrived.*

belt the grape To get drunk, especially on wine. *Based on all the empty wine bottles, I'm guessing you guys really belted the grape last night.*

belt up To anchor or fasten someone in place, as with a seatbelt in a vehicle. A pronoun or the name of the person can be used between "belt" and "up" or after "up." *OK, the kids are belted up—let's hit the road! Can you*

please belt the baby up in her highchair?

bench jockey In US baseball slang, a coach or player who berates or derides the umpire or opposing players from his team's dugout bench. In this usage, "jockey," the rider of a race horse, refers to "riding someone," which commonly means to harass or ridicule a person. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *I wish you wouldn't be such a bench jockey at our games!*

benchmark Something against which to measure success or progress. *We have several benchmarks that will help us to determine if your portfolio is experiencing solid growth. I'm so happy to share that I've reached the benchmark of six months of sobriety!*

bend back **1.** (of a person) To lean backwards. *I bent back to catch my dog before he sprinted past me through the open door. I bent back to pick up all the socks I'd dropped on my way down the hall.* **2.** (of a thing) To push backwards. A noun can be used between "bend" and "back" or after "back." *If you bend those curtains back, this room will get a lot more sunlight. Bend back the corner of the page to mark your place in the book.*

bend before (something) To be pushed by something, usually the wind. *As soon as I hung the sheets on the clothesline, they bent before the wind.*

bend down **1.** (of a person) To lean down or squat. *I bent down to get my son's ball out from under the porch. I think I hurt my back when I bent down to pick up those boxes.* **2.** (of a thing) To lean closer to the ground. *The way that shed is bending down makes me nervous that it will collapse soon.*

bend forward To lean in a forward direction. *OK, everyone, now bend forward and touch your toes.*

bend in To lean or arch inward. *Ever since the car accident, my passenger-side door has been bent in.*

bend in the wind To be resilient and adaptable to harsh events or adversity in life, like the way a tree that can bend is better able to withstand heavy winds. *I know you've had a lot of setbacks this year, but you have to bend in the wind and continue trying your best.*

bend (one's) ear To talk to someone for a long time, usually causing the listener to become bored or annoyed. *Do you guys need any help in the kitchen? Uncle Stu has been bending my ear about the stock market for the*

past hour!

bend (one's/the) elbow To drink alcohol, perhaps excessively. *Come bend your elbow at the bar with us tonight! If you're this hung-over, you must have really bent the elbow at the party last night.*

bend over To bend at one's waist. *OK, everyone, now bend over and touch your toes. I think I hurt my back when I bent over to pick up those boxes.*

bend over backwards **1.** Literally, to lean backwards. *I'm so sore after bending over backwards and doing all those weird stretches at yoga this morning.* **2.** To exert a lot of effort towards some end. This phrase is often used to express frustration when one's efforts go unrecognized. *I have been bending over backwards to make sure that you have a wonderful visit, and you don't even care! The entire staff really needs to bend over backwards while the CEO is visiting our office.*

bend the law To do something that does not break the law but could be considered inappropriate or unfair. *A: "Come on, a little bit of speeding is just bending the law." B: "Yeah, I think a police officer would disagree with that." They can't arrest me for just bending the law!*

bend the rules To do something that is usually prohibited. *You're not supposed to have sweets when you get home from school, but I guess we can bend the rules a little.*

bend the rules To allow something to be done which is technically against the rules or not normally accepted. *It's galling to know that the management team, who are so strict with the lower-level employees, all bend the rules to give themselves more vacation time and bigger bonuses. You're normally not allowed to take an exam if you arrive late, but because of the student's excuse, his teacher bent the rules for him.*

bend the truth To alter, omit, or tailor certain elements of a story to suit one's own needs, intentions, or desires. *He always bends the truth so he never gets in any trouble. Politicians often bend the truth to make themselves look better and their opponents look worse.*

bend with the wind To be resilient and adaptable to harsh events or adversity in life, like the way a tree that can bend is better able to withstand heavy winds. *I know you've had a lot of setbacks this year, but you have to*

bend with the wind and continue trying your best.

beneath contempt Abominable. *The atrocities committed by this regime are beneath contempt.*

beneath (one's) dignity Said of an action that one deems inappropriate and thus would not do. *Screaming at someone in public is beneath my dignity, but it sounds like not everyone feels the same way.*

beneath the salt In or at a position of low or common standing, rank, regard, or repute. The term is derived from the social hierarchy of nobility in medieval times, in which salt, a precious commodity then, was set in the middle of the dining table. Those of high noble rank were seated "above the salt," that is, closer to the lord and lady of the house, while those in lower social standing were seated "beneath" it. *Robert's tech firm bankrupted last month, so I guess he's back to sitting beneath the salt with us again. I know it makes me a snob, but I just consider these big summer blockbusters to be rather beneath the salt.*

beneath (the/someone's) radar Without being noticed, detected, or addressed. A: *"Have you heard this band's latest album?"* B: *"I didn't even know it was out, it must have flown beneath my radar."* *Every year, the government promises to do something about the homelessness problem, yet every year it seems to slip beneath the radar again.*

benefit by (something) To gain from a particular experience, change, or occurrence. *We will all benefit by moving to a warmer, sunnier climate. You may hate it now, but I guarantee you will benefit by your time as an intern.*

benefit from (something) To gain from a particular experience, change, or occurrence. *We will all benefit from moving to a warmer, sunnier climate. You may hate it now, but I guarantee you will benefit from your time as an intern.*

the benefit of the doubt The withholding of judgment so as to retain a favorable or at least neutral opinion of someone or something when the full information about the subject is not yet available. *You're my sister! Can't you give me the benefit of the doubt, instead of believing the worst about me? Let's give him the benefit of the doubt before we start accusing him. There may be a good explanation.*

benevolent overlord A person, group, or government described as generous to those over which it has power and control. Used ironically or sarcastically. *Our boss, the benevolent overlord, has given us Christmas Day off from work, even though we still need to come in for the rest of the week! Today, we learned that our right to vote was revoked unless we showed public support for our benevolent overlords.*

bent cop A police officer who is corrupt, takes bribes, or abuses the privileges and powers of their position. *The gangs are a problem, but it's the bent cops you really have to watch out for. I know a bent cop working down at the station. If we slip him a few hundred dollars, this charge might go away.*

bent double Bent over at the waist. *I was bent double for nearly half an hour after he punched me in the stomach.*

bent on a splice An older sailing phrase meaning about to or intending to get married. "Bent" in this context means determined or set (on a course of action), and "splice" refers to two ropes that have been joined to create a single, larger one. *I can't wait for this voyage to be over, for I'm bent on a splice to my lady as soon as we reach home.*

bent on (doing something) Very determined to do something, perhaps aggravatingly so. *She's bent on coming here for the weekend, so we better clean the guest room. I'm bent on getting an A on this exam, so I've been studying all week.*

bent out of shape **1.** (of a person) Upset or angry. *Don't get all bent out of shape—I'm sure she didn't mean to insult you. You should apologize to Phil before he gets bent out of shape.* **2.** (of an object) Misshapen or misaligned. *Ever since the car accident, my passenger-side door has been bent out of shape.*

bequeath (something) to (someone) To posthumously leave something to someone, as in a will. *Did Aunt Millie bequeath anything to us in her will? When my grandmother died, she bequeathed this vintage coffee table to me.*

bereft of (someone or something) Completely lacking something. *The children at the orphanage are bereft of any family members. After crying all day at the hospital, I was bereft of all emotion when I got home.*

beset with 1. To pester, bother, or harass, often excessively. In this usage, a person or group can be named between "beset" and "with." *I'll make sure the kids don't beset the babysitter with lots of demands today. The senator's office has been beset with angry calls from constituents.* **2.** To embellish, typically with jewels. In this usage, a noun is used after "with." *My grandmother's antique bracelet is beset with rubies.*

beside (oneself) Very shocked or distraught. *I was beside myself when I found out I'd been rejected from my first-choice school. Honestly, we've all been beside ourselves since the funeral.*

beside the cushion Unimportant. A digression. *Oh, that's beside the cushion. Let's get back to the main topic.*

beside the point Tangential or insignificant to the main issue being discussed. *I do love the apartment, but that's beside the point because I don't have enough money for a security deposit right now. Your weekend plans are beside the point—let's get back to the topic at hand.*

besiege with (something) 1. Literally, to attack with something. A person or group can be named between "besiege" and "with." *We besieged the attacking army with cannon fire.* **2.** To overwhelm with something. A person or group can be named between "besiege" and "with." *I haven't been able to finish that report because I've been besieged with phone calls all morning. The kids have been besieging me with questions, so I just need a moment of quiet.*

besmirch (someone or something) with (something) To tarnish one's or something's reputation in some way. *Don't besmirch my stellar reputation with those lies! A few disgruntled patrons have besmirched the restaurant's reputation with their negative online reviews.*

the best bet See [\(one's/the\) best bet](#).

(one's) best bib and tucker One's dressiest or most formal attire. A "bib" and a "tucker" are now-outdated clothing embellishments. *Be sure to wear your best bib and tucker to the gala tonight*

best-case scenario The best possible outcome. *The best-case scenario is that Doug will be only an hour late—traffic on his route is at a standstill. They're only selling junk at the yard sale, so I think the best-case scenario is that they'll make \$10. The doctor said that the best-case scenario is an*

operable tumor.

the best defense is a good offense Proactively attacking one's opponents or enemies is the best way to protect oneself, since they will be occupied with defending themselves, rather than attacking. *They have a lot of scoring power, so we need to attack the goal early and wear them out. The best defense is a good offense, girls.*

best (do something) To take a certain action because it is a good idea or in one's best interest. *I'd best get to bed early tonight, since I have to be at the airport at 3:30 AM. You best call your mother before she hears about your pregnancy from someone else.*

best is the enemy of (the) good To allow the demand, desire, or insistence for perfection decreases the chances of obtaining a good or favorable result in the end. *I know you want your research paper to be great, but remember that best is the enemy of good. I mean, you'll fail if you don't even finish it in time! As a manager, you have to realize both the potential and the limits of your employees. Keep in mind that best is the enemy of the good.*

best-kept secret A certain aspect, fact, location, or activity, usually touristic or commercial in nature, that is or purports to be not well known to the public but deserving of praise or attention. *The newspaper called the restaurant the city's best-kept secret. While everyone wants to visit the Ring of Kerry, the Dingle Peninsula is really one of Ireland's best-kept secrets.*

the best-laid plans Said when something ends poorly or differently than expected, despite preparations for success. It is an abbreviated version of the full proverb "the best-laid plans of mice and men oft go astray." *I always thought our marriage was stable and that we'd be together forever. I guess it's true what they say, though, the best-laid plans and all that. A: "I've been working on this project for six months, and now, right before it's due, they tell me they want something completely different." B: "That's rough. The best-laid plans, I suppose."*

the best-laid plans go astray Said when something ends poorly or differently than expected, despite preparations for success. It is an abbreviated version of the full proverb "the best-laid plans of mice and men oft go astray." *I always thought our marriage was stable and that we'd be together forever. I guess it's true what they say, though, even the best-laid*

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the best-laid plans of mice and men oft go astray Said when something ends poorly or differently than expected, despite preparations for success. The phrase is likely an adaptation of a line from 18th-century Scottish poet Robert Burns. *I always thought our business would last forever. I guess it's true what they say, though, the best-laid plans of mice and men oft go astray.* A: "I've been working on this project for six months, and now, right before it's due, they tell me they want something completely different." B: "That's rough. The best-laid plans of mice and men oft go astray, I suppose."

the best-laid schemes Said when something ends poorly or differently than expected, despite preparations for success. It is an abbreviated version of the line, "The best-laid schemes o' mice an' men gang aft a-gley" (go astray), from Robert Burns' poem "To a Mouse," which itself is a play on the proverb "the best-laid plans of mice and men oft go astray." *I always thought our marriage was stable and that we'd be together forever. I guess it's true what they say, though, the best-laid schemes and all that.* A: "I've been working on this project for six months, and now, right before it's due, they tell me they want something completely different." B: "That's rough. The best-laid schemes, I suppose."

the best-laid schemes go astray Said when things that are well prepared for or seem certain end poorly or differently from how one intends. It is an abbreviated version of the line, "The best-laid schemes o' mice an' men gang aft a-gley" (go astray), from Robert Burns' poem "To a Mouse," which itself is a play on the proverb "the best-laid plans of mice and men oft

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best of a bad lot A person or thing in a group that is slightly better or more desirable than anything or anyone else in the group, even though none of the options available are desirable. *To be honest, none of the apartments we can afford looked very nice, but this place seems to be the best of a bad lot. I don't care for Mary's new college friends. She's still the best of a bad lot, but she's become a real troublemaker since meeting them.*

best of both possible worlds The most ideal or desirable attributes of two different things, situations, or circumstances. *We hope that by forming a bipartisan committee we will be able form a body that represents the best of both possible worlds. I believe college gives you the best of both possible worlds: a place where both study and social life can thrive.*

best of both worlds The most ideal or desirable attributes of two different things, situations, or circumstances. *We hope that by forming a bipartisan committee we will be able form a body that represents the best of both worlds. I believe that living at college gives you the best of both worlds: a place where both study and social life can thrive.*

best of luck A parting wish of encouragement. *Best of luck to you in your new endeavor—we'll miss you around the office.*

the best of men are but men at best The best people are still human, and therefore have shortcomings. *Your dad is a great guy. I know you're upset that he missed your game, but the best of men are but men at best.*

best of the bunch The most excellent, ideal, desirable, or preferable person or thing within a given group. *There were several cars on display that caught my eye, but this one is definitely the best of the bunch. Mary hangs out with many talented and intelligent kids, but to me, she will always be the best of the bunch.*

the best part of (something) 1. The majority of something. *I'm sorry I'm late—my doctor's appointment took the best part of an hour.* 2. The most enjoyable or exemplary aspect of something. *No, the cream filling is definitely the best part of this dessert! The introduction was the best part of your term paper. After that, it meandered for a while.*

best regards A common, semi-formal valediction (used to say farewell at the end of a letter or message; also known as a complimentary close) expressing well wishes to the recipient. *I look forward to finally meeting you in person. Best regards, Peter.*

the best thing since sliced pan Extremely good, wonderful, impressive, or revolutionary, often said facetiously or sarcastically. Taken from the more common expression "the best thing since sliced bread." In this usage, a pan, in which a loaf of bread is baked, refers to the loaf of bread itself. Primarily heard in Ireland. *I don't care what you say, I think she's the best thing since sliced pan! This new smartphone design really is the best thing since sliced pan.*

the best things come in small packages Often the things that have the most value or quality are small; the size of something does not always properly indicate its value. A variation of the more common phrase, "good things come in small packages." *Experiencing the love of a baby is really life-changing. It's so true that the best things come in small packages.*

the best things in life are free Often the things that have the most value or quality cost nothing; the price of something does not always properly indicate its value. *Experiencing the love of a baby is really life-changing. It's so true that the best things in life are free. My mom always tries to buy me all of these fancy gifts, but I try to remind her that the best*

things in life are free.

best wishes A common, semi-formal valediction (used to say farewell at the end of a letter or message; also known as a complimentary close). *I hope I'll have the chance of meeting with you again soon. Best wishes, Brian*

bestie slang One's closest friend. *I'm so excited that my bestie is coming to visit this weekend!*

bestow on (someone) To gift, grant, or award something to someone. The gift can be named between "bestow" and "on." *I can't believe that much responsibility has been bestowed on me—I'm just an intern! Before my grandmother died, she bestowed this vintage coffee table on me.*

bet a huckleberry to a persimmon dated To wager or reckon a very small amount (usually used in the negative). Primarily heard in US. *I wouldn't bet a huckleberry to a persimmon that we'll see any share of that money.*

bet on it To be certain that something will happen (so much so that one would bet money on it). *Oh, Kevin's never on time, so he will be late tonight—you can bet on it.*

bet on (someone or something) **1.** To place a wager on someone or something. *I bet on the winning horse! Which team did you bet on to win the Super Bowl?* **2.** To be certain that something will happen. *Oh, you can bet on Kevin being late tonight—he's never on time!* **3.** To have confidence in one's or someone else's abilities. *I don't often bet on myself, but I'm trying to think more positively these days. I'm betting on my son to get the job—he's very qualified for the position.*

bet on the wrong horse **1.** To support a person or thing that ultimately fails. *I truly believed our candidate would win this election, but it looks like I bet on the wrong horse. I know you're confident about the success of this product, I'm just worried you might be betting on the wrong horse.* **2.** To anticipate some future event incorrectly. *When I was a kid, I thought by the time I grew up we'd have walking, talking robots doing everything for us. Looks like I bet on the wrong horse.*

bet (one's) boots To be so certain of something as to be (figuratively) willing to bet an important or essential personal possession, e.g., one's shoes. *I'd bet my boots that there will be a cure for cancer by the time I reach 60.*

You can bet your boots the government knows all sorts of things they aren't telling us.

bet the farm To risk everything on a venture that one thinks will be successful. Primarily heard in US. *I wouldn't bet the farm on that wacky invention. He's broke now because he bet the farm on a failed business venture.*

bet the ranch To risk everything on a venture that one thinks will be successful. Primarily heard in US. *I wouldn't bet the ranch on that wacky invention. He's broke now because he bet the ranch on a failed business venture.*

bet with (someone) To make a wager with another person. *I bet with my brother before the big game.*

bet you dollars to donuts I assure you (that something will happen, with so much confidence that I would bet money against something less valuable). *I lost my umbrella, so I bet you dollars to donuts that it rains tomorrow! Oh, I bet you dollars to donuts that Kevin will be late tonight—he's never on time!*

bet your bottom dollar Be certain that something will happen (so much so that one would hypothetically risk one's last dollar betting on it). *I lost my umbrella, so you can bet your bottom dollar that it will rain tomorrow! Oh, you can bet your bottom dollar that Kevin will be late tonight—he's never on time!*

bet your life Be certain that something will happen (so much so that one would hypothetically risk one's life betting on it). *I lost my umbrella, so you can bet your life that it will rain tomorrow! Oh, you can bet your life that Kevin will be late tonight—he's never on time!*

bête noire A person or thing that one strongly dislikes. This phrase means "black beast" in French. *People who chew loudly are really my bête noire. She's trying to get her shift changed because night work is her bête noire.*

betrothed to (someone) Engaged to be married to someone. *My sister is betrothed to Lord Alistair, and they will be married in the spring.*

better be an old man's darling than a young man's slave It is better for a woman to marry an old man who treats her well than a controlling young man. *If anyone says that Lord Alistair is too old for you,*

just remember: better be an old man's darling than a young man's slave.

better be going See [\(one had\) better be going](#).

better be the head of a dog than the tail of a lion It is better to be in a leadership position, even if the group or organization you're leading is deemed less important than others. *I think you should look for another job because you'll never get a prominent position at this big company. Better be the head of a dog than the tail of a lion, you know?*

better dead than red A Cold War-era slogan opposing the Communist Party (denoted by the color red). *I can't believe you're supporting the Communists now! Better dead than red, I always say!*

better get moving See [\(one had\) better get moving](#).

better get on her horse See [\(one had\) better get on \(one's\) horse](#).

(one's) better half One's significant other (typically one's spouse). *Oh, there's my better half! Honey, come say hi to some of my work friends! A: "Wait, Jennie is Ken's better half?" B: "Oh yeah, they've been married for years."*

(one's) better half One's spouse, romantic partner, or boyfriend/girlfriend. *I'd love to come out with you guys after work, but I'd better check in with my better half to make sure we don't have any plans for this evening. The work retreat is meant to be for couples, so be sure to bring your better half!*

the better half of (something) The majority of something. *I'm sorry I'm late—my doctor's appointment took the better half of the morning.*

better keep quiet about it See [\(someone had\) better keep quiet about it](#).

better keep still about it See [\(someone had\) better keep still about it](#).

better late than never The delayed occurrence or achievement of something that one desires is better than it not happening at all. This set phrase is often used to acknowledge (perhaps begrudgingly) that something has finally occurred. *After two weeks, I finally got a return phone call from that company. Better late than never, I guess. I'm sorry my gift came late, but better late than never, right?*

better left unsaid This phrase emphasizes that something should not be

mentioned, usually because it is offensive, inappropriate, or problematic. *Yeah, your romantic feelings for the groom are definitely better left unsaid! I hope you know that sexist comments like that are better left unsaid.*

better luck next time A phrase said to one who has lost or failed in some pursuit. It can be used both derisively and encouragingly. *You'll never beat me at basketball! Better luck next time, little brother! I know you really hoped to medal in the competition, so better luck next time.*

the better of (someone or something) Superiority, mastery, or an advantage over someone or something; control over someone or something. *I know we could have beaten them in last week's game, but they just got the better of us from the get-go. I knew I shouldn't be meddling in other people's business, but my curiosity got the better of me.*

better off In a preferable position or situation. *Oh, honey, you're better off without him. As a computer programmer, you're better off moving to a city that's home to a lot of tech companies.*

better off dead See [be better off dead](#).

better off than (someone) In more favorable financial situation than someone else. *With that big raise, you're now better off than most of your neighbors.*

better (oneself) To improve or cultivate an aspect of oneself, such as one's education, financial situation, health, etc. *I've been wanting to better myself for a long time, so I've decided to start taking a part-time course on the weekends to earn my associate's degree.*

the better part of (something) The majority of something. *I'm sorry I'm late—my doctor's appointment took the better part of an hour.*

better than nothing An acknowledgment that a particular thing, although not ideal, is preferable to nothing at all. *After two weeks, I finally got a return phone call from that company, which is better than nothing, I guess. Yeah, her gift was late, but it's better than nothing, at least.*

better than sex Extremely enjoyable or pleasurable. *You have to try some of this chocolate cake—it's better than sex! The exhilaration you feel when you reach the top of a mountain is better than sex.*

better the devil you know When faced with two options, it is better to choose the more familiar one, even if it is undesirable. A shortened form of

the phrase "better the devil you know than the devil you don't know." A: "Why don't you just quit your job if you're so miserable?" B: "Who knows if a new job will be any better? Better the devil you know."

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better things to do Things that are more important or enjoyable than what one is currently doing. This phrase is usually preceded by the verbs "got" or "have." Aunt Marie couldn't join us today because she's got better things to do, apparently. Oh, this is ridiculous. I have better things to do than stand in line for an hour!

better (to be) safe than sorry It is better to expend the time or effort to be cautious with one's actions than to feel regret about one's carelessness later. It might be nothing, but you should take your car to the mechanic right away—better to be safe than sorry. I was so nervous about oversleeping that I set three alarms. Better safe than sorry, you know?

better you than me (set phrase) I'm glad that I don't have to experience what you just mentioned having to do or go through. A: "My boss is making me come in this weekend to do an inventory of the entire store. It's going to take forever!" B: "Wow, better you than me. I'm going to a baseball game this weekend!"

betting on See [bet on \(someone or something\)](#).

between a rock and a hard place Facing two equally unpleasant, dangerous, or risky alternatives, where the avoidance of one ensures encountering the harm of the other. I was between a rock and a hard place, for if I didn't take out another loan—and go deeper into debt—I could not pay off the debts I already owed. You were really between a rock and a hard place when you had to choose between your career and your relationship.

between dog and wolf Between dusk and daylight. *What were you guys doing out between dog and wolf? You better not have been getting into trouble last night!*

between hawk and buzzard Caught between two extremes or two factions. *The settlers on the border of the two warring states found themselves caught between hawk and buzzard.*

between hay and grass Unable to be easily categorized. *Our inventory is between hay and grass—it will take weeks to summarize everything in the warehouse. Bill's interest in the position is between hay and grass—I still can't figure out what his motive is.*

between jobs A euphemism for "unemployed." A: "I'm just between jobs right now." B: "OK, you've been out of work for six months. It's time to start looking for a new job." Just tell the recruiter that you're between jobs. She doesn't need to know that you got fired!

between life and death In a precarious or dangerous situation that could result in one's death. *That horrific car accident left Kara between life and death.*

between projects A euphemism for "unemployed." A: "I'm just between projects right now." B: "OK, you've been out of work for six months. It's time to start looking for a new job." Just tell the recruiter that you're between projects. She doesn't need to know that you got fired!

between Scylla and Charybdis Facing two equally unpleasant, dangerous, or risky alternatives, where the avoidance of one ensures encountering the harm of the other. Refers to the Greek mythological sea beasts Scylla and Charybdis, which inhabited a sea passage so narrow as to ensure a ship would be forced into the grasp of one or the other. *I was between Scylla and Charybdis, for if I didn't take out another loan—and go deeper into debt—I could not pay off the debts I already owed. The police knew with certainty he had drugs in his car, so he became trapped between Scylla and Charybdis: either lie to the police, or admit that the drugs belonged to him.*

between the devil and the deep blue sea Facing two equally unpleasant, dangerous, or risky alternatives, when the avoidance of one ensures encountering the harm of the other. *I was between the devil and the*

deep blue sea, for if I didn't take out another loan—and go deeper into debt—I could not pay off the debts I already owed. The police knew with certainty he had drugs in his car, so he became trapped between the devil and the deep blue sea: either lie to the police, or admit that the drugs belonged to him.

between the hammer and the anvil Facing two equally unpleasant, dangerous, or risky alternatives, where the avoidance of one ensures encountering the harm of the other. *I was between the hammer and the anvil, for if I didn't take out another loan—and go deeper into debt—I could not pay off the debts I already owed. The police knew with certainty he had drugs in his car, so he became trapped between the hammer and the anvil: either lie to the police, or admit that the drugs belonged to him.*

between the jigs and the reels That which happens among, despite, or because of great confusion, chaos, or disarray; between or because of one thing and another. Primarily heard in Ireland. *I was resolved to leave work early that day, but then the boss called a last-minute meeting, the printer stopped working, and I got put on hold with a client for half an hour. So between the jigs and the reels, I ended up leaving an hour late! He drew loans from all over the country, using one to pay off the other. Between the jigs and the reels, he ended up owing more than millions to various banks and investors.*

between the pipes In ice hockey, field hockey, or lacrosse, playing the position of goalkeeper. The word "pipes" refers to the pipe-like bars that make up the frame of the goal. *It should be a great game—I hear the new goalie is a demon between the pipes. Remember, when you're between the pipes, you are the last line of defense!*

between the sheets 1. Literally, in bed. *It was such a long day today, I can't wait to get between the sheets tonight.* 2. Colloquially, of or pertaining to sexual intercourse. *In polite company, one does not discuss what happens between the sheets.*

between wind and water Vulnerable. *She's between wind and water, living in this terrible neighborhood. I hope she moves soon, for her own safety.*

between you and me See [\(just\) between you and me](#).

between you, (and) me, and the bedpost What is going to be or has been said should not be told to anyone else. This phrase is usually said

along with information that needs to be kept secret. *I overheard the boss talking to her secretary last night and—just between you, me, and the bedpost—she's giving the promotion to George after all. Between you and me and the bedpost, Stephanie is not as qualified for this job as she claims to be.*

between you, me, and the lamppost In complete confidence between the speaker and the listener, as of a forthcoming secret or rumor. *Now, this is between you, me, and the lamppost, but I'm thinking about filing for divorce. Between you, me, and the lamppost, I hear that they're going to lay off half the staff by the end of the week.*

betwixt and between Conflicted and unable to decide between two options. *I'm betwixt and between about going back to school. I got a great scholarship offer, but I don't know that I want to juggle schoolwork and a full-time job.*

bevy of beauties A group of physically attractive women. *Of course the cool guy with the motorcycle is surrounded by a bevy of beauties.*

beware of Greeks bearing gifts Be skeptical of a present or kindness from an enemy. The phrase refers to the Trojan horse, a gift to the Trojans from which Greek soldiers emerged and conquered Troy. A: *"I can't believe the opposing team made us cupcakes before the big game!"* B: *"Yeah, I'd beware of Greeks bearing gifts if I were you."*

beware of (someone or something) Be cautious or mindful of something or someone, especially something or someone that might pose a danger of some kind. *Beware of the boss today—he's been yelling at everyone he sees. Beware of their dog, he's vicious!*

beware the ides of March A phrase used to foreshadow something bad. "Ides" refers to the 15th day of the month. In the Shakespeare play *Julius Caesar*, a prophet tells Caesar to "beware the ides of March"—and Caesar is subsequently killed on that day. *You have History next period? Well, beware the ides of March—Mr. Smith is in a bad mood today and gave us extra homework.*

beyond a reasonable doubt With confidence; without any doubt. This phrase is most commonly heard in legal proceedings. *The jury acquitted him because they could not say that he was guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.*

beyond a/the shadow of a doubt With confidence; without any

doubt. *This photo now proves, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that my client is innocent. I barely remember leaving the office last night, so I can't say beyond a shadow of a doubt that I set the alarm before I left.*

beyond belief Inconceivable; outside of the realm of imagination, expectation, or anticipation. *I find it simply beyond belief the greed of all these big corporations. That film was amazing, it was actually beyond belief!*

beyond caring Unable or unwilling to devote more time and attention to a particular person or issue. *Give him anything he wants in the divorce settlement—I'm just beyond caring anymore. I'm a senior now, so I'm beyond caring about what the catty girls at school say.*

beyond description To a great degree. *My poor car is wrecked beyond description. It just looks so awful.*

beyond feeling Unable to feel one's emotions anymore, usually after being subjected to a great deal of stress. *I am simply beyond feeling now, after sitting at my comatose daughter's bedside all day. Give him anything he wants in the divorce settlement—I'm just beyond feeling anymore.*

beyond help Unable to be helped, improved, or repaired. *That fence is beyond help—you're better off tearing it down and putting up a new one. Here at the center, we don't believe that anyone is beyond help.*

beyond her ken See [a bit beyond \(one's\) ken](#).

beyond imagination Inconceivable; outside of the realm of imagination, expectation, or anticipation. *I find it simply beyond imagination the greed of all these big corporations. That film was amazing, it was actually beyond imagination.*

beyond me Advanced beyond my ability to understand or make sense of the subject matter or task at hand. *The stuff they're teaching in this advanced math class is beyond me. It is beyond me why you don't help with the chores even after I've asked you several times.*

beyond measure 1. In large numbers. *Protestors beyond measure assembled at city hall on Saturday.* **2.** To a great extent. *I thought that moving to a warmer climate would simply help my arthritis, but it has improved my entire life beyond measure.*

beyond (one's) depth 1. In water that is too deep for one to swim in. *The lifeguard had to save the girl who had gotten beyond her depth in the*

pool. 2. Advanced beyond one's ability to understand or make sense of the subject matter or task at hand. The stuff they're teaching in this advanced math class is beyond my depth.

beyond (one's) ken Advanced beyond one's ability to understand or make sense of the subject matter or task at hand. *The stuff they're teaching in this advanced math class is beyond my ken.*

beyond (one's) ken Advanced beyond one's ability to understand or make sense of the subject matter or task at hand. *The stuff they're teaching in this advanced math class is beyond my ken.*

beyond (one's) means Exceeding one's available finances. *If you keep living beyond your means, you'll deplete your bank account before you know it. Unfortunately, I can't go on the trip anymore—it's just beyond my means these days.*

beyond (one's) pay grade 1. The responsibility of those who are of a higher authority than oneself, denoted by the level of pay which one receives in comparison to one's superiors. *All these questions you're asking are beyond your pay grade. He had some great ideas about how to run the company, but contributing such things was beyond his pay grade. 2.* Above or beyond one's skill, knowledge, ability, or willingness to participate. *He soon realized that the details of the IT development project were a bit beyond his pay grade. Sorry, fishing garbage out of the lake is beyond my pay grade.*

beyond (one's) wildest dreams Unimaginable. *Living in Paris was beyond my wildest dreams when I was a broke college student.*

beyond price Priceless. Describing something that is so valuable, no price can be put on it. *This safari will be an experience beyond price!*

beyond question Clear and certain. *Her skill on the court is beyond question, so I'm not surprised that she won a full athletic scholarship.*

beyond reach Out of one's ability to comprehend, accomplish, or attain. *After I failed my biology midterm, I realized that a 4.0 GPA was beyond reach this semester. The discussion turned to the nuances of local politics, which is admittedly a bit beyond reach for me.*

beyond recall Impossible to change, reverse, retrieve, or restore. *The union is immovable on the issue, so it looks like a workers' strike is beyond recall now. Your truck's engine is completely shot; I'm afraid it's beyond*

recall at this point.

beyond reproach Perfect; unable to be criticized. *I have to scold some of my employees regularly, but Tom's behavior is beyond reproach.*

beyond the black stump In or of an extremely remote, isolated, and/or uncivilized location, usually meaning the Australian outback. "Black stump" is used colloquially as an imaginary marker of the edge of civilized settlement, though the origin of the term is uncertain. Primarily heard in Australia. *There are many people who still live beyond the black stump, lacking access to medical care and other basic social services.*

beyond the call of duty Exceeding the expectations of one's job, position, or role. *Wow, I can't believe you finished our whole report while I was out sick. You really went beyond the call of duty on this one!*

beyond the horizon Farther than the possible limit of sight; beyond what one is able to foresee, know, or anticipate. *Just beyond the horizon the first signs of daylight signaled the approaching dawn. My mind wandered out beyond the horizon, trying to picture what my life would look like 10 years from now.*

beyond the pale Completely unacceptable or inappropriate. A "pale" is an area bounded by a fence. *Disrupting my class is beyond the pale, young lady—go to the principal's office! Most people would consider stealing to be beyond the pale.*

beyond words To such a great degree that one has (figuratively) been left speechless. *I am just thrilled beyond words that so many of you were able to come to our baby shower! After our parents offered to help us buy our first home, we were appreciative beyond words.*

BFD An acronym for "big freaking deal," used sarcastically to mean not interesting, not important, or of no concern to the speaker. In more vulgar usage, F may stand for a profanity, thus making this acronym unsuitable to polite conversation or writing. A: *"I heard they may raise tuition rates next year."* B: *"BFD, we'll have graduated by then, so it doesn't affect us in the slightest."*

bffl slang An acronym for "best friend for life." Typically pronounced "biffle." *I'm so excited that my bffl is coming to visit this weekend!*

bias against (someone or something) A prejudice against

someone or something. *That teacher just seems to have a bias against me—she never calls on me in class, and she grades my papers so harshly. My father has a bias against that company because he dislikes its outspoken CEO. The bias against hiring women that exists in this company is painfully obvious.*

biased against (someone or something) Having a prejudice against someone or something. *That teacher just seems to be biased against me—she never calls on me in class, and she grades my papers so harshly. My father is biased against that company because he dislikes its outspoken CEO. If you don't start hiring women, people will think you're biased against them or something.*

Bible-basher **1.** A derogatory term for a person who uses Christian beliefs or Bible passages to try to influence others' opinions. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *After Mary started spending more time with her church's youth group, her friends from school began to complain that she had become a bit of a Bible-basher.* **2.** A person who does not approve of the Bible or Christianity. *Tired of Bill harassing her about her Christian faith, Joan finally said to him, "You don't have to be a Christian, but I refuse to stay friends with such an intolerant Bible-basher as yourself."*

Bible-thumper A derogatory term for a person who uses Christian beliefs or Bible passages to try to influence others' opinions. Primarily heard in US. *After Mary started spending more time with her church's youth group, her friends from school began to complain that she had become a bit of a Bible-thumper*

biblical **1.** Huge, catastrophic, or of extreme magnitude. Usually used in the phrase "of biblical proportions." *The typhoon laid waste to the coast of Japan, causing damage of biblical proportions. The magnitude of the evacuation is tremendous, almost biblical.* **2.** Of or pertaining to the Bible, its teachings, or the themes contained therein. *The book's vast and elaborate themes draw on deep-rooted, almost biblical human drama. In this part of the country, you can be sure that biblical analogy will accompany any scientific teaching.*

bid adieu to (someone or something) **1.** To say goodbye to someone or something. "Adieu" is a French valediction that literally means "to God." *Because I had a train to catch, I had to bid adieu to them quite*

early in the evening, unfortunately. It was hard to bid adieu to college, but I knew deep down that it was time to move on. **2.** To part with something, such as a possession. *It's time for you to bid adieu to these ratty old t-shirts.*

bid (someone or something) adieu **1.** To say goodbye to someone. "Adieu" is a French valediction that literally means "to God." *Unfortunately, I've got a train to catch, so I must bid you all adieu now. It was hard bidding college adieu, but I knew deep down that it was time to move on.* **2.** To part with something, such as a possession. *It's time for you to bid these ratty old t-shirts adieu. Bid your phone adieu, because I'm confiscating it.*

bid (something) down To decrease the value of something, usually a security, by offering to pay lower and lower prices for it. *Only buy that stock if you are able to bid it down first.*

bid (something) for (something) To say that one will pay a certain amount of money in exchange for an item, as at an auction. The monetary amount is often mentioned between "bid" and "for," while the item sought is named after "for." *I can't believe I bid \$500 for that necklace and still didn't win it! How much did you bid for that antique dresser?*

bid (something) on (something) To say that one will pay a certain amount of money in exchange for an item, as at an auction. The monetary amount is often mentioned between "bid" and "on," while the item sought is named after "on." *I can't believe I bid \$500 on that necklace and still didn't win it! How much did you bid on that antique dresser?*

bid up **1.** To increase the price of an item by offering to pay more money for it than the previous bidder, as at an auction. The item sought can be mentioned after "bid" or after "up." *If no one bids up the price of the necklace, it will be yours. I did really want that antique dresser, but the other people at the auction kept bidding it up, and I wasn't willing to pay thousands for it.* **2.** To increase the value of something, usually a security, by offering to pay higher and higher prices for it. *Only sell that stock if you are able to bid it up first.*

bide (one's) time To delay some action until an ideal moment or situation reveals itself. *I'm just biding my time in an office job until a tenure-track position opens up at one of the local colleges.*

big and bold Visually striking. This phrase typically describes things, not

people. *I think more people will come into your store now that you have a big and bold marquee.*

big and burly Large, strong, and imposing in size and stature. *I know that Mike looks big and burly, but he's one of the gentlest people I've ever met.*

the Big Apple A nickname for Manhattan, the exact origin of which is debated. *I'm so excited for our trip to the Big Apple because we're going to a Broadway show!*

big around as a molasses barrel Very large and round. *If you keep eating fried food all the time, you'll be big around as a molasses barrel soon enough.*

big as all outdoors See [as big as all outdoors](#).

big as life See [as big as life](#).

a big ask An inconvenient request. *I know it's a big ask, but could I borrow your car for a week?*

big boned **1.** Literally, having a larger bone structure than the average of one's demographic. *Some people are naturally big boned, offering them a broader frame or greater height than others. It is often the big-boned men and women of the family who work the farm.* **2.** A euphemism for being overweight or obese, usually used as an excuse for one's size. *I know that people think I have an eating problem, but really I'm just big boned!*

big boy **1.** A male who is not an infant, i.e., a child, young man, or man, depending on context. Can be used either literally or sarcastically/disparagingly. *You're a big boy, and you need to learn to clean up after yourself. Sean is a big boy, he can take care of himself.* **2.** A large and/or formidable person or thing. *You're a big boy, but that doesn't mean I won't fight you! Let's take this big boy out for a spin on the open road.* **3.** slang A term of affection for a man, used by a person who finds that man sexually attractive. *Bye big boy, I hope to see you again really soon.* **4.** (usually pluralized) The most prominent, powerful, or influential people in a group, organization, or area of business. *You're a partner in the firm, so you're going to be working with the big boys now. I'm just a local councilor, I'm not exactly among the big boys of politics.* **5.** adjective Of, pertaining to, or belonging to a male who is not an infant, with specific age being variable

and dependent on context. Often hyphenated. *You're growing up so fast, you are already old enough to play on the big-boy swings!*

big-boy pants A euphemism for being old or mature enough to do something as an adult man or as an adult man should. *Come on, Larry, you need to put on your big-boy pants and own up to your lies. I know you're not a morning person, but put on your big-boy pants and go to work.*

big boys The people who are at the top echelon of a particular group or field. *With this promotion, you'll be working with the big boys now. Can you handle it? This is varsity, and you'll be competing with the big boys now, so be physical out there.*

big brass The most important and/or powerful people in an organization. *With this promotion, you'll be working with the big brass now. Can you handle it? I just found out that the big brass want to see me, and now, my heart won't stop pounding. I hope I'm not getting fired!*

big break A fortuitous moment, opportunity, or turn of events of great consequence, especially as relates to one's career. *He had been writing for years, but his big break came when his third novel became a huge international bestseller. I had a big break when a movie director saw me in an improv group and offered me an audition for his new film.*

big brother **1.** One's older brother. *My big brother said he would help us move the couch. Andrew is Julie's big brother.* **2.** A shorthand reference to oppressive rule that was popularized by George Orwell's dystopian novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. In this usage, the phrase is usually capitalized. *You have to be careful what you write in an email these days. Big Brother is watching you, after all.*

Big Brother is watching you A phrase taken from George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, meaning one's actions and intentions are being monitored by the government as a means of controlling and suppressing the will of the populace. *You have to be careful what you write in an email these days. Big Brother is watching you, after all.*

(the) big bucks A lot of money. *I wasn't looking for a new job, but I couldn't say no to one that offered me big bucks. She makes the big bucks because she manages an entire department.*

big bully Someone who is overly critical, domineering, or authoritative, or

who is physically or psychologically abusive. The intensifier "big" implies a level childishness, immaturity, or a lack of seriousness or severity if used by an adult. *Don't take what he says too much to heart, he's just a big bully. Jeff's been a big bully since he got that promotion.*

big cheese An important, successful, or influential person. *Jacob thinks he's a big cheese now that he's been promoted to assistant manager. I'm the big cheese around here, so you have to do what I say.*

big deal 1. Something that is considered important or consequential. *Being the first in her family to graduate college was a big deal to Katie. I'm kind of a big deal here, but I'll just be the new kid when I switch schools.* 2. Who cares? That's not impressive or important. *So you did 20 push-ups. Big deal, I can do 100. A: "Wow, a 1969 Mustang!" B: "Big deal. It's just a car."*

big drink of water 1. A tall, typically slender person. *Who's that big drink of water who just walked in?* 2. A rather boring, plain, or uninteresting person. *Sarah's new boyfriend sure is a big drink of water, huh? He barely said a word all night.*

big enchilada 1. The most important or powerful person in a group, organization, business, or movement (e.g., the boss, leader, etc.). Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *I think it sounds like a great idea, but you'll have to ask the big enchilada first.* 2. An object or goal of great value, importance, or consequence. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *We only need to win two more games in the tournament to take home the big enchilada.*

the big eye 1. A flirtatious or seductive look. *That girl over there is totally giving you the big eye! Why don't you go talk to her?* 2. Purposeful eye contact. *I tried to give the presenter the big eye when I sensed his audience growing restless, but he didn't see me.*

big eyes A longing and/or pleading look, often in an attempt to get what one wants. *I'm not changing my mind, so don't even bother looking at me with those big eyes! My little sister always gives me big eyes when things don't go her way.*

big fat 1. Absolute, total; unadulterated. *You are a big fat slob, do you know that?* 2. Huge or obscenely large. *Look at that big fat spider. Yuck! My grandmother always gives me a big fat kiss on the cheek when she sees me.*

a big fish An important, successful, or influential person. *Meeting a big*

fish like the company's CEO can be quite an intimidating experience for an intern. I'd rather be a big fish in a small pond than move to New York City and be a nobody!

a big fish in a small pond A situation in which one person has more power, influence, knowledge, or experience than others within a small group. It often implies that the person may not have as much clout in "a bigger pond," i.e., a larger group or arena of some kind. *Since she was so popular and well-known within the walls of her small high school, Jennifer was used to being a big fish in a small pond. Once she started attending a large state university, however, she suddenly realized that it would take a lot more effort to make friends. His coarse management style made it evident that he was used to being a big fish in a small pond. That attitude certainly won't be tolerated by anyone at his new company.*

a big frog in a small pond A situation in which one person has more power, influence, knowledge, or experience than others within a small group. It often implies that the person may not have as much clout in "a bigger pond," i.e., a larger group or arena of some kind. *Since she was so popular and well-known within the walls of her small high school, Jennifer was used to being a big frog in a small pond. Once she started attending a large state university, however, she suddenly realized that it would take a lot more effort to make friends. His coarse management style has made it evident that he was used to being a big frog in a small pond. That attitude certainly won't be tolerated by anyone at his new company.*

big-girl pants A euphemism for being old or mature enough to do something as an adult woman or as an adult woman should. *Come on, Linda, you need to put on your big-girl pants and own up to your lies. I know you're not a morning person, but put on your big-girl pants and go to work.*

a big girl's blouse A derogatory phrase used in jest to insult a man who other men believe is behaving in a weak or effeminate manner. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *"You're nothing but a big girl's blouse walking around with your hair in a bun like that," yelled the old man to the young hipster.*

big gun 1. (usually used in the plural) The biggest or most powerful tool or asset for a given task. *This axe is getting nowhere on this stump—it's time to bring out the big guns and use the dynamite. My phone calls have not been*

answered, so it's time to bring out the big guns and send them a subpoena. **2.** An important, successful, or influential person. *He's a big gun at the law firm; he wins every court case he gets. After failing to convince the IT department that implementing new network security controls would be in everyone's best interest, Mike felt it was time to bring in the big guns, so he called a company meeting with the executive board.*

big guy 1. A term of friendly endearment for a boy, man, or male animal. *Aw, who's a good dog? Come here, big guy! Hey, big guy! How are things?*
2. Literally, a large male. *My brother is such a big guy that I'm never worried when he's around.*

a big hand A round of clapping, often as a show of approval or appreciation. *Let's welcome our special guest with a big hand!*

a big head 1. An exaggerated sense of one's importance or status. Often used with the verbs "get" or "have." *Jeff has such a big head now that he's captain and thinks he's in charge of everything. Susan got a big head for a while after her promotion, but she's been more modest recently.* **2.** A conceited person who exaggerates their own importance or skillfulness. *Bill is such a big-head and thinks he's smarter than everyone else just because he has his PhD.*

big hitter 1. A person, group, or organization of exceptional talent, ability, influence, authority, or success. *Ms. Smith's law firm is a big hitter in this city. I've become known as something of a big hitter in the company since securing that new client last week.* **2.** A product or brand that sells or has sold extremely well. *Through its clever advertising campaign, this new vacuum cleaner has become a big hitter in the industry.*

big in (something or somewhere) Well-known, influential, and/or successful in a particular arena or place. *He's very big in the financial sector, so I'm surprised you haven't heard of him. Why are heavy metal bands so big in Scandinavia?*

big jump A figurative leap in one's thinking or course of action; a big change. *You want to marry me after just one date? That's a big jump! Yes, I know it's a big jump, but I'm switching majors from Biology to Textile Design.*

big kahuna The most important or powerful person in a group, organization, business, or movement (e.g., the boss, leader, etc.). Primarily

heard in US, South Africa. *I think it sounds like a great idea, but you'll have to ask the big kahuna first.*

big leagues An area, echelon, or sphere of great competition, success, power, achievement, etc. Refers to major (i.e., "big") leagues of sports teams. *I know you're new here, but you need to perform much better than that. You're in the big leagues now. Welcome to the big leagues, senator.*

big man on campus A very well-known and influential male student, usually in college. The phrase can be used derisively, especially when aimed at someone deemed conceited. *All the girls swooned as the big man on campus walked by on his way to football practice. Jake acts as if he's the big man on campus, but none of the popular kids actually know who he is. We'll definitely get into this party if we're with the big man on campus!*

big moment An occasion that has been eagerly awaited. *It's the big moment—they're finally picking the raffle winner! I'm sorry I spoiled your big moment—I had no idea Brad was going to propose.*

a big mouth **1.** A tendency or habit of speaking incessantly and indiscreetly, especially about sensitive or secret information. *If I'd known you had such a big mouth, I'd have never shared my secret with you! God you've got a big mouth! Don't you ever stop talking about other people's business?* **2.** A person who talks in such a manner. *I can't stand Terry's new husband, he is such a big mouth!*

big name **1.** A person of great importance, fame, success, or reputation in a particular field or area. *I would make sure she knows who you are, she's one of the big names in computer design. After the success of his first novel, he instantly became a big name in literary circles.* **2.** adjective Of great importance, fame, success, or reputation in a particular field or area. Often hyphenated. *We've got a lot of big-name singers who perform at our annual charity event.*

a big noise An important, successful, or influential person. *Did you hear that Kelly got promoted to senior analyst? She's a big noise now.*

big ol' Exceptionally or impressively large, either in physical size or in magnitude, where "ol'," an elision of the word "old," is an intensifier and not indicative of age. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *Grab hold of that big ol' bag of cement and throw it into the back of my truck. Well, that's just a big ol' lie and you know it!*

big old Exceptionally or impressively large, either in physical size or in magnitude, where "old" is an intensifier and not indicative of age. *Grab hold of that big old bag of cement and throw it into the back of my truck. Well, that's just a big old lie and you know it!*

big ole Exceptionally or impressively large, either in physical size or in magnitude, where "ole," a colloquial pronunciation of the word "old," is an intensifier and not indicative of age. *Grab hold of that big ole bag of cement and throw it into the back of my truck. Well, that's just a big ole lie and you know it!*

big on (something) Very interested or invested in something. *My sister loves going to clubs because she's really big on dancing. My family is big on education, so I know I'm going to college next year.*

big picture **1.** noun The general, overall, or long-term scheme of something, as opposed to the specific details or present preoccupations. *I know that one parking ticket isn't important in the big picture, but I'm really annoyed about it right now. You need to focus on the big picture here, and stop getting bogged down in the day-to-day operations. That's what we're paying you for as a high-level manager.* **2.** adjective Of or describing such a scheme. *These are big picture projections. We'll worry about the details later.*

a big send-off A lively and enthusiastic farewell celebration thrown in honor of someone who is leaving someplace behind and/or setting off on a new endeavor. *The night before I flew back to America, the entire town came out to give me a big send-off at the local pub.*

a big shot An important, successful, or influential person. *Ever since Jack won the poker tournament, he walks around acting like he's some kind of big shot. Don't forget to dress up for work tomorrow. The company's corporate big shots are coming to visit.*

big sleep A euphemism for death, as in, the sleep from which one cannot awaken. Possibly coined by the author Raymond Chandler (1888–1959). *I know it's morbid, but we all must sleep the big sleep someday.*

big spender Someone who spends money freely and in great amounts, especially on nonessential things or events. Can also be used sarcastically to refer to someone who is reluctant to spend money, or who offers to spend

only a small amount. *There are a certain few big spenders who always come through the casino, so we try to make sure they have the best experience possible. You're only willing to pay for my soda? Wow, you're a real big spender.*

big stink A major contention, complaint, fuss, furor, or scandal. *There was a big stink among the investors this morning over the issue of bonuses for employees. Jim decided to make a big stink at the wedding because he still harbored feelings for the groom.*

big talk Boastful, arrogant, or grandiose talk or statements, usually that which is without merit, veracity, or substance. *Lucy is always full of big talk, but she rarely follows through on it.*

big tent **1.** noun A group, movement, or philosophy that appeals or caters to, or encompasses, the broadest and most diverse amount of members possible. *We pride our church on being something of a big tent, welcoming any and all who wish to join us. The party is trying to establish itself as a big tent, broadening its aims to appeal to the widest amount of voters possible.* **2.** adjective (often hyphenated) Appealing or catering to, or encompassing, the broadest and most diverse amount of members possible. *In my opinion, their big-tent politics, while reaching more people, dilute the potency of their goals.*

big things come in small packages Often the things that have the most value or quality are small; the size of something does not always properly indicate its value. A variation of the more common phrase, "good things come in small packages." *Experiencing the love of a baby is really life-changing. It's so true that big things come in small packages.*

big ticket Very expensive. This phrase typically precedes a noun (often "item"). *I can't afford a big ticket item like a car right now, so I'm saving as much money as I can.*

big time **1.** adverb A lot; in a significant manner. *You owe me big time for driving you to the airport at 4 AM! We're going to need to catch up big time if we want a chance to win.* **2.** noun A status or situation involving a lot of fame or success. *Though she'd been acting for years, it was after her role in last summer's blockbuster that she finally hit the big time.* **3.** adjective Prominent or significant. The phrase is usually hyphenated when used as an adjective. *Though she'd been acting for years, it was her role in last*

summer's blockbuster that turned her into a big-time star.

big top **1.** noun A large tent at a circus under which the main attractions are featured. Used figuratively to refer to the location where a primary or major event, show, or attraction is held, often in the phrase "under the big top." *The headline bands are performing under the big top at the music festival this weekend.* **2.** adjective (often hyphenated) Featured as the primary or major event, attraction, show, etc. *The big-top match in boxing this weekend will be the fight between the reigning champion and the underdog newcomer.*

big up **1.** To promote or aggrandize the importance, quality, or positive aspects of someone or something. *The promoters have really been bigging up this new band; I hope their concert is as good as we've been led to believe. First impressions are really important, so I'd like it if you could big me up to your boss before I meet her.* **2.** To make one's body larger and/or more muscular, as by weight-training exercises. *I was always a really skinny kid, so I got this gym membership so I could really big up.*

a big wheel An important, successful, or influential person. *After Mark successfully persuaded both sides to pass the budget, people considered him to be quite a big wheel in the political arena.*

big with child Very visibly pregnant, often because the baby's due date is near. ("With child" is a euphemism for "pregnant.") *I am so big with child right now, but at least the baby is due next week.*

big with (someone) Passionately appreciated or enjoyed by a particular person or group. *Cartoons are always big with kids, which is why they're often used in advertising. Why are heavy metal bands so big with Scandinavians?*

big year **1.** A particularly fortuitous, beneficial, or productive year. *It's been a big year for our company: we've grown from a minor start-up to a real contender in the market.* **2.** A bird-watching competition informally organized by individuals, local groups, or larger bodies. It centers on identifying as many unique species of birds as possible within a calendar year and is usually contained to a specific geographical area. *We might not win any cash or prizes, but the local big year offers a unique chance to improve my birding techniques.*

bigger fish to fry More important matters to deal with. *I can't worry*

about that now, I've got bigger fish to fry! I want Chris to help me with this project, but he claims he has bigger fish to fry right now.

bigger than the sum of its parts See [more/bigger/greater than the sum of its parts](#).

the bigger they are, the harder they fall Those who are exceptionally large, powerful, or influential will have more to lose when they fail, and their failure will be all the more dramatic or spectacular because of it. *Over 20 years, he created an iron-fisted dictatorship, but when the revolution came, he and the small few who controlled the country were summarily executed or driven into exile. Truly, the bigger they are, the harder they fall. That bully thinks he's untouchable, but the bigger they are, the harder they fall.*

the bigger they are, the harder they fall Those who are exceptionally large, powerful, or influential will have more to lose when they fail, and their failure will be all the more dramatic or spectacular because of it. *The iron-fisted dictator and his cronies who controlled the country were summarily executed or driven into exile when the revolution came. Truly, the bigger they are, the harder they fall. That bully thinks he's untouchable, but the bigger they are, the harder they fall.*

the bigger they come, the harder they fall Those who are exceptionally large, powerful, or influential will have more to lose when they fail, and their failure will be all the more dramatic or spectacular because of it. *Over 20 years, he created an iron-fisted dictatorship, but when the revolution came, he and the small few who controlled the country were summarily executed or driven into exile. Truly, the bigger they come, the harder they fall. That bully thinks he's untouchable, but the bigger they come, the harder they fall.*

the biggest frog in the puddle The most powerful, influential, knowledgeable, or experienced person within a small group. This phrase often implies that the person may not have as much clout in a larger group or arena of some kind. *Since she was so popular and well-known within the walls of her small high school, Jennifer was used to being the biggest frog in the puddle. Once she started attending a large state university, however, she suddenly realized that it would take a lot more effort to make friends. His coarse management style has made it evident that he was used to being the*

biggest frog in the puddle. That attitude certainly won't be tolerated by anyone at his new company.

bigly Significantly. The word gained popularity after Donald Trump was thought to have said it during a 2016 US presidential debate. Official transcripts of the debate rendered the word as "big league." A: "I can't support a candidate who promises to 'cut taxes bigly.'" B: "Yeah, I don't think that's what he said."

bigmouth See [a big mouth](#).

bilk (one) out of (something) To obtain something from one by dishonest means and for personal gain. *I think this workers' comp claim is bogus—he's just trying to bilk us out of money.*

bill and coo To kiss, nuzzle, and talk sweetly with another person, typically a romantic partner. *All my sister and her boyfriend do is bill and coo—it's so nauseating.*

Bill Cosby sweater The kind of boldly-patterned sweater that Bill Cosby was known for wearing on *The Cosby Show*. More commonly known as simply a "Cosby sweater." *Why are you wearing that hideous Bill Cosby sweater? Take that off before my friends get here!*

bill of goods Lies. Often used in the phrase "sell (one) a bill of goods." *So you told me you would study harder, and then your grades got even worse. Looks like you sold me a bill of goods! Mike told me that he would stay away from Liz, since he knew I liked her, and yet, there he is, flirting with her! I was sold a bill of goods!*

a bill of health 1. An official report that a ship's crew is in good health. *If the ship received a bill of health before departing, why are so many people onboard suddenly sick?* 2. A statement affirming the condition of something. *Thank goodness my car got a clean bill of health at its inspection—I can't afford any big expenses right now.*

bill (one) for (something) To send someone an invoice for a good delivered or a service rendered. *I wouldn't celebrate too much—if you didn't have to pay today, I'm sure they'll bill you for it later.*

billet-doux A love letter. *John was so enamored with the new girl in his class that he wrote a billet-doux and slipped it into her locker after school.*

billow out 1. To flare out in the wind, as of fabric. *The sails billowed out*

as the wind caught them. **2.** To gush out of a place or thing, as of smoke. *By the time I remembered I had put bread in the oven, smoke was billowing out of the kitchen.*

bind over 1. To present a criminal to a legal authority. A noun can be used before or after "over." A: *"Who's being interrogated?"* B: *"Someone the guys on patrol bound over to our department last night."* **2.** To use a legal obligation to induce a particular action (such as appearing in court or avoiding trouble), as of a criminal. A noun can be used before or after "over." *My lawyer believes that the judge will bind me over in exchange for my good behavior.*

bind (someone or something) together To join or fasten together. *I fell down because some pranksters bound my shoelaces together. The teacher bound us together for the three-legged race.*

bind (something or someone) down To anchor or fasten something or someone in place. *You need to bind down the shed in the backyard before the big storm. Can you please bind down the baby in her highchair?*

bind up To wrap something or someone in a material. A noun can be used before or after "up." *I bound up my foot in a bandage to try to reduce the swelling. Bind yourself up in blankets if you're cold.*

binge and purge slang To eat a large quantity of food and vomit shortly thereafter (as is symptomatic of the eating disorder bulimia), often repeatedly. *Because she goes to the bathroom immediately after every meal, I'm starting to worry that she's binging and purging.*

binge-watch To watch multiple episodes of a TV show in one sitting, as on a streaming service. The term alludes to the addictive nature of some shows, especially those that entice the viewer to find out what happens next. *I can't believe I spent all day binge-watching that show—it's so addictive! A lot of my friends like to binge-watch their shows, but I like to space them out.*

bio queen A performance artist whose sex is biologically female but who performs in the exaggerated style and dress of a male drag queen. Also known as a faux queen. *To be honest, that bio queen's performance was so good that I couldn't tell her apart from the drag queens.*

biological clock is ticking Of a woman, there is a limited amount of

time in which to be able to conceive a child. *I've been very successful in my career and want to see it to its fullest, but I would also love to have kids, and I know my biological clock is ticking. For women who may want to have children, their biological clocks are always ticking—a concern that men never have to worry about.*

bird-brain A person who lacks intelligence or who makes stupid decisions. *You're such a bird-brain. I can't believe you got stranded on the highway because you didn't put enough gas in your car!*

bird in a gilded cage See [be \(like\) a bird in a gilded cage](#).

bird in (one's) bosom obsolete An oath of faith, servitude, piety, or conscience that is kept guarded in one's heart, mind, and spirit. *Truly, my lord, I am at your service and loyal to your name, and I shall guard the bird in my bosom till my last breath.*

a bird in the hand Something of some value that is already acquired. Taken from the proverb "a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush," which means that having something, even if it is a lesser quantity, is better than taking the chance of losing it in order to attain something else that seems more desirable. *Stephen: "I enjoy dating Nicole, but I'd really like to ask Debbie to dinner." Mark: "If you do that, Nicole will break up with you. Don't forget that a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush."*

a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush It is better to have something less valuable than to pursue something more valuable that may not be able to be obtained. *I think I'll keep my modest winnings rather than wagering them all on the next horse race. A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.*

bird of (one's) own brain obsolete A thought or idea of one's own conception, especially that which is confidential or unknown to others. *I know not what she thinks of me, for that is a bird in her own brain and kept from my eyes.*

bird of passage A person who remains unfixed to a certain location, relocating from one place to another. *The economy has forced me to become a bird of passage, moving around the state to wherever I can find work.*

a bird's eye shot A scene photographed or filmed from an angle above the subject. *Stand on the roof of that building and get a bird's eye shot of our*

lead actress walking down the street.

a bird's eye view **1.** A view looking down at an object or area from a high elevation. *As much as I'd love to go to the observation deck of the Empire State Building and see New York City from a bird's eye view, I'm afraid that my acrophobia will prevent me from enjoying the experience.* **2.** A consideration of a problem or situation from a comprehensive perspective. *In order to determine why the company was headed towards a fiscal disaster, the CFO had to take a step back and get a bird's eye view of the situation so he could locate the cause of the problem.*

birds in their little nests agree Housemates should try to treat each other amicably. *Even though I know that birds in their little nests agree, I can't seem to stop myself from arguing with my sister all the time.*

birds of a feather Similar or like-minded people. A shorthand version of the full proverb "birds of a feather flock together," meaning people who have similar interests, ideas, or characteristics tend to seek out and/or associate with one another. *I knew you and John would get along well, you're birds of a feather, after all.*

birds of a feather flock together People who have similar interests, ideas, or characteristics tend to seek out and/or associate with one another. *I knew you and John would get along well—birds of a feather flock together, after all.*

birth tourism Travel to another country for the specific purpose of giving birth to one's child there, so as to avail of that country's economic advantages, such as superior healthcare, or to gain citizenship for the child and/or parent(s). *Due to its universal healthcare, even for foreign nationals, the country is a popular destination for birth tourism.*

a bit **1.** A small portion, degree, or amount. *It got a bit warm when the sun started shining so I'm not going to need to wear this coat today. I forgot my lunch, can I have a bit of yours? I'm afraid I've caught a bit of a cold.* **2.** A brief amount of time; a moment. *I should be over in five minutes, so I'll see you in a bit!*

bit back See [bite back](#).

a bit beyond (one's) ken Advanced beyond one's ability to understand or make sense of the subject matter or task at hand. *The stuff*

they're teaching in this advanced math class is a bit beyond my ken.

bit by bit Incrementally; slowly. *You don't have to overhaul your diet overnight—just start making healthier choices bit by bit. It took years, but bit by bit we turned the ramshackle house we'd bought into a home.*

a bit dicey Carrying a certain degree of risk or danger; uncertain of a favorable outcome. *This street looks a bit dicey, I think we should walk another way home. This merger deal could be a bit dicey for the company.*

a bit dodgy Appearing to be somewhat unsafe or dangerous; dubious; risky. *This car looks a bit dodgy to drive in traffic. I don't think we should stay, the crowd in this bar seems a bit dodgy. The way the politicians run the country seems a bit dodgy to me.*

a bit from column A a bit from column B See [a little from column A, a little from column B](#).

a bit green See [a little green](#).

bit head off See [bite \(one's\) head off](#).

bit her in the arse See [bite \(someone\) in the arse](#).

bit her in the ass See [bite \(someone\) in the ass](#).

bit her tongue See [bite \(one's\) tongue](#).

bit into See [bite into \(something or someone\)](#).

bit it off See [bite off](#).

a bit much Unnecessarily excessive. *Julie's mother thought that it was a bit much to expect the students to stay at school until 10 o'clock for theater practice.*

a bit obtuse Coming across as dull, thick-witted, or stupid; unable to grasp or understand a situation or concept. *I feel like I'm a bit too obtuse to understand what these people are talking about. I've shown you how to do it five times now! Are you just a bit obtuse?*

a bit of a sticky situation See [a sticky situation](#).

a bit of a stretch A mild exaggeration beyond the truth or what is likely the case. *I'm not too fond of taxes either, but it's a bit of a stretch to claim they are the cause of all our problems. A: "The government is covering up all sorts of extraterrestrial activity." B: "Come on now, don't you think that's a*

bit of a stretch?"

a bit of all right Physically attractive. (Said of a person.) Primarily heard in UK. *As the tall, blond woman in a black dress sauntered across the room, Billy turned to his friend and said, "She's a bit of all right, isn't she?"*

bit of fluff 1. A physically attractive woman. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *Jack knew he was the envy of all of his friends as he paraded around town with his new bit of fluff.* **2.** A derogatory term used to describe a woman who lacks value beyond being physically attractive. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *I can't believe my ex-boyfriend went out with that bit of fluff!*

a bit of how's your father A playful euphemism for sexual activity. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *Jeremy snuck under the bleachers with his girlfriend to have a bit of how's your father but ended up getting caught by the school's principal.*

a bit of rough A person who has a lower socioeconomic status than their romantic partner. Primarily heard in UK. *When Jenny, a refined and successful businesswoman, started dating a plumber, many of her colleagues secretly called him a bit of rough.*

bit of skirt 1. A physically attractive woman. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *Jack knew he was the envy of all of his friends as he paraded around town with his new bit of skirt.* **2.** A derogatory term used to describe a woman who lacks value beyond being physically attractive. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *I can't believe my ex-boyfriend went out with that bit of skirt!*

a bit off 1. Sickly, unwell, or out of sorts, either physically or mentally. *You seem a bit off, Jim. Are you feeling all right? That dog on the corner looks a bit off. I think we should walk another way home.* **2.** Somewhat strange, incorrect, inaccurate, or substandard. A: *"The rest of your portrait is coming along really well, but the hands look a bit off."* B: *"I know, hands are just so hard to draw!"* *The gameplay is great, but the graphics on the characters' faces are a bit off.* **3.** Of food, spoiled or rotten. *These chicken breasts smell a bit off—I think we should throw them out.*

bit off more than he can chew See [bite off more than \(one\) can chew](#).

bit on it See [bite on \(something or someone\)](#).

a bit on the side A person who is involved in a sexual relationship with someone who is married. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *I spotted Harry at the diner with a woman much younger than his wife. She must be his bit on the side.*

a bit out of it Feeling somewhat disoriented, phased, or out of touch with the world; spaced out. *Sorry I'm rambling so much tonight, I've been feeling a bit out of it lately.*

a bit part A very minor role in a production (such as a TV show, play, or movie) with little to no spoken lines. *My sister is so excited to have gotten a bit part in a Hollywood movie that she doesn't mind only having one line. Of course I'm disappointed to have only gotten a bit part—I auditioned for the lead!*

bit player 1. An actor with a small or insignificant part in a performance. *I've been a professional actor for a few years now, but I've only been able to find work as a bit player in a couple of television shows.* **2.** By extension, a person with a minor, unimportant, or unimpressive role in something. *This business is full of bit players who never advance in their careers.*

bit rough and ready See [\(a little/bit\) rough and ready](#).

bit rough around the edges See [\(a little/bit\) rough around the edges](#).

a bit too much An amount beyond what is reasonable or beyond some limit; an excess. *By the way he was slurring his words, it was obvious that Danny had a bit too much to drink at the holiday party.*

bitch about (someone or something) rude slang To complain about someone or something. This phrase is usually indicative of the listener's annoyance about the complaints. *Oh boy, which dead president is grandpa bitching about today? If you hate your job so much, quit bitching about it and look for a new one!*

bitch and moan rude slang To complain about someone or something. This phrase is usually indicative of the listener's annoyance about the complaints. *Oh boy, which dead president is grandpa bitching and moaning about today? If you hate your job so much, quit bitching and moaning about it and look for a new one!*

a bitch of (something) rude slang An intensifying phrase used to emphasize that something (stated after "of") is very trying or difficult to deal with. *Oh, I had a bitch of a time getting that nut off. I almost broke my wrench! This was really a bitch of a day—nothing went according to plan at all.*

bitch off rude slang To anger someone. A noun can be used before or after "off." *You'll bitch off the boss with that attitude of nonchalance. People who chew loudly really bitch me off.*

bitch up rude slang To jumble up or ruin something. A noun can be used before or after "up." *Boy, you really bitched up this report—I'm not sure I can even fix it.*

bitchy resting face rude slang A perpetually angry or sullen look on one's face when it is "resting" or neutral (not intentionally making any expression). This phrase is typically only used to describe women. *I'm not mad, I just have bitchy resting face. She looks grumpy but she just has bitchy resting face. She's actually very approachable!*

bite back 1. To stop oneself from saying something that is potentially inappropriate, hurtful, or offensive. *I had to bite back a snarky comment as my sister gushed about her new boyfriend.* 2. To retaliate against a verbal attack. *I wouldn't talk badly about Tiffany, if I were you—she bites back. I mean, you heard the vicious rumor she started about the girl who stole her boyfriend!* 3. To retaliate by biting, as by an animal. *The dog lunged at the cat, and the cat bit back.*

bite into (something or someone) 1. Literally, to clench between one's teeth, as of food. *I can't wait to bite into my hamburger—I'm so hungry! Unfortunately, I didn't realize the casserole was still cold until I bit into it.* 2. To cause one physical pain, as of the wind. *When I couldn't stand the icy wind biting into me anymore, I ran for the ski lodge.*

bite me rude slang A rejoinder that emphasizes one's annoyance with and dismissal of something or someone. A: "Yikes, what did you do to your hair?" B: "Bite me!"

a bite of the cherry A good opportunity that isn't available to everyone. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *Jason heard about a new investment opportunity that has the potential to be very profitable. He*

definitely wants a bite of the cherry.

bite of the reality sandwich Recognition of certain delusions, flaws, or misconceptions regarding a particular situation or task at hand. Most often used as office jargon in a business or place of work. *I know you think this new product will solve all of our problems, but you really need to take a bite of the reality sandwich. If Becky still thinks she's getting that promotion, even though she's late every day, she seriously needs a bite of the reality sandwich!*

bite of the reality sandwich See [take a bite of the reality sandwich](#).

bite off To use the teeth to pull off something. The bitten item can be named before or after "off." *We had to take the dog to the vet after he bit off and ate a piece of a questionable-looking plant. Once the lollipop was soft enough, I bit it off the stick*

bite off more than (one) can chew To take on more responsibility than one can handle. *I bit off more than I could chew when I volunteered to manage three little league teams in one season.*

bite on (something or someone) **1.** Literally, to use the teeth to hold or take something; to chew on something. *We had to take the dog to the vet after he bit on that questionable-looking plant. The teething baby bit on her rattle.* **2.** To be attracted to someone or something with an appealing, but ultimately false, promise. *The fish are not biting on my lure today—do I need to use different bait? I can't believe those freshmen bit on the promise of going to a big party tonight. Once they get here, we're going to make them wash our gear instead!* **3.** To imitate or copy another person in some way. *My little sister is constantly biting on me because she likes how I dress—it's so annoying!*

bite (one's) head off To respond to someone with anger that is often sudden or unprovoked. *What's wrong with the boss today? I just tried to ask him a question, and he totally bit my head off!*

bite (one's) lip To forcibly prevent oneself from exhibiting an outward reaction to something, especially that which makes one angry, irritated, or upset. *I just had to bite my lip while the boss yelled at me for losing the account. If someone tries to provoke you, just bite your lip and keep walking.*

bite (one's) nails **1.** Literally, to chew on one's fingernails and shorten

them. *I wish I didn't bite my nails, but it's been such a hard habit to try to break. My sister gets regular manicures to keep from biting her nails.* **2.** To nervously await something. *I've been biting my nails ever since I submitted my application for my first-choice college.*

bite (one's) thumb at An archaic insult, often accompanied by the gesture of biting one's thumb at the person being insulted. *How dare you say that to me? I bite my thumb at you, sir!*

bite (one's) tongue **1.** Literally, to accidentally pinch one's tongue with one's teeth. *My daughter started crying after she bit her tongue.* **2.** To stop oneself from saying something (often something potentially inappropriate, hurtful, or offensive). *I had to bite my tongue as my sister gushed about her new boyfriend yet again.*

bite (someone) in the arse colloquial To punish or take revenge on someone for their misjudgment or misdeed(s). Typically the punishment or revenge is not exacted by a person, but as a general consequence for the misbehavior itself. Primarily heard in UK. *Your poor treatment of your employees might come back to bite you in the arse some day. I got too greedy with my gambling, and now it has bitten me in the arse.*

bite (someone) in the ass To punish or take revenge on someone for their misjudgment or misdeed(s). Typically the punishment or revenge is not exacted by a person, but as a general consequence for the misbehavior itself. Not used in polite conversation. *Your poor treatment of your employees might come back to bite you in the ass some day. I got too greedy with my gambling, and now it has bitten me in the ass.*

bite the big one **1.** slang To die. *We were so lucky to avoid that massive accident—we could have bitten the big one!* **2.** vulgar slang To be remarkably bad, unpleasant, disappointing, or upsetting. *Well, that movie bit the big one. I wish I could get my money back! Yeah, I heard that class bites the big one.*

bite the biscuit **1.** To die, break down, or become defunct. *We all have to bite the biscuit someday. I drove that truck everywhere for 25 years, but it finally bit the biscuit yesterday.* **2.** To face up to, undertake, or confront some unpleasant or risky situation, action, or responsibility. *You were the only person here when the television broke, so you might as well bite the biscuit and tell me the truth. I guess we'd better bite the biscuit and get this over with.*

bite the bullet To do or accept something unpleasant, often after a period of hesitation. The phrase is thought to have come from the military, perhaps because biting a bullet was a common practice for patients, due to a lack of anesthesia. *I don't actually enjoy cleaning, but I bite the bullet and do it so that everything in my house isn't covered in a thick layer of dust. I know she's disappointed to have not gotten her dream job, but the sooner she bites the bullet and accepts it, the sooner she can move on.*

bite the dust **1.** slang Of a person, to die. *We were so lucky to avoid that massive accident—we might have bitten the dust!* **2.** slang Of a machine, to be near a complete breakdown or loss of functionality. *Judging by all that noise coming from her car, I'm pretty sure it's about to bite the dust. I have to go buy a new blender because mine bit the dust today.* **3.** slang To become unpopular or irrelevant. *Sadly, it doesn't take long for the latest technological innovations to bite the dust.*

bite the hand that feeds (you) To scorn or poorly treat those on whom you depend or derive benefit. *You might not agree with your parents' rules, but be careful about biting the hand that feeds you, because you owe everything you have to them. In politics, if you bite the hand that feeds, benefactors can very quickly crush your political future.*

bite the ice rude slang A rejoinder that emphasizes one's annoyance with and dismissal of something or someone. A: "Yikes, what did you do to your hair?" B: "Oh, bite the ice!"

a bite to eat A meal, often a small or quick one. *We don't have a lot of time, so let's just grab a quick bite to eat before the movie starts. Let's pull off at the next rest stop to grab a bite to eat.*

bite your tongue! Stop talking! An expression of frustration with what someone is saying, often because it is pessimistic. A: "Oh, I don't think I'm going to get the job." B: "Bite your tongue! You don't know that for sure."

bites the big one See [bite the big one](#).

bites the bullet See [bite the bullet](#).

bites the dust See [bite the dust](#).

bits and bobs Sundry little items, tasks, or chores. Primarily heard in UK. *I'm almost finished, I just have a few bits and bobs to do around the house before we leave. I never thought it would take me this long to pack, but*

I have so many bits and bobs scattered around the house!

bitten by the same bug Sharing a particular desire, interest, or impulse. *I can't believe we applied to the same five schools! We must have been bitten by the same bug.*

a bitter pill An unwanted or unpleasant situation that someone is forced to accept. A shortening of the phrase, "a bitter pill to swallow." *When Brett's parents stopped giving him money to pay his bills and told him to get a job, it was a bitter pill for him to swallow. Getting a poor performance review was a bitter pill, but it made me a better worker.*

a bitter pill to swallow An unwanted or unpleasant situation that someone is forced to accept. A pronoun for the person in such a situation can be mentioned between "pill" and "to," as in "a bitter pill for her to swallow." *When Brett's parents stopped giving him money to pay his bills and told him to get a job, it was a bitter pill for him to swallow. Getting a poor performance review was a bitter pill to swallow, but it made me a better worker.*

blab around To talk about something in a loose or gossipy manner. A noun can be used between "blab" and "around." *They are blabbing around that story as if it's the truth. Management is just casually blabbing around the idea of layoffs. Don't blab that nonsense around here, we're not buying it.*

blab out To talk about or reveal a private or secret matter. A noun can be used between "blab" and "out." *I can't believe you blabbed out the plans for her surprise party right to her face! Don't tell your little brother anything you want to keep secret because he'll definitely blab it out.*

black and blue Bruised, either physically or emotionally. *I'm probably going to be black and blue after falling down the steps this morning. It's normal to feel black and blue right after you break up with someone.*

black and white 1. Literally, lacking bright colors, as of a monochromatic image. *In what decade did color movies start to replace black and white ones?* 2. Of the utmost clarity; clearly defined or differentiated; without any room for confusion, ambiguity, or discrepancy. *Love isn't always black and white, you know. You have to accept that there are many gray areas in relationships. Don't debate me about it. The rules are black and white, and you broke them.*

black as a raven See [\(as\) black as a raven](#).

black as a raven's feather See [\(as\) black as a raven's feather](#).

black as a raven's wing See [\(as\) black as a raven's wing](#).

black as a skillet See [\(as\) black as a skillet](#).

black as hat See [\(as\) black as \(one's\) hat](#).

black as ink See [\(as\) black as ink](#).

black as is painted See [\(as\) black as \(one\) is painted](#).

black as Newgate's knocker See [\(as\) black as Newgate's knocker](#).

black as the ace of spades See [\(as\) black as the ace of spades](#).

black as the devil See [\(as\) black as the devil](#).

black as the minister's coat See [\(as\) black as the minister's coat](#).

black as thunder See [\(as\) black as thunder](#).

black babies dated, offensive Any group (whether African or not) for whom charities or Catholic missionaries were sent to provide aid. The term fell into disuse as the racial diversity in poverty-stricken countries (and the inherently racist connotations of the term) came to be better understood. Primarily heard in Ireland. *I still remember as a child when the priest would ask the congregation to give money to help the black babies in the poor parts of the world.*

black book A book of people's names or titles (e.g., of literature, films, music, etc.) that are or will be banned, censured, or liable for punitive actions. *During the height of the anti-communist "Red Scare" in the US, many authors, politicians, and public figures found their names in the government's black book.*

a black day A day that marks a sad or unfortunate event. *When we heard the news that David Bowie had died, we knew it was going to be a black day for all of his loyal fans.*

black eye 1. Literal discoloration in the area surrounding the eye(s) due to an accumulation of blood. *He had a pretty bad black eye after the bully punched him in the face. I had two black eyes for several days after my car accident.* 2. By extension, a blemish to one's reputation. *That food critic's negative review really gave a black eye to my restaurant.*

Black Friday 1. Any day of major financial chaos or disaster; refers specifically to September 24, 1869, when stock speculators attempting to corner US gold trade caused the entire market to crash. *The extremely fast growth in Wall Street has some economists worried that another Black Friday might be ahead if such growth continues unchecked.* **2.** The day after Thanksgiving in the US, on which extravagant sales create a frenzy of consumer activity in stores across the country. *I hate working in retail on Black Friday—everyone acts like a crazy person!*

black gold Crude petroleum oil, so called for its black color and extremely high value. *We were barely surviving until Jed discovered black gold beneath our field, and now we're richer than we could ever imagine!*

black gum A deciduous tree (*Nyssa sylvatica*) native to eastern North America, known for the shades of bright scarlet its leaves turn in the autumn; also known as sour gum, black tupelo, or simply tupelo. *The leaves of the black gum are an amazing sight in autumn.*

black hole 1. A theoretical object in space, the mass of which is so great and dense that nothing, not even light, can escape its gravitational pull. *Black holes have always fascinated me. If even light can't escape them, who knows what they might really contain?* **2.** Any place, region, or thing in which something (items, people, etc.) are irretrievably lost. *My desk is just a black hole of papers and things, and I can never find anything in it! Alzheimer's is a terrible disease, like a black hole in one's mind.* **3.** A prison cell or area of confinement, especially that which is in notoriously poor or hostile condition. Refers specifically to the so-called "Black Hole of Calcutta," a prison in West Bengal where, in 1756, 146 Europeans were said to have been imprisoned and all but 23 suffocated overnight. *Sebastian was sentenced to 30 days of solitary confinement in a tiny black hole, where the only light came from the slot for his food.*

Black Lives Matter A social justice movement focusing on black oppression and police brutality in the US and abroad. Its start is typically associated with the 2013 acquittal of George Zimmerman for the murder of Trayvon Martin, a black teenager who was unarmed at the time of the shooting. *Black Lives Matter is organizing a demonstration outside city hall today.*

black look An expression of anger, hatred, or utter contempt. *I tried to*

apologize for what I said, but she gave me such a black look that I knew it wasn't the right time to talk to her yet.

black magic Magic used for or derived from evil forces, such as witchcraft or sorcery. *He laid a curse upon the town with his black magic, robbing people of their free will.*

Black Maria dated A police vehicle, typically one carrying prisoners. *Man, there's the Black Maria. Looks like I'm headed to a different jail. They just threw Billy in the back of a Black Maria and hauled him off to the police station!*

a black mark A long-lasting negative impact of a mistake. *Jerry's speeding ticket was a black mark on his driving record that prevented him from getting a job as a delivery man.*

a black mark beside (one's) name A long-lasting negative impact of a mistake. *Jerry's speeding ticket was a black mark beside his name that prevented him from getting a job as a delivery man.*

black on black **1.** Of or pertaining to interactions between two or more African Americans, usually regarding violence or crime. *The speakers exhorted the community to renounce black-on-black crime.* **2.** Completely misleading, invisible, or indecipherable (either intentionally or unintentionally), as of black text printed on a black or dark background. *There are pages upon pages of sub-clauses and exceptions in this agreement. The whole thing is rather black on black. I hate these black-on-black warning labels, you can't make out what they're trying to warn you about at all!* **3.** Of an automobile, having the entire outside color scheme done in black. *Some people prefer sports cars with bright, flashy colors, but I prefer mine to be black on black.*

black out **1.** verb To lose consciousness. *My blood sugar dropped so low during the meeting that I blacked out and woke up on the floor.* **2.** verb To experience a period of time about which one does not remember anything, despite having been fully conscious at the time (as during a stressful or traumatic event.) *It's like I blacked out during the interview—I don't remember anything I said!* **3.** verb To avoid thinking about or remembering something, often because it is stressful or traumatic. *Many trauma victims try to black out the horrific things that have happened to them.* **4.** verb To prevent something from being broadcast or disseminated, usually in a specific

geographic area. *Ugh, the game must be blacked out tonight. Is it on any other channel? The dictator has blacked out news from the rest of the world.*

5. verb To cover something (usually with black lines or blocks) so that it cannot be seen or read. *Be sure to black out all the other names on this list before you put it in the employee's file. The newspaper blacked out part of the photograph.* **6.** noun An episode of unconsciousness. Often written as one word ("blackout"). *My blood sugar dropped so low that I had a blackout during the meeting and woke up on the floor.* **7.** noun A period of literal darkness caused by the loss of electricity, as during a storm. Often written as one word ("blackout"). *We read by candlelight to pass the time during the blackout.* **8.** adjective slang Extremely drunk, often to the eventual point of unconsciousness. Often written as one word ("blackout"). *He was blackout last night, so I'm not surprised that he doesn't remember talking to you.*

the black ox has trod upon (one's) foot obsolete One has been beset upon by trouble or misfortune. "Black ox" here refers to Satan. *I am in low spirits, for the black ox has trod upon my foot since last we met.*

the black ox has trod upon (one's) toe obsolete One has been beset upon by trouble or misfortune. "Black ox" here refers to Satan. *I am in low spirits, for the black ox has trod upon my toe since last we met.*

black rider "Famine," the third of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, so named for the black horse upon which it rides. *The food shortages are at a critical level, as if the black rider has swept through the country and demolished our fields and supplies.*

Black Russian An alcoholic beverage made of coffee liqueur and vodka. Usually served over ice. *Can I get a rum and coke, a glass of wine, and a Black Russian, please? I love Black Russians, but Ryan can't stand them. I think it's because he doesn't like the taste of coffee.*

the black sheep of the family One who is unlike other family members, sometimes due to intentional rebelliousness, and often viewed unfavorably by them. *Everyone likes me because I'm so quiet and obedient. The same cannot be said for my wild cousin Nathan, who is the black sheep of the family.*

black-silk barge slang A fat woman. Primarily heard in UK. *I hate to say that Jenny's a black-silk barge, but she's gained so much weight that I barely recognize her.*

black stump An imaginary marker of the edge of civilized settlement, usually referring to the Australian outback. The origin of the term is uncertain. Primarily heard in Australia. *There are many people who still live beyond the black stump, lacking access to medical care and other basic social services.*

black tie **1.** adjective Of, pertaining to, or requiring formal evening dress for men, typically consisting of a tuxedo or dinner jacket with a tie. Often hyphenated. *I'm having a black-tie party for my 30th birthday, so don't show up in jeans and a T-shirt! The gala will be strictly black tie: no guests will be admitted without proper attire.* **2.** noun Formal evening dress code for men, typically consisting of a black tuxedo or dinner jacket with matching trousers and bow tie. *The gentlemen, all of them in black tie, posed for the publicity photograph.*

black triangle **1.** An unidentified flying object (popularly known as a UFO) in the shape of a dark triangle, typically with points of light in each corner. *I know you think I'm crazy, but every spring, I see those black triangles appearing over my corn fields at night!* **2.** In Nazi Germany, a badge assigned to concentration camp inmates considered "asocial" or mentally unfit for work. *Her clinical depression, which was vilified by the Nazis, meant she had to wear a black triangle in the concentration camp.*

blacklist **1.** noun A list of names of people, groups, or organizations who are to be banned, censured, or are under suspicion, as in politics, law enforcement, business, labor unions, etc. *The country's government maintains a blacklist of people it deems dangerous. The company circulates a blacklist every year among its employees so they know not to offer jobs or information to people whose views run contrary to its values.* **2.** verb To put someone on a blacklist, that is, a list of names of people, groups, or organizations who are to be banned, censured, or are under suspicion. *The influential writer was blacklisted early in her career for denouncing certain policies of the federal government. If you keep getting into fights there, the bar will eventually blacklist you.*

blackmail (someone) into (something) To coerce someone to take a certain action by threatening to expose something about them. *I've known him for years and can definitely blackmail him into silence. The maid blackmailed her famous employer into paying her an exorbitant sum of*

money.

blah, blah, blah slang A phrase used to summarize unsurprising or boring statements. *Why was that meeting three hours long? This quarter's numbers, blah, blah, blah—that seriously could have been condensed into 20 minutes! Oh, my mom is fine, blah, blah, blah, just the usual stuff going on at home.*

blame Canada A slang phrase from the cartoon *South Park*, (comically) blaming Canada for any troubles in one's life. *Another tax increase? Ugh, blame Canada! I can't believe we all failed that stupid test. Blame Canada!*

blame for (something) To foist or assign responsibility or guilt for something on someone else (who can be mentioned between "blame" and "for"). *My partner had been cooking the books for years, but because I was the CEO, I was blamed for our company's collapse. Don't blame me for your unhappiness—I told you not to take that job!*

the blame for (something) The responsibility or guilt for something *My partner had been cooking the books for years, but because I was the CEO, I got the blame for our company's collapse. I'm the coach, and I called a bad play, so I deserve the blame for this loss.*

blame game The exchange of accusations and blame between two or more parties during a dispute or some undesirable event. *After the team lost the match, there was a bit of a blame game going on between the players and the coaches. The government parties prefer to play the blame game during an economic crisis.*

blame on (someone) To foist or assign responsibility or guilt for something on someone else. A noun can be used between "blame" and "on." *My partner had been cooking the books for years, but because I was the CEO, our company's collapse was blamed on me. Don't blame your unhappiness on me—I told you not to take that job!*

blanch at (something) To balk or hesitate when faced with something unpleasant. This phrase can also include or describe one's visible paleness, as to "blanch" something means to whiten it. *All of my friends ran into the creepy haunted house, but I blanched at the sight of it. Stella blanched at the plate of cooked ants that had been set before her.*

blanch with (an emotion) To become visibly pale as a result of

feeling a particular emotion. *All of my friends ran into the creepy haunted house, but I blanched with fear when I saw it. Stella blanched with disgust at the plate of cooked ants that had been set before her.*

blank canvas A person or thing that has nothing of substance or permanence within or imprinted upon him, her, or it, such that it can be easily filled with entirely new things. Refers to a painter's canvas that has yet to be painted on. *Children's minds are blank canvasses, so we have to be sure to provide them with enriching education and opportunities so as to give them the best possible future. I love moving into a new house and having a blank canvas to make my own! These freshmen are all blank canvasses—we can get them to believe anything we tell them!*

a blank check 1. Literally, a check presented to someone with the amount left blank, so that it can be written out for the desired total. *Mom, can you give me a blank check so I can fill it out when I buy my school supplies?*

2. By extension, the freedom or permission to spend as much money or use as much resources as needed in pursuit of a desire or goal. *The company was having a difficult time retaining good employees so the manager was given a blank check to increase salaries and restructure his department. After the fifth murder, the city's police officers were given a blank check to use whatever resources they needed in order to find the serial killer before he struck again.*

a blank cheque 1. Literally, a cheque presented to someone with the amount left blank, so that it can be written out for the desired total. *Mom, can you give me a blank cheque so I can fill it out when I buy my school supplies?*

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blank look on (one's) face A facial expression with no emotional articulation, usually implying befuddlement, incomprehension, or being overwhelmed by something. *I tried to explain to him why what he did was wrong, but he just sat there staring at me with that blank look on his face. Claire carried a blank look on her face for weeks after the traumatic*

accident.

blank out **1.** To unexpectedly forget something. *Can you remind me of your name? I'm so sorry, but I'm completely blanking out right now!* **2.** To avoid thinking about or remembering something, often because it is stressful or traumatic. *Many trauma victims try to blank out the horrific things that have happened to them.* **3.** To erase or conceal something (such as text or an image) that one does not want widely disseminated. *You should blank out the last paragraph before submitting this paper to your professor. Be sure to black out all the other names on this list before you put it in the employee's file.*

blanket (someone or something) with (something) To cover with something. *By the time I got to the beach, the kids had already blanketed grandpa with sand. The storm blanketed the mountaintops with snow, making it look like a scene from a painting.*

blanket term A word or phrase used to describe a broad range of similarly related things, usually resulting in diluting the specific meaning of individual items. *"Idiom" is often used as a blanket term for any element of language that is used strangely or uniquely by its users. "American" can be seen as something of a blanket term, considering how drastically people differ from one part of the country to the next.*

blare out To project (the sound of something) loudly, as of music or an announcement. *There's always this one car that drives by the neighborhood at night blaring out heavy metal music. The judge blared out the sentence for the whole assembly to hear.*

blast away **1.** To be extremely loud. *If grandma's TV is blasting away, gently remind her to put in her hearing aids.* **2.** To vehemently criticize someone or something. *The senator's disgusted constituents blasted away at him during the town hall meeting.*

a blast from the past Someone or something that evokes a sense of nostalgia. *Bumping into my old high school sweetheart in the grocery store was a real blast from the past. Wow, I used to have this baseball card when I was kid. What a blast from the past!*

blast off **1.** To shoot upward from the ground, as of a rocket. *The rocket blasted off successfully and is now headed for the moon. My kids love blasting off toy rockets in the backyard and seeing how high they'll go.* **2.** To

ignite an exploding device, such as fireworks. *Our poor dog is hiding under the bed because our neighbors celebrate the Fourth of July by blasting off tons of fireworks.* **3.** To use an explosion to destroy or remove something. *After the emergency crew blasted off some rocks, they were able to free the trapped hikers from the cave.* **4.** To amputate by means of an explosion. *I'm really worried my fool husband is going to blast off a hand while playing with those fireworks!* **5.** To depart very quickly. *The robbers blasted off when they heard the approaching sirens.* **6.** To strike with a lot of force in order to remove something, as with a pressure washer or sandblaster. In this usage, a noun can be used between "blast" and "off." *The sidewalk looks so clean this morning! I guess someone from the township blasted all the stains off of it. We can blast off that graffiti with the pressure washer.*

blast (someone or something) to kingdom come **1.** slang To kill someone with gunfire or an explosive device. "Kingdom come," a phrase taken from the Lord's Prayer, refers to heaven or the afterlife. *The robber waved his gun and shouted, "Get back, or I'll blast you to kingdom come!"* **2.** slang To destroy something with an explosion. *If we blast these rocks to kingdom come, we should be able to rescue the trapped hikers from the cave.*

blast to smithereens To explode or otherwise destroy something into tiny, fragmentary pieces. Smithereens, first appearing in 1829 as "smiddereens," is likely derived from the Irish word "smidirín" or "smidiríní," meaning fragment. *The demolition crew came in and blasted the house to smithereens. The small band of rebels didn't stand a chance; they were blasted to smithereens as soon as the loyalists had them in sight.*

blasted to smithereens See [be blasted to smithereens](#).

blaze away at (someone or something) To shoot a gun at a target repeatedly. *The officer blazed away at the fleeing criminal and finally struck him in the leg. William blazed away at the bull's eye and still didn't land a single shot!*

blaze down on (someone or something) To intensely shine down onto someone or something. *I sure hope you put on sunscreen before letting the sun blaze down on you for hours. The suspect started sweating as the lights in the interrogation room blazed down on him. The sun blazing down on the car melted the pack of gum I'd left in there.*

blaze (the/a) trail **1.** Literally, to create a trail by clearing trees and

vegetation or simply by marking trees. *Does anyone know who blazed the trail through these woods back in the 18th century?* **2.** By extension, to be the first to do something, often that which is later emulated or built upon by others. *I hope that the rest of my family will move to the West Coast if I blaze the trail and relocate there first. The forefathers of medicine blazed a trail for today's doctors.*

blaze up To suddenly gain strength and burst forth, as of a fire. This phrase can be used to describe a literal blaze or any worsening situation. *I thought I had contained the fire, but when the flames blazed up again, I called the fire department. Things had been peaceful between my aunts for months, but old grievances blazed up again on our family vacation.*

blaze with (something) To shine or burn in a particular way (which is stated after "with"). *The sun blazed with such intensity that I had to shut my eyes.*

blazing inferno Some place or thing totally engulfed in flame. *After the summer-long drought, it didn't take long for a minor forest fire to become a blazing inferno.*

blazing star A comet. *Did you see the tail on that blazing star? I can't believe how much it lit up the night sky!*

bleach out To remove unwanted color or a stain from something. A noun can be used between "bleach" and "out." *Do you think I'll be able to bleach this stain out of my pants?*

bleed for (someone or something) **1.** To acutely feel another person's emotional pain along with them. *My mother is a crying mess whenever she watches the news because she just bleeds for any victim of a tragedy.* **2.** To support something so passionately as to accept pain and suffering on its behalf. *I know this is an unpopular cause, and I am willing to bleed for it—let's go to the protest!*

bleed from (somewhere) To lose blood from an injured part of the body. *After the car accident, the driver was dazed and bleeding from the head. The patient is bleeding from the abdomen—he needs surgery right away.*

bleed (someone or something) dry To take all of the resources that another person or thing has available. This phrase is often applied to

money. *Paying for my kids' education is just bleeding me dry. I hope I'll still be able to retire one day! Overhead costs are bleeding our business dry. We need to come up with a different way of doing things.*

bleed (someone) white To take all of the money that another person has, often through blackmail. *The maid bled her famous employer white until he could no longer pay her the hush money.*

bleed the lizard slang, vulgar To urinate, said of or by a male. *After my third cup of coffee, I really had to go bleed the lizard.*

bleed to death To die due to losing excessive amounts of blood. *If we don't get this patient into surgery right away, he is going to bleed to death from internal injuries.*

bleeding edge 1. adjective (hyphenated and used before a noun) Of or being in the most advanced position, practice, or technology in a given area, activity, or endeavor. *Scientists at the local university are pioneering bleeding-edge cancer research. The company has released some of the most bleeding-edge smartphones in the world.* 2. noun The most advanced position, practice, or technology in a given area, activity, or endeavor. *The work their organization is doing at the moment is the bleeding edge of public health. Anthony's fascination with gadgetry always has him at the bleeding edge of the latest technology.*

a bleeding heart A person who shows an overwhelming and often ostentatious display of sympathy, especially for those perceived as victims. *He only voted for the tax increase because he's a bleeding heart. He really believes all of that extra money is going to help the homeless.*

bleep out slang To censor audio by playing a high-pitched "bleep" sound over it, as is often done with expletives. A noun can be used between "bleep" and "out." *When I heard the replay of that interview on the radio, they had bleeped everything out, so I still don't know what the celebrity said that was so offensive.*

blend in(to) (something) To merge seamlessly and successfully with something. *Do you think Sam will be able to blend into the group? He can be pretty standoffish. Be sure to blend in your makeup so that your face isn't two different colors. Don't wear anything too flashy—try to blend into the background.*

blend together To merge seamlessly and successfully with something. Each of the items being combined can be stated in the phrase. *Can you blend together the ingredients for the icing while I prep the next step? Blend the butter together with the eggs.*

bless my stars An exclamation of surprise. *Oh, bless my stars! Don't sneak up on me like that!*

bless (one) with (something) **1.** To bestow something favorable upon someone, as of a gift from God. *The Lord has blessed us with fine weather during the harvest season.* **2.** To anoint someone with something during a religious ritual. *The priest blessed the baby with holy oil during the baptism ceremony.*

bless (one's) cotton socks An expression of one's fondness for another person. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *Look at this picture that my sweet daughter drew me, bless her cotton socks!*

bless (one's) heart An expression of one's fondness or appreciation for another person. *Look at this picture that my sweet daughter drew me, bless her heart! I know I can always count on you to help me in a crisis, bless your heart.*

bless (one's) lucky star(s) An expression of appreciation for a beneficial occurrence. *You should bless your lucky stars that you managed to avoid that violent car accident. We bless our lucky star that we were able to get a home in this neighborhood at such a reasonable price.*

bless the world with (one's) heels To be hanged. A: *"Did you hear what happened to the fellow that got caught robbing the general store? He blessed the world with his heels today."* B: *"Wow. I didn't know that was an offense punishable by hanging."*

bless you See [\(God\) bless you](#).

bless your pointy little head A condescending phrase used to patronize someone for being foolish or not very bright. *You failed the exam because you thought the sun was a planet? Aw, bless your pointy little head.*

blessed A common hashtag on social media posts that may accompany a sincere expression of gratitude or may be used comically or as an attempt to mask bragging. It is sometimes spoken, usually humorously. *How awesome is my new apartment?! #blessed My mom came over with chicken soup tonight*

because I wasn't feeling well. She's the best, hashtag blessed. Well, this adorable infant just puked on me. #blessed

the blessed event The birth of a baby. *She's almost nine months pregnant, so the blessed event will be happening very soon!*

blessed is he who expects nothing, for he shall never be disappointed Having high expectations often leads to disappointment when the desired result does not occur, so keeping expectations low will save one from being disappointed. *I promised myself I wouldn't get my hopes up, so when I found out that my first-choice school had rejected me, I was actually OK with it. Blessed is he who expects nothing, for he shall never be disappointed.*

blessed with (something) Possessing something beneficial, such as a positive ability, quality, or general state of welfare. The phrase implies that such a thing was bestowed by a deity or through good fortune. *My brother has been blessed with athletic abilities that the rest of us kids seriously lack. We should never forget that we have been blessed with wealth, and with that comes the responsibility to do good with it.*

a blessing in disguise An unfortunate event or situation that results in an unforeseen positive outcome. *Running late for work turned out to be a blessing in disguise. I would have been in the middle of that big multi-car pileup had I left the house on time.*

blew a fuse See [blow a fuse](#).

blew a hole in See [blow a hole in \(something\)](#).

blew a kiss See [blow \(someone\) a kiss](#).

blew a raspberry See [blow a raspberry](#).

blew a strawberry See [blow a strawberry](#).

blew away the cobwebs See [blow away the cobwebs](#).

blew brains out See [blow \(one's\) brains out](#).

blew cover See [blow \(one's\) cover](#).

blew doors off See [blow \(one's\) doors off](#).

blew her out of the water See [blow \(someone or something\) out of the water](#).

blew her own horn See [blow \(one's\) own horn](#).

blew her own trumpet See [blow \(one's\) own trumpet](#).

blew her socks off See [blow \(one's\) socks off](#).

blew her to See [blow \(one\) to \(something\)](#).

blew her to bits See [blow \(someone or something\) to bits](#).

blew hot and cold See [blow hot and cold](#).

blew in See [blow in\(to\)](#).

blew it See [blow it](#).

blew it out of all proportion See [blow \(something\) out of \(all\) proportion](#).

blew it wide open See [blow \(something\) wide open](#).

blew itself out See [blow itself out](#).

blew off See [blow off](#).

blew off the map See [blow off the map](#).

blew on See [blow on \(something\)](#).

blew out See [blow out](#).

blew over See [blow over](#).

blew sky high See [blow \(something\) sky-high](#).

blew smoke See [blow smoke](#).

blew something to smithereens See [blow \(something\) to smithereens](#).

blew the coals See [blow the coals](#).

blew the gaff See [blow the gaff](#).

blew the lid off See [blow the lid off \(something\)](#).

blew the whistle See [blow the whistle \(on\) \(someone or something\)](#).

blew them a kiss See [blow \(someone\) a kiss](#).

blew up See [blow up](#).

a blight on the land Something that is environmentally harmful or

destructive. *Opponents of hydraulic fracturing see it as a blight on the land.*

blimp out **1.** derogatory slang To gain an excessive amount of weight. *Have you seen Phil recently? He's really blimped out since college.* **2.** slang To eat an excessive amount of food, especially junk food. *It's hard not to blimp out at a Super Bowl party where there's a lot of junk food.*

a blind alley A metaphorical path that leads nowhere; a dead end. *After spending years trying to prove his hypothesis but failing to get the results he had hoped for, the physicist feared that he had wasted too much time heading down a blind alley.*

blind as a bat See [\(as\) blind as a bat](#).

blind date A date among two people who have not previously met. *Blind dates are terrifying because you don't know what the person will be like, but that's part of the excitement.*

blind man's holiday A phrase that refers to the inability to work at night (before electric light was common). It is a "holiday" because one cannot work when it is too dark to see. *I don't mind that it gets dark so early in the winter because then we can go home earlier—it's a blind man's holiday! A: "What are you doing home so early?" B: "It's too dark to keep working so we got to take a blind man's holiday."*

blind (someone) with science To use technical terms or scientific jargon that the listener does not understand. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *As you plan your talk, be careful not to blind the audience with science.*

blind spot **1.** An area that is not able to be seen, either due to its location outside of the field of vision, or due to some physical obstruction or a defect in one's vision. Often used to describe the areas around a car that cannot be seen with the rear-view or side mirrors. *This car has a big blind spot on the right side, so remember to always turn your head to look before merging. Leslie always experiences blind spots when she starts to get a migraine. That security camera has a blind spot—and that's where we'll sneak in.* **2.** By extension, an aspect of one's life or a certain situation that one is ignorant of or that one does not understand fully. *Jen has a real blind spot when it comes to her relationships with men trying to take advantage of her wealth.*

blind to (something) Ignoring something; oblivious to something. *Kara worships her father and is completely blind to his shortcomings. She is*

going to be heartbroken once she learns about his embezzlement. I know you're blind to any issues with your car, but unless you want it to break down, you're going to have to take it to the shop.

blink-and-you-miss-it (used as a modifier before a noun) Of such a brief duration or small size as to be easily missed. *I was excited to be in the movie, but it was really just a blink-and-you-miss-it part.*

blink at (something) **1.** Literally, to quickly open and close one's eyes, perhaps several times in succession. *I had to blink at the bright sunlight that blinded me when I stepped out of the house.* **2.** To ignore something, often because it is unpleasant. *I've been blinking at the strange issue with my car because I don't have the money to get it repaired right now.*

blink back tears To try to stop oneself from crying. *I often have to blink back tears when I listen to a sappy love song on the radio. The poor student was so nervous on stage that she was clearly blinking back tears.*

blink of an eye Very quickly; in a very short period of time. Usually used in the phrase "in the blink of an eye." *When we got into that car accident, our lives changed in the blink of an eye. Watch the baby closely, she can get into something dangerous in the blink of an eye.*

blink tears back To try to stop oneself from crying. *I often have to blink tears back when I listen to a sappy love song on the radio. The poor student was so nervous on stage that she was clearly blinking tears back.*

bliss out To be in a state of extreme happiness. *Oh, I had a great time on my vacation—I totally blissed out while relaxing on a tropical island.*

blitz (one) out To surprise, unsettle, and confuse someone. *The sudden, blaring alarm blitzed us out—nobody moved until our teacher yelled for us to evacuate the building. I had to sit down because hearing such terrible news really blitzed me out.*

blitzed (out) slang Intoxicated by drugs or alcohol. *Do you remember last night at the pub at all? You were blitzed! The celebrity entered rehab after admitting to being blitzed out nearly every day.*

BLM An abbreviation for "Black Lives Matter," a social justice movement focusing on black oppression and police brutality in the US and abroad. Its start is typically associated with the 2013 acquittal of George Zimmerman for the murder of Trayvon Martin, a black teenager who was unarmed at the time

of the shooting. *A BLM demonstration is being held outside city hall today.*

block in To prevent someone or something from moving from a certain spot. A noun can be used between "block" and "in" or after "in." *I can't move my car because some jerk blocked me in! All these boxes are blocking in my tools at the back of the garage—I can't get to any of them.*

block off To prevent access to a particular area or thing. *We had to block off that section of the restaurant for a private party. I had to take a detour on my way home because the water department blocked off a bunch of streets.*

block out 1. To prevent something from being seen or noticeable or entering one's awareness. *I have to block out all distractions and just sit down and write this paper. Your curtains aren't opaque enough to block out all of the sunlight. Some of the names on this list are blocked out, which means they're top secret.* **2.** To avoid thinking about or remembering something, often because it is stressful or traumatic. *Many trauma victims try to block out the horrific things that have happened to them.* **3.** To reserve a period of time for someone or something. *If I block out a chunk of my valuable time to meet with you, then you better show up! Mom made us all block out a few hours on Sunday afternoon to clean out the garage.* **4.** To thoroughly explain the details of something. *After our new supervisor blocked out his vision for the department reorganization, it made a lot more sense to us.*

block up 1. To obstruct. *This cold is blocking up my nose and I can hardly breathe. One of the kids flushed some action figures, which are now blocking up the pipes.* **2.** To make constipated. In this usage, a noun is used between "block" and "up." *That type of food always blocks me up—I was constipated for days the last time I ate it.*

blocking and tackling The basic, fundamental skills, tasks, or roles necessary to the function of something. Used especially in business, it is a reference to American football in which blockers and tacklers have the least glamorous positions but are critically important to the team as a whole. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *You don't even know how to file a basic report? Tom, that's just simple blocking and tackling. Our accountants are the blocking and tackling of our company. They might not get the spotlight, but they make the company run smoothly.*

blood and guts 1. noun A shorthand reference to the result of graphic violence, often as depicted in a film or television show; gore. *I can't stand*

horror movies like that. Who wants to look at blood and guts for two hours?
2. noun A conflict. *I hope they reconcile and stop the blood and guts because I'm sick of listening to them argue with each other.* **3.** adjective Hostile. The phrase is often hyphenated in this usage. *I hope they reconcile soon because I'm sick of listening to all the blood-and-guts arguing.*

blood and thunder A spoken piece or performance that is loud and impassioned. *I don't think you'll fall asleep during this play—I hear it's all blood and thunder.*

blood brother A boy or man who has sworn loyalty to another despite not being biologically related. *When Jake and Tim entered the battlefield, they became blood brothers, vowing to protect each other from harm's way.*

blood in the water The exposure of a competitive weakness in an opponent that arouses increased competitive aggression in others. Likened to the literal presence of blood in water that causes aquatic predators (such as sharks) to seek out and attack prey. *After their opponents' star striker left the match with an injury, the home team smelled blood in the water and brought on their attack with everything they had.*

blood is thicker than (something) Family is more important than anything else. The common version of the phrase is "Blood is thicker than water." *There was no way I was going to stay at that company after they fired my brother. Blood is thicker than business.*

blood is thicker than water Family is more important than anything else. *Can't you give your sister a job at your company? Blood is thicker than water! My relatives insist that blood is thicker than water, but I just can't blindly condone the bizarre things that some of them do.*

(one's) blood is up One is in an angry, aggressive, or violent mood; one is looking or ready for a fight. *Everyone in the office knows to avoid the boss when her blood is up.*

blood money **1.** Money paid to a hired killer. *Here's your blood money, all right? Just get the job done so that no one ever has to see that fool again!* **2.** Money paid to the family of someone who has been murdered. *That settlement is nothing more than blood money. It can't even begin to make up for our father's murder.* **3.** Money gained at the expense/suffering of others. *I don't want this blood money! My mother worked herself to death making it! Many people consider the profits from conflict diamonds to be blood money.*

blood moon Earth's moon during a total lunar eclipse, that is, when a full moon is in exact alignment with the Earth and the sun, with Earth in between the two. Light refracted off of Earth's atmosphere appears on the moon in a dark-red hue, hence the name "blood moon." It is referred to in the Bible (Revelation 6:12–14) as a sign of the end of the world, and so it is regarded by many as an ill omen. *The wind was howling, the sky was pitch black, and a blood moon loomed heavy over our heads. I knew something bad was coming our way.*

(one's) blood runs cold One becomes seized by an acute and intense sensation of fear, panic, horror, or dread. *My blood ran cold when I overheard that a police officer had been asking about me at work. Janet could feel her blood run cold when the murderer she was testifying against walked into the courtroom.*

blood sister A girl or woman who has sworn loyalty to another despite not being biologically related. *Sally and Rita are such good friends, you rarely see one without the other. They're blood sisters.*

blood will have blood Violent acts will be followed by more violent acts of vengeance. *I'm not surprised that he got beat up after punching his nemesis—blood will have blood, after all.*

blood will tell One will inevitably display the unfavorable qualities of one's relatives. *Of course Mark never has any money, just like his parents. Blood will tell, after all.*

blood, sweat, and tears Maximum effort. *I poured my blood, sweat, and tears into this company, and I refuse to let you destroy it! Let's take a moment to acknowledge the people whose blood, sweat, and tears went into this project.*

bloodied but unbowed Still willing to continue despite stress or setbacks. *The troops emerged from the brutal battle bloodied but unbowed. We were bloodied but unbowed after the board rejected our first proposal—we just resolved to make a better pitch next time.*

bloodshot eyes Eyes in which the sclera (the whites of the eye) and/or conjunctiva (the inside of the eyelid) are colored red due to the prominence of superficial blood vessels. Bloodshot eyes can be the result of a wide range of conditions, including tiredness, eyestrain, irritation, conjunctivitis, injury, or

more serious inflammatory conditions. *I've got these really bloodshot eyes from studying all night long. Honey, those bloodshot eyes look terrible! I think we need to get you to the doctor.*

bloodsucker **1.** Someone who preys (monetarily) upon a person or people through deceitful means, as through extortion or by means of a con. *That insurance salesman ended up being a total bloodsucker. He signed me up for coverage that I can't use, and it has cost me a fortune!* **2.** One who depends upon the generosity or resources of another person in a parasitic manner. *Your friend seems like a bit of a bloodsucker. He kept asking everyone to pay for his drinks all night long.*

bloody but unbowed Still willing to continue despite stress or setbacks. *The troops emerged from the brutal battle bloody but unbowed. We were bloody but unbowed after the board rejected our first proposal—we just resolved to make a better pitch next time.*

bloody minded slang Petulant and argumentative in nature. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *I hate spending time with bloody minded people who have a pessimistic response to all of my ideas. Don't listen to him—he's just bloody minded, and his argument doesn't even make sense.*

bloom is off the rose Something, someone, or some situation is no longer as exciting, novel, or interesting as it first was, likened to a rose that is no longer in its prime and most appealing condition. *Everyone had very high hopes for the newly elected senator, but she accomplished little in her first term, and I'm afraid the bloom is off the rose at this point. After four years, it just feels like the bloom is off the rose in this relationship.*

bloom is off the (something) Something, someone, or some situation is no longer as exciting, novel, or interesting as it first was, likened to (usually) a flower or fruit that is no longer in its prime and most appealing condition. It is taken from the full phrase, "the bloom is off the rose." *Everyone had very high hopes for the newly elected senator, but she accomplished little in her first term, and I'm afraid the bloom is off the peach at this point. After four years, it just feels like the bloom is off the petunia in this relationship.*

bloom of youth The most enjoyable and/or successful time of one's youth, likened to the bloom of a flower being its most prominent and beautiful moment. *I have a great fondness for that age, when I was in the*

bloom of youth.

blossom forth **1.** Of a plant, to bloom. *I can't wait for the flowers I planted to blossom forth and fill our yard with color!* **2.** Of a person or thing, to quickly grow and mature. *It feels like my kids blossomed forth into adulthood in no time at all. I had a much easier time writing my second novel—the idea for its plot just blossomed forth overnight.*

blossom into (something) **1.** Of a plant, to bloom into a particular form. *I can't wait for the flowers I planted to blossom into beautiful colors and brighten up our yard.* **2.** Of a person or thing, to quickly grow and mature into a particular type of person or thing. *It feels like my kids blossomed into adulthood in no time at all. I had a much easier time writing my second novel—my idea blossomed into a fully fledged plot almost overnight.*

blossom out **1.** Of a plant, to bloom. *I can't wait for the flowers I planted to blossom out and fill our yard with color!* **2.** Of a person or thing, to develop completely. *Amanda was really shy as a kid, but her bubbly personality blossomed out in adulthood. I had a much easier time writing my second novel—the idea for its plot just blossomed out overnight.*

a blot on (one's) escutcheon A stain or mark against one's reputation or that of one's family. An escutcheon was a heraldic shield that bore a family's coat of arms, and thus serves as a metaphor for one's honor. *I was at the top of my class in college, but that narcotics charge will be a blot on my escutcheon for years to come.*

a blot on the escutcheon A stain or mark against one's reputation or that of one's family. An escutcheon was a heraldic shield that bore a family's coat of arms, and thus serves as a metaphor for one's honor. *I was at the top of my class in college, but that narcotics charge will be a blot on the escutcheon for years to come.*

a blot on the landscape Something that is considered unattractive that covers up or otherwise takes away from the value of something attractive. *Although many people say that they want clean energy, they argue that miles of turbines on wind farms are a blot on the landscape.*

blot (one's) copy book To tarnish, damage, or ruin one's reputation by behaving badly or committing some mistake or social transgression. Refers to a child's copy book, the blotting (staining with ink) of which ruins one's

work. Primarily heard in UK. *The local councilor blotted his copy book when it came to light that he had accepted bribes to allow unregulated development projects to go ahead. I really blotted my copy book when I spilled my drink on the visiting dignitary last night.*

blot out 1. To cover something so that it cannot be seen or read. *Be sure to blot out all the other names on this list before you put it in the employee's file.*
2. To prevent something from being noticeable or entering one's awareness. *Your curtains aren't opaque enough to blot out all of the sunlight.* **3.** To avoid thinking about something, often because it is stressful or traumatic. *Many trauma victims try to blot out the horrific things that have happened to them.*
4. To kill someone. *Ray blotted out the informant, just as the boss told him to.*
5. To completely destroy something. *This illness threatens to blot out an entire generation. The fire blotted out all of our belongings.*

blotto(ed) To be extremely drunk, especially to the point of losing consciousness. *I think you should call a cab for Tony—he's looking pretty blotto. It seems like my brother's only goal during college is to go out and get blottoed as often as possible.*

blow a fuse 1. Literally, to suddenly lose power due to an overloaded electrical circuit. *Well, we just blew a fuse—it seems that running the space heater, the coffee maker, and a blow dryer at the same time was not the best idea!* **2.** To react furiously and/or violently to something or someone, to the point of losing control of one's behavior. *Mom totally blew a fuse when I told her I had failed math. Don't blow a fuse, it's just a tiny scratch on the car.*

blow a gasket To react furiously and/or violently to something or someone, to the point of losing control of one's behavior. *Mom totally blew a gasket when I told her I had failed math. Don't blow a gasket, it's just a tiny scratch on the car.*

blow a hole in (something) 1. To point out or expose the flaws in something. *I hate to blow a hole in your argument against relocating, but the cost of living actually isn't that high there.* **2.** To take, use up, or deplete a large amount of money available in something, such as a budget, one's wallet, etc. *The cost of repairing the car is really going to blow a hole in our savings. Tammy's private piano lessons are blowing a hole in my wallet!*

blow a kiss See [blow \(someone\) a kiss](#).

blow a raspberry To make a sputtering noise by pressing the tongue

and lips together. It can be used to express either real or faux contempt, mockery, or displeasure, or as a playful gesture toward babies or young children, who may repeat it. *Jacqueline quickly blew a raspberry at Dave after he made fun of her new haircut. Tara loves hearing her baby boy giggle when she blows raspberries on his tummy.*

blow a strawberry To make a sputtering noise by pressing the tongue and lips together. It can be used to express either real or faux contempt, mockery, or displeasure, or as a playful gesture toward babies or young children, who may repeat it. It is more often called a "raspberry." *Jacqueline quickly blew a strawberry at Dave after he made fun of her new haircut. Tara loves hearing her baby boy giggle when she blows strawberries on his tummy.*

blow away **1.** Of the wind, to blow someone or something away from its current location. *Our trashcans were blown away in that bad storm, and we finally found them down the street in our neighbor's yard. I was almost blown away on my walk to the library because it's so windy out!* **2.** To thoroughly impress, overwhelm, or excite. In this usage, a noun can be used between "blow" and "away." *The show of support from everyone just blew me away. I was blown away by how good that movie was!* **3.** slang To kill someone, especially with gunfire or an explosive device. *Ray blew away the informant, just as the boss told him to.* **4.** To defeat an opponent easily and/or by a wide margin. In this usage, a noun can be used between "blow" and "away." *The final score was 17-1? Wow, we really blew that team away! I have a feeling the top-ranked team is just going to blow away any opponent they face.*

blow away the cobwebs To energize or invigorate oneself. ("Cobwebs" are spider webs that are typically found in abandoned spaces.) *When was the last time you left the house? Come on, get out there and blow away the cobwebs!*

blow brains out See [blow \(one's\) brains out](#).

a blow-by-blow account A very thorough and detailed description of an event or occurrence. *I'm so jealous that you get to go to the gala! I'll want a blow-by-blow account when you get home tonight! Don't bore people with a blow-by-blow account that chronicles every minute of your trip—just give them the highlights.*

blow chance See [blow \(one's\) chance](#).

blow chunks slang To vomit, especially violently or in great amount. *I felt like I was going to blow chunks from seasickness out on that boat.*

blow cool See [blow \(one's\) cool](#).

blow cover See [blow \(one's\) cover](#).

blow doors off See [blow \(one's\) doors off](#).

blow down Of the wind, to blow something to the ground. *That wind today blew down all of the clothes I'd hung on the clothesline. Your hanging flower pots might get blown down in this storm.*

blow him out of the water See [blow \(someone or something\) out of the water](#).

blow him over See [blow over](#).

blow him to See [blow \(one\) to \(something\)](#).

blow him to bits See [blow \(someone or something\) to bits](#).

blow him to kingdom come See [blow \(someone or something\) to kingdom come](#).

blow his load See [blow \(one's\) load](#).

blow his lunch See [blow \(one's\) lunch](#).

blow his mind See [blow \(one's\) mind](#).

blow his nose See [blow \(one's\) nose](#).

blow his own horn See [blow \(one's\) own horn](#).

blow his own trumpet See [blow \(one's\) own trumpet](#).

blow his socks off See [blow \(one's\) socks off](#).

blow his stack See [blow \(one's\) stack](#).

blow his top See [blow \(one's\) top](#).

blow his wad See [blow \(one's\) wad](#).

blow hot and cold To vacillate between two opposing or starkly different states, opinions, or behaviors. A: "So, how are things going between you and Mallory?" B: "Hard to tell. She blows hot and cold one day to the next, so I can never tell how she really feels!" *The boss has been blowing hot and cold about whether or not we're going through with this project. I wish*

she would just make a decision.

blow in(to) **1.** Of the wind, to blow a person or thing inward or into something else. When "into" is used, it is followed by a noun. *The wind is so strong that it keeps blowing in our curtains and knocking things off the windowsills. We had such a hard time walking in that gusty wind that we were almost blown into each other!* **2.** To arrive in a certain place or area after having been carried by the wind. *But if cold air from the north blows in this weekend, that rain will change to snow. The dust storm is going to blow into the city soon. We'd better get indoors.* **3.** Of a person, to arrive suddenly. *Well, Paulina just blew into town, if you want to come over and see her. My brother always just blows in with no warning and expects me to entertain him.* **4.** To expel air into something. *Figuring out how to blow into my saxophone for the first time is something I'll never forget. Blow into that bottle and see what kind of noise it makes.*

blow it slang To ruin, mishandle, or fail to capitalize on an opportunity. *Bob was being considered for the promotion, but he blew it when he came in late to work each day this week. Things were going well with Steve, but I blew it by smothering him.*

blow it out of all proportion See [blow \(something\) out of \(all\) proportion](#).

blow it out your ear rude slang Leave me alone! A: "Yikes, what did you do to your hair?" B: "Oh, blow it out your ear!"

blow it wide open See [blow \(something\) wide open](#).

blow itself out To return to a state of calm after turmoil by its own workings. *Don't worry, the storm will blow itself out eventually.*

blow job slang An act of oral sex performed on a male.

blow me **1.** slang Damn. Primarily heard in UK. *Well, blow me... I can't believe you got an A on that impossible test!* **2.** vulgar slang Although the phrase specifically refers to a request to perform fellatio, it is typically used as an expression of frustration, like "screw you" or "go to hell." A: "Did you seriously strike out every time you went up to bat?" B: "Blow me, OK?"

blow me a kiss See [blow \(someone\) a kiss](#).

blow me down An expression of shock or surprise at something. Often used jocosely and usually preceded by the word "well." *Well, blow me down!*

I never thought I'd see you around these parts again!

blow off **1.** verb Literally, of air, to move something off of a surface. In this usage, a noun can be used between "blow" and "off." *That wind today blew off all of the clothes I'd hung on the clothesline. Thank you so much for blowing the snow off of my car!* **2.** verb, slang To ignore a planned event or responsibility, often to do something frivolous instead. In this usage, a noun can be used between "blow" and "off." *I blew off class this afternoon and went to the mall instead. Tom and I were supposed to go on a date tonight, but he totally blew me off!* **3.** verb To engage in frivolous or unproductive activities. *Stop blowing off and just work on your paper!* **4.** verb To explode off of something, typically due to an increase in pressure that must be released. *If you keep shaking that bottle of soda, the cap is going to blow off!* **5.** verb To voice one's anger or frustration. *I'm sorry to rant like that, but work is so frustrating right now that I needed to blow off a little.* **6.** noun An argument. The phrase is often hyphenated in this usage. *Have you two reconciled after your blow-off last week?* **7.** noun The act of ignoring someone. *I thought our date went well, but he seems to be giving me the blow off now—he hasn't called in days.* **8.** noun The last in a series of recurring offenses or problems that causes one to finally lose patience. The phrase is often hyphenated in this usage. *My mom's catty comments usually annoy me, but when she insulted my husband, that was the blow off!* **9.** noun Something that is very easy to do. The phrase is often hyphenated in this usage. *Come on, these chores are a blow-off—you can get them done in 10 minutes.* **10.** noun One who prioritizes frivolous activities over important or productive ones. The phrase is often hyphenated in this usage. *Stop being such a blow-off and just work on your paper!* **11.** vulgar slang To perform oral sex on a man.

blow off (some) steam To release strong emotions or energy by engaging in some kind of enjoyable, vigorous, or relaxing activity. *I went on a run to blow off steam after our fight. When work gets frustrating, I like to go bowling to blow off some steam.*

blow off the map To obliterate. A noun can be used between "blow" and "off." *Many buildings were blown off the map during the siege. The dictator threatened to blow our country off the map.*

blow on it slang Calm down! *I know you guys are upset, but blow on it! You're going to wake the neighbors!*

blow on (something) To expel air onto something. *Hey, that coffee's piping hot, so blow on it before you drink it. The vent has been blowing on me all morning—I'm freezing! I blew on the dice for good luck.*

blow (one) to (something) slang To pay for something for oneself or someone else. *My date tonight blew me to dinner, which was a nice treat.*

blow (one's) brains out slang To fatally shoot someone in the head. *Ray blew the informant's brains out, just as the boss told him to.*

blow (one's) chance To ruin, mishandle, or fail to capitalize on an opportunity. *I'm sorry, Bob, you blew your chance at a promotion when you decided to come in late to work each day this week. I blew my chances with Steve last night when I ordered the veal. How was I supposed to know he's a vegetarian?*

blow (one's) cool To lose control of one's composure, temper, or nerve in a given situation. *He really blew his cool when the waiter dropped his food. I really blew my cool during the interview.*

blow (one's) cover To expose one's true identity or motives after they had been intentionally concealed (i.e. after one had been "undercover"). *The spy fled when he realized that someone had blown his cover. I totally blew my cover when I stupidly wore my school jacket to steal the other team's mascot.*

blow (one's) doors off slang To drive very quickly past another vehicle. *The truck zoomed past me on the highway and practically blew my doors off.*

blow (one's) load **1.** To lose or spend all of one's money. *My Las Vegas trip was short-lived—I blew my load at the poker table in the first two hours! Here's \$20 for the weekend, don't blow your whole load tonight.* **2.** Of a man, to ejaculate semen during an orgasm. **3.** To lose control of one's composure, temper, patience, or nerve in a given situation. A reference to premature ejaculation, it is usually used in the negative. *Don't blow your load, we'll get there soon. The game is in 30 minutes. I know you're nervous, but stay sharp, don't blow your load now.*

blow (one's) lunch slang To vomit. *I felt like I was going to blow my lunch from seasickness out on that boat.*

blow (one's) mind To extremely impress, overwhelm, or excite one. *The show of support from everyone just blew my mind. I had really low*

expectations for that movie, but it totally blew my mind.

blow (one's) nose To breathe forcefully through the nose to expel mucus into a tissue. *My allergies are so bad right now that I have to blow my nose constantly just to be able to breathe.*

blow (one's) own horn To boast or brag about one's own abilities, skills, success, achievements, etc. *I don't mean to blow my own horn, but this pasta sauce I made is quite delicious! I can't stand being around Marcus ever since his company became such a massive success. The guy just can't stop blowing his own horn!*

blow (one's) own trumpet To boast or brag about one's own abilities, skills, success, achievements, etc. Primarily heard in UK. *I don't mean to blow my own trumpet, but this pasta sauce I made is quite delicious! I can't stand being around Marcus ever since his company became such a massive success. The guy just can't stop blowing his own trumpet!*

blow (one's) socks off To thoroughly impress, overwhelm, or excite one. *The show of support from everyone just blew my socks off. That movie really blew my socks off—I didn't expect it to be so good!*

blow (one's) stack To become very angry, often quickly. *Oh man, dad is going to blow his stack when he sees that I wrecked his car!*

blow (one's) top To become very angry, often quickly. *Oh man, dad is going to blow his top when he sees that I wrecked his car!*

blow (one's) wad **1.** To lose or spend all of one's money. *My Las Vegas trip was short lived—I blew my wad at the poker table in the first two hours! Here's \$20 for the weekend, don't blow your whole wad tonight.* **2.** Of a man, to ejaculate semen during an orgasm. **3.** To lose control of one's composure, temper, patience, or nerve in a given situation. A reference to premature ejaculation, it is usually used in the negative. *Don't blow your wad, we'll get there soon. The game is in 30 minutes. I know you're nervous, but stay sharp, don't blow your wad now.*

blow out **1.** verb To extinguish something (typically a flame) with some form of air, such as breath or wind. *Make a wish and blow out your birthday candles! That huge gust of wind blew out all our tiki torches.* **2.** verb To break or burst suddenly. *I almost lost control of the car when one of the tires blew out on the highway.* **3.** verb, slang To kill someone, typically with

gunfire. *Ray blew out the informant, just as the boss told him to.* **4.** verb To defeat an opponent easily and/or by a wide margin. In this usage, a noun can be used between "blow" and "out." *The final score was 17-1? Wow, we really blew that team out! I have a feeling the top-ranked team is just going to blow out any opponent they face.* **5.** verb To return to a state of calm after turmoil by something's own workings. *Don't worry, the storm will blow out eventually.* **6.** verb To break or explode due to excessive pressure or force. *The vibration of that opera singer's high note blew out a window!* **7.** noun An intense argument or disagreement. In this usage, the phrase is often written as one word. *Our neighbors had a real blowout last night—we could hear them screaming at each other through the walls.* **8.** noun A big, elaborate party. In this usage, the phrase is often written as one word. *Come on, we need to have one last blowout before we graduate from college!* **9.** noun A method of styling one's hair with a blow dryer and a round brush. In this usage, the phrase is often written as one word. *To ensure that my hair would look good for the wedding, I stopped at the salon for a blowout.* **10.** noun An instance of a tire suddenly bursting while the vehicle is being driven. In this usage, the phrase is often written as one word. *I almost lost control of the car when I got a blowout on the highway.* **11.** noun The unchecked, often accidental, release of a substance, such as oil or gas. In this usage, the phrase is often written as one word. *What effects did the oil blowout have on marine life?* **12.** noun An easy victory and/or one by a wide margin. In this usage, the phrase is often written as one word. *The final score was 17-1? Wow, that's really a blowout!* **13.** noun slang An instance of excessive fecal matter not being contained by a diaper. In this usage, the phrase is often written as one word. *I'm sorry I'm late, the baby had a blowout, so I had to give her a bath before dropping her at the sitter's.*

blow over **1.** Literally, of the wind, to topple something or blow it to the ground. In this usage, a noun can be used between "blow" and "over." *Our daughter's playhouse was blown over in that bad storm, and it took two of us to get it upright again! That gusty wind almost blew me over on my walk here!* **2.** To return to a state of calm after turmoil. *Don't worry, the storm will blow over eventually. When you think the tension between mom and grandma will blow over?*

blow raspberries See [blow a raspberry](#).

blow smoke **1.** Literally, to expel smoke from one's mouth, as while

smoking a cigarette, cigar, etc. *Ew, don't blow smoke in my face!* **2.** To smoke marijuana. *My little brother has no aspirations of going to college—he'd much rather blow smoke with his friends all day.* **3.** To intentionally mislead. *I think they're blowing smoke about giving regular raises to their employees—I couldn't find any evidence to support that claim.*

blow (someone) a kiss To kiss the inner part of one's hand and then act as if one is blowing the kiss off to be received by a nearby person. *I blew my wife and daughter a kiss before getting in my car to leave for the airport.*

blow (someone or something) out of the water **1.** To totally defeat or ruin someone or something. The image refers to the explosion of a ship that has been hit by enemy fire. *The final score was 17-1? Wow, we really blew that team out of the water! I planned to be productive today, but a sudden emergency blew that idea out of the water.* **2.** To thoroughly impress, overwhelm, or excite one. *The show of support from everyone just blew me out of the water. That movie really blew me out of the water—I didn't expect it to be so good!*

blow (someone or something) to bits To explode or otherwise destroy something into tiny, fragmentary pieces. *The demolition crew came in and blew the house to bits. The small band of rebels didn't stand a chance; they were blown to bits as soon as the loyalists had them in sight.*

blow (someone or something) to kingdom come **1.** slang To kill someone with gunfire or an explosion. "Kingdom come," a phrase taken from the Lord's Prayer, refers to heaven or the afterlife. *The robber waved his gun and shouted, "Get back, or I'll blow you to kingdom come!"* **2.** slang To destroy something with an explosion. *If we blow these rocks to kingdom come, we should be able to rescue the trapped hikers from the cave.*

blow (something) out of (all) proportion To make something seem more important, negative, or significant than it really is; to exaggerate something or focus unnecessary attention on something. *I'm sure he didn't mean anything by that comment—don't blow it out of proportion. Of course she's mad at me because I didn't call her back—you can always count on my mom to blow something out of all proportion!*

blow (something) sky-high **1.** Literally, to destroy something through an explosion. *The tanks blew the enemy fortress sky-high.* **2.** To undermine or negate something completely. *I thought I had finally discovered*

the problem with our experiment, but, when we tested it, the results blew my theory sky-high. Bob was considered for the promotion, but he blew that idea sky-high when he came in late to work each day this week.

blow (something) to smithereens To break or destroy something into tiny, fragmentary pieces. (Smithereens, first appearing in English in 1829 as "smiddereens," is likely derived from the Irish word "smidirín" or "smidiríní," meaning fragment.) *The demolition crew blew the building to smithereens in a matter of seconds. The typhoon's gale-force winds have been blowing the village to smithereens over the last few days.*

blow (something) up out of proportion To indicate, imply, or argue that something is more important or consequential than it really is; to overinflate the importance of something. *Don't blow this up out of proportion, Bill—I was late due to traffic, and that's it. It's just a small inconvenience, don't blow it up out of proportion and make it sound like the end of the world.*

blow (something) wide open 1. To expose something scandalous or deceptive. *That company's stock price plummeted after the media blew the CEO's embezzlement scandal wide open. An anonymous tip to the police is what blew the theft ring wide open. 2. To make the outcome of a competition hard to predict. *Having so many outstanding teams in the playoffs this year has really blown the field wide open.**

blow the coals To turn a minor issue into a major source of conflict. Likened to coaxing a smoldering flame into a fire by literally blowing on hot coals. *Stop trying to blow the coals! There is no tension between Jen and me—you're imagining it! A: "What went wrong last night?" B: "Well, you know Sue, she just kept blowing the coals until everybody was in an all-out fight."*

blow the coop To leave or escape (something). *This lecture is so boring. Come on, let's blow the coop and go get a drink somewhere! I'm definitely blowing the coop when I turn 18—I can't wait to have a little freedom!*

blow the gaff slang To talk about or reveal a private or secret matter. Primarily heard in UK. *I can't believe you blew the gaff and talked about the plans for her surprise party right to her face! Don't tell your little brother anything you want to keep secret because he'll definitely blow the gaff.*

blow the joint To leave a place, especially one that has become dull or of no use or interest, generally in search of something better. Often preceded

by "let's." *This is boring, let's blow the joint and find something else to do. I graduate in six months, then it's time to blow the joint.*

blow the lid off (something) To expose something to the public, often something scandalous or deceptive. *That company's stock price plummeted after the media blew the lid off the CEO's embezzlement scandal.*

blow the whistle (on) (someone or something) To expose or report something scandalous or deceptive. *That company's stock price plummeted after the media blew the whistle on the CEO's embezzlement scandal. If you keep coming in late, I'm going to have to blow the whistle and report you to the department head.*

blow this hot dog stand To leave a place, especially one that has become dull or of no use or interest, generally in search of something better. Often preceded by "let's," it is a variation of "blow this popsicle stand." *This is boring, let's blow this hot dog stand and find something else to do. I graduate in six months, then it's time to blow this hot dog stand.*

blow this joint To leave a place, especially one that has become dull or of no use or interest, generally in search of something better. Often preceded by "let's." *This is boring, let's blow this joint and find something else to do. I graduate in six months, then it's time to blow this joint.*

blow this pop stand To leave a place, especially one that has become dull or of no use or interest, generally in search of something better. Often preceded by "let's," it is a shortened version of "blow this popsicle stand." *This is boring, let's blow this pop stand and find something else to do. I graduate in six months, then it's time to blow this pop stand.*

blow this popsicle stand To leave a place, especially one that has become dull or of no use or interest, generally in search of something better. Often preceded by "let's." *This is boring, let's blow this popsicle stand and find something else to do. I graduate in six months, then it's time to blow this popsicle stand.*

blow this taco stand To leave a place, especially one that has become dull or of no use or interest, generally in search of something better. Often preceded by "let's," it is a variation of "blow this popsicle stand." *This is boring, let's blow this taco stand and find something else to do. I graduate in six months, then it's time to blow this taco stand.*

blow to See [blow \(one\) to \(something\)](#).

blow to bits See [blow \(someone or something\) to bits](#).

blow to kingdom come See [blow \(someone or something\) to kingdom come](#).

blow up **1.** verb To destroy something through an explosion. *They plan to blow up that old apartment building and replace it with shops and luxury condos.* **2.** verb To explode something. *Our poor dog is hiding under the bed because our neighbors celebrate the Fourth of July by blowing up tons of fireworks.* **3.** verb To inflate. *Can you help me blow up these balloons for the birthday party? I need to blow up one of my bike tires—it's a little flat right now.* **4.** verb To increase in size. *If you can't read the text at this size, I can blow it up a little bit more. For my mom's birthday, I blew up that picture of our entire family at my graduation and gave it to her as a gift.* **5.** verb To lose one's temper in a display of anger. *I'm sorry that I blew up at you like that—work is so frustrating right now that I have no patience left when I get home. Don't blow up at me—I didn't make that mistake!* **6.** verb To become very popular, often suddenly. *I used to think I was the only one who liked that band, but they're really popular at my school now—it's like they blew up overnight.* **7.** verb To make something seem more important, negative, or significant than it really is; to exaggerate something or focus unnecessary attention on something. In this usage, a noun is often used between "blow" and "up." *I'm sure he didn't mean anything by that comment—don't blow it up too much. Of course she's mad at me for not calling her back—you can always count on my mom to blow something up!* **8.** verb To begin suddenly, as of a storm or other windy weather condition. *The storm blew up so quickly that I didn't have a chance to move the patio furniture before it started pouring rain.* **9.** verb To fail or fall apart. *My plans of being productive this weekend blew up when I got really sick on Friday night.* **10.** verb, slang To receive a lot of phone calls and/or text messages in a short period of time. This phrase typically uses the form "blowing up." A: "Wow, you're really blowing up right now." B: "Ugh, it's just this stupid group text. The other people in it text each other every five seconds!" *The senator's phones were blowing up as his constituents called en masse to urge him to vote against the confirmation.* **11.** noun An intense argument or disagreement. In this usage, the phrase is often written as one word. *Our neighbors had a real blowup last night—we could hear them screaming at each other through the walls.* **12.**

noun A larger version of something, such as a photo. In this usage, the phrase is often written as one word. *For her birthday, I gave my mom a poster-size blowup of that picture of our entire family from my graduation.* **13.** noun A failure or collapse. In this usage, the phrase is often written as one word. *The blowup of the management team was another big setback for the fledgling company.*

blow up a storm A compliment said of musicians, namely those who play an instrument that requires blowing (such as the trumpet or saxophone). *I love this jazz club. Did you hear that guy blowing up a storm? What a talent!*

blow up in (one's) face To have a plan go wrong or awry. *Mike was trying to sabotage my campaign, but the plan blew up in his face when I overheard him talking about it. Tina's decision to invest only in technology stocks has really blown up in her face.*

blow up (one's) phone To call someone repeatedly and/or send someone a lot of text messages. A: "Hey, your phone keeps lighting up!" B: "Ugh, I wonder who's blowing up my phone." A: "It's fine, I just texted him a few times." B: "More like 15 times! Stop blowing up his phone!"

blow us out of the water See [blow \(someone or something\) out of the water](#).

blow us over See [blow over](#).

blow wad See [blow \(one's\) wad](#).

blow you a kiss See [blow \(someone\) a kiss](#).

blow your brains out See [blow \(one's\) brains out](#).

blow your chance See [blow \(one's\) chance](#).

blow your cool See [blow \(one's\) cool](#).

blow your cover See [blow \(one's\) cover](#).

blow your doors off See [blow \(one's\) doors off](#).

blow your load See [blow \(one's\) load](#).

blow your lunch See [blow \(one's\) lunch](#).

blow your mind See [blow \(one's\) mind](#).

blow your nose See [blow \(one's\) nose](#).

blow your own horn See [blow \(one's\) own horn](#).

blow your own trumpet See [blow \(one's\) own trumpet](#).

blow your socks off See [blow \(one's\) socks off](#).

blow your stack See [blow \(one's\) stack](#).

blow your top See [blow \(one's\) top](#).

blowing a fuse See [blow a fuse](#).

blowing a hole in See [blow a hole in \(something\)](#).

blowing a raspberry See [blow a raspberry](#).

blowing a strawberries See [blow a strawberry](#).

blowing away See [blow away](#).

blowing away the cobwebs See [blow away the cobwebs](#).

blowing down See [blow down](#).

blowing hot and cold See [blow hot and cold](#).

blowing in See [blow in\(to\)](#).

blowing it See [blow it](#).

blowing it out of all proportion See [blow \(something\) out of \(all\) proportion](#).

blowing it wide open See [blow \(something\) wide open](#).

blowing itself out See [blow itself out](#).

blowing off See [blow off](#).

blowing off the map See [blow off the map](#).

blowing on See [blow on \(something\)](#).

blowing out See [blow out](#).

blowing over See [blow over](#).

blowing sky high See [blow \(something\) sky-high](#).

blowing smoke See [blow smoke](#).

blowing something to smithereen See [blow \(something\) to smithereens](#).

blowing the coals See [blow the coals](#).

blowing the gaff See [blow the gaff](#).

blowing the lid off See [blow the lid off \(something\)](#).

blowing their nose See [blow \(one's\) nose](#).

blowing their own horn See [blow \(one's\) own horn](#).

blowing their own trumpet See [blow \(one's\) own trumpet](#).

blowing to bits See [blow \(someone or something\) to bits](#).

blowing up See [blow up](#).

blowing up Receiving a lot of phone calls and/or text messages in a short period of time. A: "Wow, you're really blowing up right now." B: "Ugh, it's just this stupid group text. The other people in it text each other every five seconds!" The senator's phones were blowing up as his constituents called en masse to urge him to vote against the confirmation.

blown (all) out of proportion Exaggerated or magnified beyond the true scale or truth of the matter. *It was just a minor tremor, not even a proper earthquake, but the media has it blown all out of proportion. These reports on the crime rate are blown out of proportion, if you ask me.*

blown away Thoroughly impressed, overwhelmed, or excited by something. *I am blown away by the show of support from everyone. I was blown away by how good that movie was!*

blown away See [be blown away](#).

blown to smithereens See [be blown to smithereens](#).

blue blood A member of a wealthy, upper-class family or ancestry. *That senator is a blue blood, so of course he doesn't understand the common man's concerns.*

blue book 1. adjective (usually hyphenated) Of or pertaining to a compendium or almanac of statistics and detailed information, as of people, consumer goods, property, etc. *You should always check the blue-book value of a home before you purchase from an independent seller.* 2. noun A compendium or almanac of statistics or detailed information, as of people, consumer goods, property, etc. *The government's blue book lists everyone employed at a federal level. I always check the blue book before making any*

major purchases.

blue chamber A room that all but the owner are forbidden entry into. The term takes its name from the French fable of "Blue Beard," who stores the bodies of his murdered former wives in a locked chamber in his castle. *My wife has something of a blue chamber in the house; it's always locked, and she'll never tell me what's inside.*

blue code of silence An unspoken policy of concealment by police regarding the wrongdoing or illicit activity of other officers. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *I respect the need for the police, but it's hard to trust them completely when so many stories of the blue code of silence come to light.*

blue collar Characteristic of the working class, especially manual laborers. The phrase refers to the collar of a laborer's uniform, in contrast to the "white collar" shirts that typically accompany formal dress. *I come from a blue collar family, so I will always champion the common man's concerns. Blue collar workers have always been an important part of our economy.*

blue devils 1. A period of depression, melancholy, or despondence. *I've had the blue devils a lot recently. I find it hard to get out of bed each day. I had trouble coping with the blue devils after Tom left me.* **2.** An acute attack of delirium resulting from withdrawal or abstinence from alcohol after excessive, prolonged use, especially in the case of alcoholism; known medically as delirium tremens (the "DTs"). *I need a drink really badly, I'm getting the blue devils like crazy. You're going to have to deal with the blue devils if you ever hope to beat your alcoholism.* **3.** Drug slang for depressants. More specifically, the barbiturate amobarbital, which has sedative-hypnotic qualities. *I was so strung out on cocaine, I needed a couple of blue devils to make me feel normal again.*

blue eyed 1. Literally, having blue eyes. *I've always found blue-eyed girls very attractive.* **2.** Having an air or disposition of innocence and/or naïveté, like that of a child. *Don't be so blue eyed, the world is an unforgiving place!*

blue eyed boy An often derogatory term used to describe a man who is respected and treated especially well by an authority figure. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *It was no surprise that Frankie got the promotion. Everyone knows he's the boss's blue eyed boy.*

blue eyed girl An often derogatory term used to describe a woman who

is respected and treated especially well by an authority figure. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *It was no surprise that Stacie got the promotion. Everyone knows she's the boss's blue eyed girl.*

blue film A film that contains graphic sexual content. The use of "blue" to mean lewd or indecent dates from the mid-1800s, though the origin is unclear. *A lot of kids at school got in trouble for trading blue films.*

blue gown 1. A prostitute. The phrase derives from the blue gowns that convicted prostitutes once had to wear in houses of correction. *Those poor blue gowns will have nowhere to turn when they're released, and most likely will end up here again.* **2.** A licensed beggar in Scotland (who traditionally wore a blue gown). *If you don't take this job, you're going to end up a blue gown, begging on the streets!*

blue in the face Showing signs of exhaustion or strain. Often used in the phrase "till (one) (is) blue in the face." *You can complain about it till you're blue in the face, but we're going to your grandmother's whether you like it or not. They are such strange friends. They'll argue till they're blue in the face, then they'll go out to eat and be the best of pals.*

Blue Lives Matter A pro-police term coined in response to the Black Lives Matter movement, which protests against police brutality. (Police officers typically wear the color blue.) *Some of the protesters were holding signs that said "Blue Lives Matter."*

blue moon A long, albeit vague, period of time. Often used in the phrase "once in a blue moon." *I haven't seen you in blue moon, Pete! What are you doing these days?*

blue movie A film that contains graphic sexual content. The use of "blue" to mean lewd or indecent dates from the mid-1800s, though the origin is unclear. *A lot of kids at school got in trouble for trading blue movies.*

blue note A flattened note (lowered in tone by a half step), usually the third or seventh, used especially in blues music. *It's the blue notes that really create the heart-wrenching tones in blues music. The whole song was pretty morose, but then the harmonica player hit a blue note that nearly made me start weeping.*

blue ribbon 1. noun A prize for first place. In contests, the person or thing that wins first place is often awarded a blue ribbon. *Congratulations on*

winning the blue ribbon! It was certainly well-deserved—I never knew pecan pie could taste so good! 2. adjective (often hyphenated) By extension, something that is excellent, or the best of a particular group or category. *Wow, Sharon, this is a blue-ribbon pie—I never knew pecan pie could taste so good!*

blue-sky thinking Thinking that is not limited to commonly accepted norms or beliefs. *Everyone said Einstein was a fool when he was growing up, but his blue-sky thinking led to some of the greatest scientific advances of his time.*

blue state In US general elections, a state that votes by majority for candidates of the Democratic Party. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *This is a firmly entrenched blue state, so Republican campaigners don't waste a whole lot of time or money trying to persuade us.*

blue streak Something that moves very quickly and unceasingly. A: *"Could you follow what Rob said?"* B: *"Not at all. The way he talks a blue streak, I couldn't keep up!"*

blue wall of silence An unspoken policy of concealment by police regarding the wrongdoing or illicit activity of other officers. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *I respect the need for the police, but it's hard to trust them completely when so many stories of the blue wall of silence come to light.*

bluff (one's) way into (something) To gain access to a particular place or thing through deceit. *We tried to bluff our way into the party, but we were immediately recognized as freshmen and told to leave.*

bluff (one's) way out of (something) To escape a negative situation through deceit. *My brother is a good liar, but even he couldn't bluff his way out of that speeding ticket. I bluffed my way out of taking the test by saying I had a bad headache.*

bluff (someone) into (something) To mislead someone into doing something, holding some position, or making some decision, often by making a false promise or lying about the purported consequences or result. *I used to be able to bluff my little sister into cleaning my room, but she's wary now since I never actually give her the candy I promise. Jeff tried to bluff management into giving him a raise by claiming he had several job offers elsewhere.*

bluff (someone) out of (something) To mislead someone in order to take something from them. *I can't believe Jon bluffed me out of ten bucks by claiming he was collecting money for charity.*

blurt out To say something unexpectedly, often at an inopportune time or with the wrong audience (as of a private or secret matter). A noun can be used between "blurt" and "out." *I can't believe you blurted out the plans for her surprise party right to her face! Don't tell your little brother anything you want to keep secret, because he'll definitely blurt it out.*

blush is off the rose Something, someone, or some situation is no longer as exciting, novel, or interesting as it first was, likened to a rose whose color is no longer vibrant or in the most appealing condition. *Everyone had very high hopes for the newly elected senator, but she accomplished little in her first term, and I'm afraid the blush is off the rose at this point. After four years, it just feels like the blush is off the rose in this relationship.*

blush with (an emotion) To have a red face while feeling a particular emotion (which is stated after "with"). *I blushed with embarrassment when the teacher caught me not paying attention in class and yelled at me.*

board out To send a person (usually a child) or animal to live somewhere other than their home temporarily. A noun can be used before or after "out." *I boarded my son out to my parents' house while I was gone on a business trip. I had to board out my dog before my vacation to Hawaii because I was going to be gone for two weeks.*

board up To cover parts of a building (often the windows) with wooden planks. *That hurricane is bearing down on us, so we need to leave town as soon as we finish boarding up the windows. I can't believe someone finally bought that old, abandoned house—it's been boarded up for years.*

board with (someone) To live with someone in a place other than one's home temporarily. *My son will board with my parents while I travel for work.*

boarded up Covered with wooden planks (especially over the windows), as of an abandoned building. *I can't believe someone finally bought that old, boarded up house—it's been empty for years.*

boardinghouse reach A long, awkward reach across a table (and other people) to take food, rather than asking for it to be passed over. It is

considered rude in polite company and thus likened to manners one might find in a boarding house. *What have I told you about using that boardinghouse reach at the dinner table? Pardon my boardinghouse reach—I'll try not to spill anything on you!*

boast about (someone or something) To speak proudly of someone or something, perhaps to an excessive or unwarranted degree. *You're my daughter, and you have such good grades—of course I'm going to boast about you! He keeps boasting about his heroic actions, but he really didn't have that big of a role in the rescue efforts. Jim is boasting about the getting promotion, but the boss hasn't officially awarded it yet.*

bob up 1. Literally, to move up into view above the surface of something. *Otters often bob up in this part of the harbor, so it's a great place to take photographs.* 2. To appear, arise, or come into being quickly and/or unexpectedly. *We thought the meeting was over until several questions bobbed up from the back row. The city is deceptively small, and acquaintances often bob up at the most unexpected places.*

Bob's your uncle A phrase used to emphasize how easily or quickly something can be done. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *All you have to do is combine all of the ingredients in one pot, let it cook, and then Bob's your uncle, dinner is ready!*

bode well for (someone or something) To seem indicative of a favorable outcome. This phrase is often used in the negative to suggest the opposite. *Sunny weather bodes well for our flight leaving on time. Being late to a job interview does not bode well for you getting hired.*

bodice ripper A historical romance novel typically published in the 1970s and 1980s. *Before heading to the beach, Justine grabbed her chair, her sunglasses, and the latest bodice ripper from her bookshelf to read while she relaxed in the sun.*

bodily functions euphemism The normal workings of the body, especially those usually done in private, such as urinating or defecating. *When you have three sons, bodily functions are a common topic of discussion around the house.*

body and soul Fully; totally. *When I met my husband, I just knew, body and soul, that we would end up together—there was not a doubt in my mind. She stayed at the office until one in the morning because she believes in this*

cause body and soul.

body blow **1.** A strong hit to one's body. *Everyone in the audience gasped when the seasoned boxer took a body blow from his opponent and dropped to his knees in agony.* **2.** By extension, a large disappointment or setback. *Olivia's dreams of becoming a professional ice skater took a body blow when she tore a ligament in her right knee. The scandal was a body blow to the politician's career, and he retired to the private sector.*

body check In ice hockey, a form of contact in which one player hits ("checks") another with his body. *That was a heck of a body check! Great job keeping their players out of our end.*

body count **1.** The number of people killed in a particular incident, especially soldiers killed in a military effort. *The body count is uncertain after the earthquake, but we expect the number to rise as rescue efforts continue. The body count in the latest fight against insurgents is the highest yet.* **2.** The number of people who participate or are involved in a given activity or situation. *I have a body count of about 24 people so far, so it looks like we're still waiting for a few more to join the tour.*

body English An often involuntary or unconscious movement of the body to try and manipulate or influence the course of an object that is already in motion. *I always find bowlers' body English humorous, as they contort their bodies to try to will the ball toward the pins.*

body language Any gesture, posture, or movement of the body or face to nonverbally communicate emotions, information, or emphasis. *His voice was calm and steady, but his body language was quite hostile and threatening. Many US presidents develop signature body language that one can easily recognize when they are speaking in public.*

body of water An area of the earth that is covered by water. *The oceans are the largest bodies of water on the planet.*

the body politic The inhabitants of a nation taken together as a political entity. *How do you think the body politic will vote in this election?*

bog down To slow down or burden someone or something. (A bog is an area of wet, muddy ground that it is difficult to walk through.) *Don't bog down your brother with more suggestions—his paper is due tomorrow, so he needs to commit to a topic and just write about it! We were hoping to open*

the restaurant by the holidays, but we've gotten bogged down with regulations and permits.

bog in 1. To eat or commence eating heartily and vigorously; to tuck into one's food. Primarily heard in Australia. *I'm happy so many people could be here for this meal. Now, bog in, everyone! After five hours of working in the sun, we all bogged into our meal in silence.* **2.** To do or undertake something quickly or enthusiastically. Primarily heard in Australia. *If we all bog in, we'll have this shed built in no time.*

bog off Get out of here; go away; get lost. Primarily heard in UK. *Listen, I don't want to buy any, so why don't you just bog off and leave me alone!*

bog standard slang Conventional. Primarily heard in UK. *I just need a bog standard phone—nothing fancy.*

bogged down Burdened or impeded by something. (A bog is an area of wet, muddy land that it is difficult to walk through.) *Try not to get bogged down in the details of this project—we're looking for speed more than accuracy.*

boggle at (something) To gape or gawk at something; to struggle to accept or understand something. *I boggled at the very generous salary offer and hoped it wasn't an error. When my wife surprised me with a new car, I could only boggle at it in our driveway—I couldn't even speak!*

boggle (one's/the) mind To thoroughly overwhelm, confuse, or surprise one. *The show of support from everyone just boggled my mind. The plot of that movie totally boggled my mind—did you understand it?*

bogus check A written order to a bank for a certain amount of funds that has been dishonored, either because such funds are not available or because the given checking account does not exist. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *A lot of bogus checks have been circulating in the area lately, claiming to be from the local university; in reality, they are scams trying to swindle people out of money.*

boil down 1. Literally, to reduce the amount of a liquid in a container through boiling. A noun can be used between "boil" and "down" or after "down." *You'll get a better, more condensed flavor when you boil down the stock. The sauce will thicken when you boil it down.* **2.** To reduce or simplify (something) to the most basic, essential, or fundamental element(s). *Your*

essay is far too long. Please try to cut out any superfluous text and boil it down to about 10 pages. The issue really boils down to whether customers will be willing to pay more for the same product or not.

boil over 1. Literally, of a liquid, to boil so vigorously that it flows out of its container. *If you put too much water in the pot, it might boil over.* **2.** To become extremely intense or out of control, especially after a period or escalation. Usually said of emotions. *Things had been tense between my aunts for months, and those feelings finally boiled over in a yelling match on our family vacation. This protest is in danger of reaching a point where it boils over into a violent confrontation.*

boil (something) away To boil a liquid for so long that it evaporates. *If you don't put the pasta in the pot soon, you will boil all of the water away.*

boil (something) down to (something) To reduce or simplify (something) to the most basic, essential, or fundamental element(s). *Your essay is far too long. Please try to cut out any superfluous text and boil it down to about 10 pages. The issue really boils down to whether customers will be willing to pay more for the same product or not.*

boil (something) out of (something) To use boiling water to clean a substance (such as a stain) from an item. *Do you know if can you boil grass stains out of cotton?*

boil the pot To make a dinner that involves boiling food. Primarily heard in US. *I already boiled the pot, so we can eat shortly. I just need to get all the meat and vegetables onto plates.*

boil up 1. To prepare food in boiling water. A noun can be used between "boil" and "up" or after "up." *I'm just boiling up some pasta for dinner—it will be ready soon.* **2.** To increase in strength and intensity. *Things had been tense between my aunts for a while, but those feelings really boiled up when they were forced to be together for days on our family vacation.*

boil with (an emotion) To express or feel an emotion, typically anger, very intensely. *Things are often tense between my mom and my aunt, so when they had to spend days together on our family vacation, they were soon boiling with anger. When I saw that someone had backed into my new car, I immediately boiled with rage.*

boiling frog A problematic situation that will gradually increase in

severity until it reaches calamitous proportions, such that the people involved or affected by it will not notice the danger until it is too late to act. It is a metaphor taken from an anecdotal parable about boiling a frog, in which a frog placed in boiling water will immediately try to save itself, but one placed in cool water that is gradually brought to a boil will not notice the heat until it is boiled to death. *Drug addiction is often a boiling frog, as many people don't see their addiction as problematic until it has consumed their lives.*

boiling frog syndrome The failure to accept, acknowledge, or act against a problematic situation that will gradually increase in severity until it reaches calamitous proportions. It is a metaphor taken from an anecdotal parable about boiling a frog, in which a frog placed in boiling water will immediately try to save itself, but one placed in cool water that is gradually brought to a boil will not notice the heat until it is boiled to death. *Many environmentalists accuse naysayers of having boiling frog syndrome, not accepting that damage is being done until the earth is polluted beyond repair.*

boiling hot Of an object, the weather, or a living creature, having an extremely hot temperature. The phrase is an often hyperbolic reference to the boiling point of liquids. *I hate July in this part of the country, it's boiling hot down here. Your forehead is boiling hot! I'm taking you to see a doctor.*

boiling mad Furious; extremely angry. The phrase refers to one's "blood boiling," meaning the same thing. *John's views were so ignorant and narrow-minded that I was boiling mad after talking to him.*

boiling point **1.** One's limit in patience, temper, or equanimity, after which one loses control of one's emotions. Likened to the temperature at which a given liquid boils. *I was at my boiling point with the kids last night. All their fighting and shouting drove me crazy!* **2.** The point at which a situation becomes critical, calamitous, or uncontrollable. *Tensions in the region are at their boiling point—full-scale war seems inevitable now.*

bold as brass See [as bold as brass](#).

bold-faced liar One who tells blatantly obvious and/or impudent untruths easily and with little or no attempt to disguise the lie. *Everyone knows he is just a bold-faced liar. It's a wonder anyone believes a thing he says anymore.*

bold-faced lie A blatantly obvious and/or impudent untruth, one in which the liar does not attempt to disguise their mendacity. *Sir, I have never*

done these things of which you accuse me; they are bold-faced lies, and nothing more.

boldly go where no man has gone before To discover new and uncharted territory or do something that no one has done before. Taken from an introductory phrase from the original *Star Trek* television series, "to boldly go where no man has gone before" (changed in later versions of the series, for the sake of political correctness, to "where no one has gone before"). *With this latest drug, scientists are hoping to boldly go where no man has gone before and cure cancer. With the surface of the planet largely documented, one must enter the depths of the sea to boldly go where no man has gone before.*

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bollix up slang To jumble up or ruin something. A noun can be used before or after "up." *Boy, you really bollixed up this report—I'm not sure I can even fix it.*

bollixed up Bungled; messed up; mixed up. *Oh man, the printer really bollixed up this report. The pages are all out of order now, and I think a whole section is missing!*

bolster up 1. To provide someone with emotional support and care. A noun can be used between "bolster" and "up" or after "up." *I always try to bolster up my little girl when she's feeling sad. Stephanie is mourning the loss of her father, so we're all going over to her house tonight to bolster her up.* **2.** To provide something with physical support or reinforcement. A noun can be used between "bolster" and "up" or after "up." *We need to bolster up that painting with another nail before it falls off the wall. I used a wood block to bolster the window up—otherwise, it comes crashing down when you least expect it.*

bolt bucket A vehicle (typically an automobile) or other machine, especially one that is or seems old, broken down, or in poor repair. *I know my car doesn't look like much, but this old bolt bucket will get us across the country without a hitch.*

bolt down **1.** To anchor or fasten something in place, as with bolts. A noun can be used between "bolt" and "down" or after "down." *We need to bolt down the shed before the big storm. If that panel keeps popping up, we're going to need to bolt it down.* **2.** To eat something quickly. A noun can be used between "bolt" and "down" or after "down." *He bolted down his dinner because he was already late for the airport. Savor it a little, will you? Don't just bolt it down!*

a bolt from the blue Something unexpected or surprising. *We always thought of Michael as a life-long bachelor, so it certainly was a bolt from the blue when he returned from his vacation sporting a wedding ring!*

bolt out To leave a location very quickly. *He bolted out the back door after seeing his ex-girlfriend walk into the party. I bolted out of the house when I realized that I was going to be late for my appointment.*

bolt upright **1.** verb To suddenly sit or stand up from a reclining position. *I bolted upright in bed when the phone rang in the middle of the night.* **2.** adjective Very erect in posture. *The teacher instructed us to be bolt upright on the stage during the assembly.*

bomb **1.** adjective slang Excellent; extremely entertaining; of very high quality. (Sometimes used as "the bomb.") *That steak I had at dinner was bomb! I'm not usually a fan of action films, but that one was the bomb!* **2.** verb To fail spectacularly or to a great degree. *Despite all the media hype, the major summer blockbuster bombed on its opening weekend.*

bomb out (of something) To fail spectacularly or to a great degree. *Despite all the media hype, the major summer blockbuster really bombed out. He graduated at the top of his class, but his brother bombed out of college in just one semester.*

bomb (someone or something) out To force someone or something from a location through bombardment with explosives. *Don't worry, sir, we'll bomb them out in our next attack.*

bombard (one) with questions To ask someone a lot of questions,

typically in quick succession. *Every time I come home for the holidays, my mom bombards me with questions about my personal life.*

bombard (one) with (something) 1. Literally, to attack someone repeatedly, as with gunfire or explosives. *The enemy army retreated after we bombarded them with grenades.* 2. By extension, to subject someone to something repeatedly. *Quit bombarding me with pitches and let me set up in the batter's box! Don't bombard your brother with suggestions—his paper is due tomorrow, so he needs to commit to a topic and just write about it! Every time I come home for the holidays, my mom bombards me with questions about my personal life.*

bombed slang Intoxicated. *Do you remember last night at all? You were totally bombed by the time I got to the bar.*

bombed out Destroyed by explosives. *Rebuilding hasn't begun in that neighborhood yet—it's still all bombed out from the siege.*

bon mot A clever or witty retort. *Brett was teased quite often by his peers, but he always responded quickly with a bon mot, causing everyone to erupt into laughter.*

bon viveur A connoisseur of food and wine. Primarily heard in UK. *Janine is such a bon viveur that she would never dream of serving her guests boxed wine at her party.*

bona fide 1. Truthful or sincere. "Bona fide" is a Latin phrase meaning "good faith." *Believe me, this is a bona fide job offer—you can start on Monday.* 2. Genuine or legitimate. *They say this is a bona fide Picasso, but I'm skeptical.*

bone-crunching Extremely fierce, violent, harsh, or of great impact. *There was a bone-crunching collision between the two cyclists on the road. The two teams played a bone-crunching game last night.*

bone-deep Very strongly felt; an inherent part of someone or something. *My interest in photography is bone-deep. It's more than a hobby—it's a part of me. A mother's love for her children is bone-deep.*

bone dry Extremely dry. *Man, it is bone dry out there today—not a bit of humidity in the air. And if that floor is anything less than bone dry when you're done, make sure to put up the signs—we don't need anyone slipping out here!*

bone-idle Extremely lazy. *Can you please get Billy to go to the playground or something? He's just laying around all day, being bone-idle.*

a bone of contention An unresolved problem, dispute, or disagreement. *Jerry leaving his dirty dishes in the sink for days became a bone of contention between him and his roommate.*

bone shaking Violently rattly, unsteady, or jolting. *The band's music is positively bone shaking. These bone-shaking roads of the countryside are little more than uneven paths of dirt and rock. I could barely sleep on that bone-shaking bus ride, it rattled and shook so severely.*

a bone to pick A petty argument or disagreement. *"I have a bone to pick with you," Mary said to her husband. "I want to you stop using my razor!"*

a bone to pick An issue to discuss—typically one that is a source of annoyance for the speaker. *Hey, I have a bone to pick with you! Why didn't you put gas in my car after you borrowed it?*

bone up on (something) To learn more about a particular topic, usually in preparation for something. *I need to bone up on factorials before attempting to teach them on Monday. Be sure to bone up on the key points before the debate.*

boo slang One's romantic partner. Often used as a term of endearment. *I don't have any plans tonight—just staying home with my boo. Come on, boo, are you ready to go yet?*

boo (one) off (the) stage To voice displeasure (by booing) for a performer or performers to the extent that they decide to leave the stage. *Are you sure you want to perform at that rowdy club? The crowd there is known to boo people off the stage.*

boob 1. slang noun A female breast. *The male fascination with boobs will always be beyond my understanding.* 2. noun A stupid, clumsy, or foolish person. *Jeremy can act like such a boob sometimes.* 3. noun A foolish or clumsy mistake or error. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *Aw, don't worry, you just made a bit of a boob, that's all.* 4. verb To make a foolish or clumsy mistake or error. Primarily heard in UK. *I'm afraid I boomed pretty spectacularly in class this morning.*

booby prize An award given to the worst performer in a competition. *Roy would get the booby prize for today's race—I didn't know a person could run*

so slow!

boogie down To go or hurry to some place or event. *I'll boogie down to the store after I finish watching this show.*

boogie on down To go or hurry to some place or event. *I'll boogie on down to the store after I finish watching this show.*

book in To register oneself for something, as at a hotel or some activity. Same meaning as "check in." *Our plane arrives at 9 AM, but we can't book in to our hotel until noon. Remember, we have to book in at the festival or we won't be allowed in.*

book (on) out To leave a location very quickly. *He booked on out the back door as soon as he saw his ex-girlfriend walk into the party. I booked out of the house when I realized that I was going to be late for my appointment.*

book (one) on (something) To reserve a spot for oneself or another on a mode of transportation, such as a train or plane. *My flight was canceled, but someone at the airline was able to book me on another one that leaves today, thank goodness.*

book (one) through To reserve a spot on a mode of transportation, such as a train or plane, for someone traveling to a particular destination (perhaps with several connections along the way). *Sir, I can book you through to Paris from here.*

book up To reserve all available spots or options. A noun can be used between "book" and "up" or after "up." *Well, that hotel is all booked up, so we'll have to look for a room somewhere else.*

boom An exclamation used in conjunction with a decisive or impressive statement or action. *Boom! You can't argue with that logic. Straight flush, I win the pot! Boom.*

boom or bust Resulting in an outcome that will either be very good or very bad. *Many professional athletes face a boom or bust situation early in their career, where they are either drafted to a professional league or don't advance at all. Working in the oil fields is always boom or bust: there's either lots of work for everyone, or hardly any work for anyone.*

boom out 1. To produce a loud sound that bursts forth. A noun can be used between "boom" and "out" or after "out." *The sound of the car engine*

boomed out and made us all jump. **2.** To speak loudly or forcefully. A noun can be used between "boom" and "out" or after "out." *The security guard boomed instructions out at us as we pulled into the parking lot.*

boomerang child An adult child who has resumed living with their parents after previously moving out. *I never planned to be a boomerang child—but then I got laid off.*

boon companion One's close or closest friend, especially someone with whom one enjoys spending time or sharing activities. *My wife and I are also boon companions—we do everything together!*

boost up To hoist someone or something up to a higher point. A noun can be used between "boost" and "up" or after "up." *I boosted up my daughter so that she could get a better view of the giraffes at the zoo. Boost me up so I can spy on them through the window! Boost up that box before it falls.*

boot camp **1.** A camp where military recruits are rigorously trained in combat, physical fitness, military drills, etc. *The military always sounded like a romantic career, but boot camp nearly killed me!* **2.** A training camp for juvenile offenders or troublesome adolescents modeled after military basic training, meant to instill socially acceptable values and behaviors through rigorous disciplinary, physical, and psychological exercises. *Our son was out of control for several years, but after he came back from boot camp, it was like he was a whole new person.* **3.** Any training camp or course that teaches by means of an intensive and immersive environment. *I hear that the computer programming boot camp is full-on, but that you'll come away from it with comprehensive skills in the field.*

boot (someone or something) out To force someone or something to leave a place, usually unceremoniously. *Maria has to get up early tomorrow morning, so she booted us out before 9 PM. When dad got home from his business trip, he booted out the stray dog we'd taken in while he was away.*

boot up To turn on a computer. A noun can be used between "boot" and "up" or after "up." *I think something is wrong with my computer—it's taking a really long time to boot up.*

boots and all With maximum effort or enthusiasm; completely and without restraint. Primarily heard in Australia, New Zealand. *If we set about digging that trench boots and all, then we should be finished before*

lunchtime.

boots on the ground Soldiers who are on active duty and physically present during a combat operation. *Word from the boots on the ground is that the enemy line is beginning to retreat. We need to get more boots on the ground if we want to win this skirmish.*

bootylicious slang Having an ample and attractively shaped buttocks. *It looks like he's out on the dance floor with some bootylicious girl. This dress is so clingy that it will even make a skinny girl look bootylicious!*

booze can An establishment (e.g., a nightclub or bar) that sells or provides alcoholic beverages illegally and/or after hours. *I know a great booze can downtown that only lets you in if you know the password.*

booze (it) up slang To drink a lot of alcohol. *It's my birthday, so I'm definitely boozing it up tonight!*

border (up)on (something) 1. Literally, to be positioned next to something. *France borders upon Spain to the south. That shed definitely borders on our property.* 2. To share similarities with something without being identical to it. *Be careful, some sections of this paper are bordering on plagiarism.*

bore a grudge See [bear a grudge \(against someone\)](#).

bore arms See [bear arms](#).

bore down See [bear down \(on\)](#).

bore fruit See [bear fruit](#).

bore in mind See [bear in mind \(that\)](#).

bore off See [bear off \(of something\)](#).

bore on See [bear \(up\)on \(something\)](#).

bore (one) stiff To cause one to be extremely bored, to the point of distraction, frustration, or irritation. *Today's lecture bored me stiff.*

bore (one) to death To cause one to be extremely bored, to the point of distraction, frustration, or irritation. *Today's lecture bored me to death.*

bore out See [bear out](#).

bore (someone) to tears To bore someone to the point of distraction, frustration, or irritation. *The professor bored the whole class to tears. This*

film bores me to tears.

bore testimony to See [bear testimony to \(something\)](#).

bore the arse off (one) rude slang To cause one to be extremely bored, to the point of distraction, frustration, or irritation. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *Today's lecture bored the arse off me.*

bore the brunt See [bear the brunt \(of something\)](#).

bore the pants off (of) (one) To cause one to be extremely bored, to the point of distraction, frustration, or irritation. *Today's lecture bored the pants off me.*

bore through (someone or something) 1. Literally, to create a hole in an object or material. *You're going to need a special drill to bore through something this thick.* 2. By extension, to penetrate one's inner self or emotions, often in a deeply affecting way. *I had to turn around and look at the mysterious man because his gaze just bore through me.*

bore watching See [bear watching](#).

bore witness to See [bear witness to \(something\)](#).

bored out of (one's) brains Extremely bored to the point of distraction, frustration, or irritation. *I was bored out of my brains listening to that lecture this afternoon.*

bored out of (one's) mind Extremely bored to the point of distraction, frustration, or irritation. *I was bored out of my mind listening to that lecture this afternoon.*

bored out of (one's) skull Extremely bored to the point of distraction, frustration, or irritation. *I was bored out of my skull listening to that lecture this afternoon.*

bored silly Extremely bored to the point of distraction, frustration, or irritation. *I was bored silly listening to that lecture this afternoon.*

bored to tears Extremely bored to the point of distraction, frustration, or irritation. *I was bored to tears listening to that lecture this afternoon.*

boring old fart An older person, typically male, especially one whose views or attitudes are considered boring or old-fashioned. *Ah, don't mind that boring old fart. He's just cantankerous because he isn't up to speed with the way of today's youth. I've fully embraced that I'm going to be a boring old*

fart when I get older.

born and bred Born and raised in a particular place, which has shaped one's personality. *As you could probably tell by his aggressive driving, he's a New Yorker, born and bred.*

born and raised Both born and raised in the same particular place; having lived in one's birthplace through one's adolescence. The phrase implies that one's identity has been shaped by the place. *I may live in California now, but I'm a Texas gal, born and raised!*

born in a barn Uncouth. Uncultured. Most often used in the phrase "were you born in a barn?" *What, were you born in a barn? Wash your hands before dinner!*

born in the purple Born into royalty. Purple is a color traditionally associated with royalty. *Did you see pictures of the latest addition to the royal family? What a sweet little princess born in the purple!*

born on the wrong side of the blanket Born to parents who were not married. *His parents eventually married, but that boy was born on the wrong side of the blanket.*

born out of wedlock Born to parents who were not married. ("Wedlock" is another term for matrimony.) *His parents eventually married, but that boy was born out of wedlock.*

born to (be or do something) Possessing an innate talent or ability in a particular area. *When that young girl walked into the audition and flawlessly belted out a Whitney Houston song without the slightest hesitation, I knew she was born to be a singer. You were born to be an artist, so I don't know why you're wasting your time working on Wall Street.*

born to the purple Born into royalty. Purple is a color traditionally associated with royalty. *Did you see pictures of the latest addition to the royal family? What a sweet little princess born to the purple!*

born under a lucky star Favored by or having extremely good fortune or luck. *Janet found a fantastic job as soon as she finished college; I guess she was just born under a lucky star. That bus almost hit you! You must have been born under a lucky star to come out unscathed.*

born with a caul on (one's) head Lucky. The "caul," part of the fetal membrane that is sometimes present on the head of a newborn baby,

was previously viewed as a magical symbol of protection. *I can't believe you walked away from that car accident without a scratch! You must have been born with a caul on your head!*

born with a silver spoon in (one's) mouth To be born into a wealthy family. *We may both be wealthy now, but I was not born with a silver spoon in my mouth. I had nothing when I was young, and all of my fortune is down to my own hard work. Everyone who attends that university was born with a silver spoon in their mouth, so I just don't think it's the right place for me.*

born within the sound of Bow bells Refers to those who have a cockney accent. If you are "born within the sound of Bow bells," you are born near St. Mary-le-Bow Church in London's East End. Primarily heard in UK. *I have no idea what she said. I guess it's because she was born within the sound of Bow bells, and I can never quite understand a cockney accent.*

born yesterday Extremely naïve, gullible, or unintelligent, like a newborn baby. Almost always used in the negative or as a rhetorical question. *Don't think you can fool me with that old ruse, I wasn't born yesterday, you know. Of course I know that major political issues can't be fixed overnight. Do you think I was born yesterday?*

borrow from (someone or something) 1. Literally, to use something that belongs to another person, with the intent to return it later. A noun can be used between "borrow" and "from." *Because I found a date to the dance at the last minute, I just borrowed a dress and shoes from my sister. I ran out of art supplies so I had to start borrowing from Steve.* 2. Of a work of some kind, to use elements from something else. *That movie may be a comedy, but its plot borrows from crime films of the 1940s.*

borrow trouble To do something that is unnecessary and likely to cause problems later. *That kid isn't bullying you, so if you tattle on him to the teacher, you're definitely borrowing trouble.*

borrowed time An uncertain length of time that may end soon or suddenly, bringing any activity, situation, or fortunes associated with it to an end as well. Usually refers to the final period of one's life, in the form "living on borrowed time." *In the scope of the planet's history, human existence is a tiny blip and unlikely to last forever—just borrowed time, really. Accidents and disease can strike so unexpectedly that it feels like we're all living on*

borrowed time.

borscht belt The resort area of the Catskill Mountains in upstate New York once predominately patronized by American Jews. Borscht is a type of soup that originated in Eastern Europe. *A lot of Jewish comedians got their start playing the Borscht Belt in upstate New York.*

bosom buddy One's close or closest friend; a friend one holds dear to one's heart. *We grew up right next door to each other, so we have been bosom buddies since we were kids.*

bosom friend One's close or closest friend; a friend one holds dear to one's heart. *We grew up right next door to each other, so we have been bosom friends since we were kids.*

bosom pal One's close or closest friend; a friend one holds dear to one's heart. *We grew up right next door to each other, so we have been bosom pals since we were kids.*

boss (one) around To tell one what to do. This phrase is often used to emphasize someone's behavior as controlling and/or unwarranted. *You can't boss me around just because mom isn't here! My friend at work got promoted, so now he thinks he can boss me around.*

bossyboots Someone who is bossy or controlling. *Josh is such a bossyboots, always trying to micromanage my every move.*

botch up rude slang To jumble up or ruin something. A noun can be used before or after "up." *Boy, you really botched up this report—I'm not sure I can even fix it.*

both feet on the ground Firmly grounded in a realistic, pragmatic mindset regarding one's or others' ideas, ambitions, plans, or goals. *It's great that you are so intrepid in your entrepreneurship, but you have to keep both feet on the ground or you could end up losing everything. I never worry about our eldest daughter's future. She has both feet firmly on the ground.*

both sheets in the wind Severely intoxicated from alcohol, to the point of finding control of one's actions or coordination difficult. Taken most likely from nautical terminology, in which a "sheet" is the rope that controls the sails of a tall ship; if several sheets are loose or mishandled, the boat's movement becomes unsteady and difficult to control, like that of a drunk person. *On his 21st birthday, Jeff's friends took him to every bar in town until*

he was both sheets in the wind.

bother about (something) To expend one's energy considering or addressing some issue. Often used in the negative to convey the opposite. *Oh, don't bother about that commotion—things are always falling off the shelves in our basement.*

bother (one's) (pretty little) head about (something) To worry or concern oneself with something. Often used in the negative to encourage someone not to worry. When the adjectives "pretty little" are used before "head," the phrase can become patronizing or derisive. *I think this issue will resolve itself quickly, so I'm not going to bother my head about it. Oh, don't you bother your pretty little head about the chaos in the kitchen—go back to watching TV.*

bother with (someone or something) 1. To expend one's energy addressing a particular person or issue. Often used in the negative to convey the opposite. *Don't bother with Billy—he just doesn't care about his grades, and no rewards, threats, or suggestions have helped. Oh, don't bother with all that stuff, I'll put it away.* 2. To irritate someone by involving them in a particular issue. In this usage, a noun or pronoun is used between "bother" and "with." *He needs to stop bothering me with these complaints about the computer system because there's nothing I can do to fix the problem.*

bottle it To lose one's nerve, courage, or resolve to undertake something. Primarily heard in UK. *I wanted to ask Steve on a date, but I bottled it at the last minute.*

bottle of Dog A bottle of brown ale, specifically the brand Newcastle Brown Ale. Colloquial to the Geordie dialect (of the larger Tyneside region of North East England), "dog" refers to the euphemistic phrase "seeing a man about a dog," often meaning going and buying a drink. Primarily heard in UK. *I've a thirst on me for a bottle of Dog, if you please.*

bottle out To lose one's nerve, courage, or resolve to undertake something. Primarily heard in UK. *I wanted to ask Steve on a date, but I bottled out at the last minute.*

bottle (something) away 1. Literally, to put and store inside a bottle, as a liquid. *I've started bottling away some of my own homemade beer, since it's actually cheaper than buying it from a store. A lot of people began bottling water away during the Y2K panic.* 2. To hold onto something inside

and keep it from being expressed or released openly, especially thoughts or emotions. *If you bottle your anger away, it will only grow worse, and soon, you won't be able to contain it. Please talk to me, don't bottle away your emotions like that!*

bottle up **1.** Literally, to put and store inside a bottle. A noun can be used between "bottle" and "up" or after "up." *I've started bottling up some of my own homemade jam, since it's actually cheaper than buying it from a store. A lot of people began bottling water up during the Y2K panic.* **2.** To hold onto something inside, especially an emotion, and keep it from being expressed or released openly. A noun can be used between "bottle" and "up" or after "up." *If you bottle your anger up, it will only grow worse, and soon you won't be able to contain it. Please talk to me, don't bottle up your emotions like that*

bottom bitch slang The prostitute who is the top in a hierarchy of prostitutes. Primarily heard in US. *Because I'm the pimp's bottom bitch, I have a lot more responsibility than these other girls.*

bottom drawer A young woman's collection of household items to use in her home after marriage. Primarily heard in UK. *Sarah collected linens and sheets for her bottom drawer in anticipation of her new life as a married woman.*

bottom edge **1.** noun In cricket, a strike of the ball on the bottom edge of the bat (the edge closest to the ground), such that the ball is deflected directly toward the ground. *That was an unlucky bottom edge for the batsman, as the ball bounced back into his own wicket.* **2.** verb In cricket, to strike the ball with the bottom edge of the bat (the edge closest to the ground), such that the ball is deflected directly toward the ground. *The batsman bottom edged the ball back into his own wicket.*

bottom falls out A phrase used to describe something that ends or goes away abruptly. *Work quickly to close that deal—the boss will be furious if the bottom falls out at the last minute.*

bottom feeder **1.** Someone who occupies or advances him- or herself from the lowest position in society, politics, business, etc., by taking advantage of the misfortunes or dregs of others. Likened to fish or other animals that feed on refuse at the bottom of a body of water. *Money lenders are often considered the bottom feeders of the financial world. Political pundits are all just bottom feeders in my eyes.* **2.** Any person of low,

despicable, or dubious social status. *This is an ugly part of town; it's full of drug dealers and bottom feeders. Jerry's just a bottom feeder: he won't get a job, so he just mooches off us every day.*

the bottom fell out of (something) The value of something reached a lower point or collapsed entirely. *Once the bottom fell out of the housing market, I knew I'd be stuck with a bad investment—or sell the house for a significant loss.*

bottom hand In cricket, the batsman's dominant hand, which maintains a grip at the lower part of the bat's handle and thus provides the most power in a swing. *It's not often you see batsmen who can switch up their bottom hand like that.*

the bottom line **1.** Literally, the final figure on a statement showing a person or company's total profit or loss. *What is the bottom line for this quarter?* **2.** By extension, the most important aspect of something. *You have all made compelling arguments, but the bottom line is that we need a viable, cost-effective solution, and I still don't think we've found one yet.* **3.** Profit or the desire for profit as an ultimate goal. *These large corporations are only driven by the bottom line. They couldn't care less whether their product is durable.*

bottom of (one's) heart An expression of sincerity, usually appearing in the phrase, "from the bottom of my heart." *I truly mean what I said! From the bottom of my heart! I think she really does love him—from the bottom of her heart.*

bottom of the bag The last of one's ready or available ploys or tricks. The "bag" is one's figurative "bag of tricks." *I'm at the bottom of the bag—do you have any suggestions for how to get out of this situation?*

the bottom of the barrel The cheapest, worst, or lowest quality. Used to describe an item in a range of comparable products. *I know we need to save money, but this bottom-of-the-barrel computer barely even works. Our washing machine broke down after just two months of use, but that's what we get for buying the bottom of the barrel.*

bottom of the line The cheapest, worst, or lowest quality. Used to describe an item in a range of comparable products. *I know we need to save money, but this bottom-of-the-line computer barely even works. Our washing machine broke down after just two months of use, but that's what we get for*

buying the bottom of the line.

bottom of the ninth The final and critical moment or moments of a tense, important, or desperate situation. It refers to the ninth inning of baseball, the "bottom" of which is batted by the home team as their last chance to win the game. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *It came down to the bottom of the ninth, but I managed to finish my report in time for the big meeting.*

bottom out 1. To reach a lower point or collapse entirely. *Once the housing market bottomed out, I knew I'd be stuck with a bad investment—or sell the house for a significant loss* Doctor, her blood pressure just bottomed out, and she collapsed. **2.** Of a car, for the undercarriage to touch the ground. *Be careful driving over those raised pothole covers—you don't want to bottom out.*

bottom the house antiquated To thoroughly clean every part of a house, i.e., from "top to bottom." *Every time we visited my elderly aunt, she told us to help her "bottom the house," as if we were her maids.*

a bottomless pit 1. A person who is always hungry. *Her teenage son was like a bottomless pit as he devoured every last bit of food in the house.* **2.** A situation that requires a seemingly endless amount of money or resources. *With all the money and time we've sunk into repairs for the roof, windows, and foundation, this house has become a bottomless pit.*

bottoms up A cheerful phrase or toast said before taking a drink. *Ooh, that drink looks delicious—bottoms up!*

bought the farm Died. *Did you hear that old Walt bought the farm? What a shame—at least he got to spend 92 years on this earth.*

bougie slang A derisive term for transparently or suspiciously ostentatious behavior of a lower- or middle-class person. A shortened form of "bourgeois." *She leased an Escalade because she's totally bougie and wants everyone to think she has money. You'll never catch a bougie girl combing through the racks at a secondhand store—only the best for her!*

bounce along 1. Of an object, to move with repeated hops or bounces into the air. *The rubber ball bounced along the floor and then rolled into the wall.* **2.** Of a person, to move with a noticeably cheerful demeanor. *He's been bouncing along ever since his crush agreed to go on a date with him.*

bounce around **1.** Of an object, to move erratically with repeated hops into the air. *The rubber ball bounced around before finally rolling into the wall.* **2.** Of a person, to move or change between several different things, such as jobs or places. *Well, since I graduated from school, I've just been bouncing around, working any job I can get. That player has bounced around a lot in his short career—in three years, he's already been on five teams!* **3.** To discuss something with other people by mentioning it informally, in passing, or at various times. In this usage, a noun can come between "bounce" and "around." *I bounced around the idea of becoming an actress with many people before discussing it with my parents. Hey, let's bounce your idea around the office to see if anyone wants to join our team.* **4.** To circulate widely. *News of my suspension sure bounced around fast—the whole school already knows about it.*

bounce back **1.** Of an object, to return to its starting point by bouncing. *I threw the rubber ball against the wall and caught it when it bounced back to me.* **2.** Of a person, to recover from a setback. *The doctors expect her to bounce back and make a full recovery. Kids are resilient, so I'm sure your daughter will bounce back from that scary incident.*

bounce off (of) (someone or something) **1.** Of a thing, to deflect or reflect off of a surface. *I caught the rubber ball when it bounced off the wall. The light bouncing off of that mirror is blinding me—can we close the curtains?* **2.** Of a person, to tell something to someone in order to solicit feedback about it. In this usage, a noun comes between "bounce" and "off." *I bounced the idea of becoming an actress off of my friends before discussing it with my parents. Hey, can I bounce something off of you guys?*

bounce off the walls To be very active and energetic to the point of hyperactivity. *How much sugar did you give the kids? They're bouncing off the walls!*

bounce out **1.** Of an object, to come out of a container or place in a bouncing motion. *The ball bounced out of the net.* **2.** To force someone out of something, such as a particular job or place. *Did you hear that the CEO was bounced out by the board of directors?*

bounce (something) back and forth **1.** Literally, for two or more people to bounce something, typically a ball, between them. *It's nice to see the kids out in the backyard bouncing a ball back and forth.* **2.** To discuss

something. *I bounced the idea of becoming an actress back and forth with many people before discussing it with my parents.* **3.** To consider or change between several options. In this usage, a noun is not usually used between "bounce" and "back and forth." *No, I haven't settled on a college yet—I'm still bouncing back and forth between a few options.*

bounce up and down To hop up and down. *The kids started bouncing up and down when they heard school was closed for the day.*

bounced check A written order to a bank for a certain amount of funds that has been dishonored because such funds are not available in the account in question. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *The bank notified me of several bounced checks that my husband has been writing around the country.*

bound and determined Very focused and devoted to completing a particular task or goal. *My brother has been practicing all summer because he's bound and determined to make the basketball team this year. I am bound and determined to lose weight, so please don't bring any sweets into the house.*

bound for (somewhere or something) Moving toward a particular destination or outcome (which is state after "for"). *Sorry I'm late, I accidentally got on a train bound for the city and then had to come all the way back to the suburbs. Alice is such a talented young coder that I just know she's bound for greatness.*

bound hand and foot **1.** Literally, having one's hands and feet tied together. *In the movie, the security guards were all bound hand and foot so that they couldn't sound the alarm.* **2.** By extension, feeling trapped in a daunting situation. *I graduated from college and found myself bound hand and foot to debt that I won't be able to pay off for years.*

bound her over See [bind over](#).

bound one together See [bind \(someone or something\) together](#).

bound to (be or do something) Apt or likely to do something. *We all thought that Doug was bound to be an artist, so we were very surprised when he became a trader on Wall Street.* A: "Do you think it will rain today?" B: "It hasn't rained for weeks, so it's bound to."

bound up See [bind up](#).

bound up in (something) Fully immersed in or preoccupied with something. *I'm going to stay late at the office tonight because I'm bound up in researching this case. I haven't seen Kate in a while because she's bound up in play rehearsals.*

bound up with (someone or something) 1. Preoccupied with someone or fully immersed in something. *I haven't seen Lily and Dave in a while because they're bound up with their new baby. I'm going to stay late at the office tonight because I'm bound up with researching this case.* 2. Linked or connected to something else. *Unfortunately, when you have roommates, your mood is bound up with theirs—a miserable roommate can make you miserable too.*

bow and scrape To be submissive, especially when faced with an authority figure. *I think that management sees us all as lowly workers who should bow and scrape to them.*

bow before (someone) To obey, pledge allegiance, or submit one's will to someone, especially in a reverential or servile manner. *My allegiance is to my own country; I'll never bow before you! The autocratic CEO all but makes his employees bow before him.*

bow down before (someone) To obey, pledge allegiance, or submit one's will to someone, especially in a reverential or servile manner. *My allegiance is to my own country; I'll never bow down before you! The autocratic CEO all but makes his employees bow down before him.*

bow down to (someone) To obey, pledge allegiance, or submit one's will to someone, especially in a reverential or servile manner. *My allegiance is to my own country; I'll never bow down to you! The autocratic CEO all but makes his employees bow down to him.*

bow out To resign from a competition or election. *The candidate bowed out after news of his scandal went public. I'm afraid I must bow out, gentlemen. Please continue the game without me.*

bow out of the running To resign from a given competition or election. *After the scandal became public, he was obliged to bow out of the running.*

bow to (one's) demands To submit to or accept another person's demands. *You need to grow a spine. You can't just bow to your boss's*

demands every time!

bow to (someone or something) To obey, pledge allegiance, or submit one's will to someone or something, especially in a reverential or servile manner. *My allegiance is to my own country; I'll never bow to another government! The autocratic CEO all but makes his employees bow to him.*

bow to the porcelain altar To vomit into a toilet, usually as the result of drinking excessive amounts of alcohol. Doing so often requires one to kneel in front of or bend over the toilet (the "porcelain altar"), a position that is likened to kneeling before or bowing to a sacred idol. *I bet that if Tommy doesn't stop drinking, he'll bow to the porcelain altar all night. I've never thrown up so much in my life. I can't wait till I stop bowing to the porcelain altar.*

bowl of cherries Wonderful; very pleasant. Typically used in the metaphoric expression, "life is (not) just a bowl of cherries." *I got a promotion and got engaged in the span of a week! Life is just a bowl of cherries these days!*

bowl over 1. Literally, to collide with and force someone or something to fall to the ground. A noun can be used between "bowl" and "over" or after "over." *When they were reunited at the airport, my daughter leapt into her boyfriend's arms and bowled him over. It seems that the wind has bowled over all of our trashcans.* 2. To thoroughly shock, impress, or overwhelm. A noun can be used between "bowl" and "over" or after "over." *My daughter was totally bowled over when her boyfriend returned from his business trip early and showed up at her birthday party. The show of support from everyone just bowled me over.*

bowl (someone) a googly To present someone with a question, situation, or piece of information that is surprising or unexpected. Taken from cricket, in which a "googly" is a ball thrown counter to that which the batsman expects. Primarily heard in UK. *Dave really bowled me a googly when he asked if I'd like to go on a date with him. The manager bowled us a googly by announcing we'd have this Friday off.*

bowl up To add a substance that can be smoked to the bowl of a pipe. *I just carry this pipe to evoke the air of Sherlock Holmes—I never actually bowl up.*

Box and Cox Two people who always miss each other and thus are never

together. The phrase comes from the 19th-century story of the same name, in which two men named Box and Cox rent the same room at different times of day. *Since I've been on night work all week, Irene and I are like Box and Cox these days, constantly missing each other. I hope to actually spend time with her over the weekend!*

box clever To act skillfully and cunningly or deceitfully to achieve a desired outcome. Primarily heard in UK. *The principal is already on to you, so you're going to have to box clever to avoid a suspension.*

box in 1. To physically block and thus prevent someone or something from moving from a certain spot. A noun can be used between "box" and "in" or after "in." *Well, I guess I'm not leaving yet because that van is boxing in my car.* 2. To limit one's options or cause one to feel restricted or stuck. A noun can be used between "box" and "in" or after "in." *I'm a very versatile performer—don't just box me in as a comedic actress.*

box office 1. The place where one may purchase tickets to a performance, such as a film, play, concert, etc.; usually located within the venue. *You can purchase your tickets online, but if you'd like to pay in cash, you can buy them at our box office.* 2. A show's or performance's overall financial success as measured by ticket sales, usually used in the form "at the box office." *Though it was critically acclaimed as the summer's best movie, it didn't do very well at the box office.*

box-office bomb A film that performs very poorly in ticket sales, earning less than the cost of production. *After its third box-office bomb in a row, the film studio was forced to close down.*

a box on the ear A physical blow struck on or around the ear, usually as a punishment or reprimand for some behavior. *Mom gave me a box on the ear when I arrived home late.*

box (one's) ears To hit someone. This now-outdated phrase is usually said as a vague threat. *The next time you borrow my car without my permission, I'll box your ears!*

box (oneself) into a corner To create a predicament or unpleasant situation for oneself whereby there are no or very few favorable solutions or outcomes. *I really boxed myself into a corner by leaving this essay till the last minute! The candidate boxed himself into a corner during the debate, having to take back several things he'd already said.*

box score **1.** In sports, especially baseball or basketball, a record that breaks down the scores, players, and statistics of two teams in a given game. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *Make sure you get your hands on the box score after the game—it will help you write a much better article than relying on memory alone.* **2.** By extension, a thorough and detailed rundown of an event, action, or situation. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *My boss asked me to prepare a box score for our earnings this quarter.* **3.** Military slang for a record of the number of dead, wounded, or missing soldiers at a given point in time. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *The box score over the past month shows that we experiencing less casualties than this time last year.*

box seat A seat at a theater or stadium that is set off by walls from the rest of the audience and is usually fixed at a higher price or reserved for important attendees. *My uncle said he'll let me use his box seat for the opera tomorrow night.*

box (someone) into a corner To create a predicament or unpleasant situation for someone whereby there are no or very few favorable solutions or outcomes. *You're going to box me into a corner if you give me another assignment—I won't be able to finish any of them! The senator's opponent boxed him into a corner during the debate, forcing him to take back several things he'd already said.*

box the compass **1.** To count off all 32 points of a compass in a clockwise order. *Sailor! Box the compass for me, posthaste!* **2.** To completely reverse one's position or stance on something, such an issue, belief, argument, etc. *After seeing so much evidence regarding climate change, I was forced to box the compass.*

box up **1.** Of a person, to force to be in a small or confining space. A noun can be used between "box" and "up" or after "up." *Now that Jenny is off at college, can I move into her bedroom? I'm sick of being boxed up in my tiny room. I always take the stairs because I hate boxing myself up in an elevator.* **2.** To pack objects into a box. A noun can be used between "box" and "up" or after "up." *I am in the process of boxing up my entire house for a cross-country move. Please be careful when you box those dishes up.*

boxed in **1.** Unable to physically move from a certain spot due to being blocking by something. *Well, I guess I'm not leaving yet because my car is*

boxed in. **2.** Restricted or feeling stuck due to one's limited options. *I'm a very versatile performer, but I've been boxed in as a comedic actress by the studio.*

boxed on the table slang Died in surgery. *We did everything we could, but the patient boxed on the table.*

boy howdy An expression said when one is excited, pleased, or pleasantly surprised. *A lot of people sure came to the fundraiser, boy howdy!*

boy in the boat A woman's clitoris, so euphemized for its placement between the labia minora resembling a person within a small boat.

boy oh boy An expression said when one is excited, pleased, or pleasantly surprised. *A lot of people sure came to the fundraiser, boy oh boy! Boy oh boy, that was a delicious birthday cake!*

boy toy A young man who is in a sexual relationship with an older woman. Primarily heard in US. *Heather is having too much fun with her new boy toy to get involved in a serious relationship.*

boy toy A younger man who has sexual or romantic interactions with an (often) appreciably older woman, especially in a superficial or non-committal relationship. *After her divorce, the actress was seen with several boy toys around town. Helen's boy toy stays over at her manse because she refuses to set foot in his frat house on campus.*

(boy,) am I glad to see you! Said when one is happy or relieved by another person's arrival. *Boy, am I glad to see you! Can you please help me with the kids? Am I glad to see you! I can't believe my car died tonight—thank you so much for coming to get me.*

(Boy,) is my face red! An exclamation of acute embarrassment or mortification. *I can't believe I was calling my date by the wrong name all night. Boy, is my face red! I spent so long on that report, only for it to be laughed at by everyone in class. Is my face red!*

boys and girls When not used to address children, a familiar and/or diminutive version of "ladies and gentlemen," i.e., everyone who is present. *Boys and girls, we're going to conduct a quick survey on your experience with us today, if that's all right. Okay, listen up boys and girls: we only have three hours to complete this project, so let's get to work.*

boys and their toys An expression implying that grown men have a greater tendency than women to be preoccupied with or drawn to mechanical

objects, such as cars, gadgets, power tools, etc. *John spends every Saturday out working on his car. Boys and their toys, am I right?*

boys will be boys A phrase of resignation used when boys get into trouble or are stereotypically reckless or rowdy. *When my sons tracked mud all through the house, I had to remind myself that boys will be boys. A: "Aren't you upset that they got into that brawl?" B: "Oh, boys will be boys."*

brace of shakes Instantly, quickly, or in an extremely short amount of time, as of a task or event. "Brace," taken from the old French for the arms' breadth from hand to hand, means twice; the phrase as a whole refers either to an old nautical term, meaning the time it takes the sail to shake twice as it takes up the wind, or else the short time it takes to shake a dice-box twice. Often used in the phrase "in a brace of shakes." *I'll have that ready for you in a brace of shakes. We'll be there in a brace of shakes.*

brace (oneself) for (something) To physically or mentally prepare oneself for something, typically something that is imminent, in an attempt to limit any adverse impact. *I braced myself for that big bump by holding onto the seat in front of me. I had braced myself for rejection, so hearing that I'd gotten the promotion was a very pleasant surprise!*

brag about (someone or something) To boast about someone or something, perhaps to an excessive or unwarranted degree. *I can't stand being around Marcus ever since his company became such a massive success. The guy just can't stop bragging about it! You're my daughter, and you have such good grades—of course I'm going to brag about you!*

bragging rights The authority and freedom to boast or brag of one's achievements that comes from having won a contest or succeeded in some way, especially against a close rival. *The game matters little to either team's statistics, but it will ensure bragging rights for the rest of the year.*

brain box Someone who is regarded as highly intelligent. *Kevin is such a brain box that he memorized pi to a hundred decimal places.*

brain bucket 1. A helmet to protect the head and brain, as worn by (e.g.) skateboarders, motorcyclists, soldiers, etc. *It may not be fashionable, but if you wear your brain bucket when you ride your motorcycle, it may just save your life. We've experienced a lot of heavy fire in this region, so all soldiers are required to wear their brain buckets at all times in the field.* 2. A dated term for one's skull. *She received a knock to her brain bucket after she*

slipped on the stairs.

brain candy Entertainment that is pleasant, enjoyable, and appealing to a broad audience but not intellectually stimulating or demanding. *The play won't make you think too hard about the meaning of life or the human condition, but it's a nice little piece of brain candy all the same.*

brain cramp A momentary mental lapse in attention, memory, understanding, care, or competence. *Sorry boss, I just had a little brain cramp there. What were you saying again? Jack, having a bit of a brain cramp, accidentally sawed the beam completely in two.*

brain drain The loss of educated and skilled workers to other locations, often ones that provide better financial compensation or job opportunities. *The state has some of the nation's best universities, but it suffers from brain drain as graduates often flee to find more lucrative job opportunities elsewhere.*

brain fart colloquial A momentary mental lapse in attention, memory, understanding, care, or competence. *Sorry boss, I just had a little brain fart there. What were you saying again? Jack, having a bit of a brain fart, accidentally sawed the beam completely in two.*

brain (someone) To strike or assault someone violently and severely, typically on the head. *He warned me that he was going to brain me if I didn't stop insulting him. The lump on my head is from when a box fell off a shelf and brained me yesterday.*

brain surgeon Someone who is extremely intelligent and adept, usually used in a negative or rhetorical manner to indicate the opposite. *You don't have to be a brain surgeon to use this device. Can I fix the computer? What do I look like, a brain surgeon?*

brain surgery A task requiring extreme intelligence, skill, or competence, usually used in a negative or rhetorical manner to indicate the opposite. *Just follow the directions as they're written—it isn't brain surgery.*

brain trust A group of experts who are chosen to be advisors to a person in power and aid in making important decisions. *All politicians need a brain trust to help guide them through the campaign process and stay informed of the important issues facing their constituency.*

the brains behind (something) The person responsible for a

certain plan or idea. *Sheila is the brains behind our new environmental initiative, so she deserves all the credit. I wonder which of my enemies is the brains behind this latest rumor about me.*

brains out An intensifier that follows an action verb to indicate that the action is or will be done to the utmost degree. Commonly heard in the phrases "beat (one's) brains out" and "blow (one's) brains out." *I'm not going into that haunted house—the kids in there already are screaming their brains out! I'm worried that the captain of the football team will beat my brains out if he finds out that I'm secretly seeing his girlfriend.*

brainwash (someone) with (something) To intentionally alter someone's thoughts or beliefs by using a particular idea or method (that is stated after "with"). *Commercials brainwash us with subliminal messages that make us go out and buy stuff. The cult leader brainwashed his followers with increasingly distorted information.*

brainwave A sudden idea or moment of inspiration; a brainstorm. *I had a brilliant brainwave last night about how we could end world hunger.*

branch off To split or move away from something. *Don't worry, you can stay on Main Street for now—the street you need to turn on to branches off of Main Street. The subclavian artery branches off from the aorta.*

branch out 1. To split or move away from something. *The subclavian artery branches out from the aorta. 2.* To grow out from a tree trunk or limb, as of a tree branch. *I'm pretty sure the limb that fell in our yard branched out from your tree. 3.* To explore something new; to widen one's interests or scope of expertise. *You're a great student, honey, but I would really like for you to branch out and try a sport this year. Paul used to only be interested in still photography, but he's branching out and shooting movies now.*

brand new Completely new and unused. The word "brand" here comes from Old English for fire or flame; thus, something that is brand new is likened to that which is forged in—and fresh out of—fire. *I bought Jim a brand-new computer for his birthday. That car is brand new, so be extra careful when you drive it.*

brass balls 1. vulgar slang Unwavering courage, resolve, or toughness. *It takes brass balls to stand up to a bully like that. You've got to have brass balls if you're going to survive in this business. 2.* vulgar slang Excessive impudence, self-assurance, ego, or audacity. *He's got some brass balls to talk*

to his boss like that.

brass ceiling The barrier of gender bias that makes it difficult for women in the military to advance through the ranks. A play on the phrase "glass ceiling," which refers to the same difficulty for women in the workplace in general. *I can't stand this brass ceiling—if I were a man, I'd be a corporal by now.*

brass farthing Something that is worth very little, nothing, or next to nothing. Refers to farthings (obsolete British units of currency, worth one-quarter of a penny), formerly made from a copper alloy (brass). Usually used in the negative, and most often in the phrase, "not worth a brass farthing." Primarily heard in UK. *I didn't get a brass farthing for all the work I did on that project. This old car isn't worth a brass farthing. If I had a brass farthing for all the times I heard that excuse, I'd be rich by now.*

brass monkey An indicator of extreme weather or temperature, typically the cold. It is usually used with the qualifier "enough," a verb, and some physical appendage of the monkey, most commonly in the semi-vulgar phrase, "cold enough to freeze the balls (testes) off a brass monkey." *After that blizzard set in, it became cold enough to freeze the balls off a brass monkey. Gosh, it's hot enough out here to melt the ears off a brass monkey.*

brass monkey weather Extremely cold weather. Though often believed to refer to so-called "brass monkeys" of a naval ship (brass trays where cannonballs were supposedly stored), this has been widely discredited as anachronistic; it is more likely a semi-vulgar reference to bronze replicas of the Three Wise Monkeys (i.e., "Hear no evil, see no evil, speak no evil") often sold as popular tourist souvenirs in China and Japan. Primarily heard in UK. *I'm so sick of the brass monkey weather this winter—I've been constantly cold for months!*

brass monkeys Extremely cold, usually regarding the weather. Taken from the semi-vulgar phrase, "cold enough to freeze the balls off a brass monkey," or its derivative, "brass monkey weather." Primarily heard in UK. *Cor, it's brass monkeys out there tonight!*

brass neck 1. noun Self-assured shamelessness, audacity, confidence, gall, or impudence. Primarily heard in UK. *It takes a brass neck to make such an outlandish demand of me. The junior minister has shown a brass neck to the public regarding his plans to cut social welfare.* 2. noun A person

displaying or characterized by self-assured shamelessness, audacity, confidence, gall, or impudence. Primarily heard in UK. *It's beyond me how a brass neck like him could be appointed as a manager.* **3.** verb To act with courageous self-confidence, especially in an audacious, impudent, or shameless manner. Primarily heard in UK. *We didn't have enough money for the train ride, but we thought we'd just brass neck it if anyone gave us grief.*

brass off To irritate or exasperate. A noun can be used between "brass" and "off" or after "off." *Let's leave John alone for now—I think we brassed him off a bit with our criticism.*

brass tacks The most important, fundamental, basic, or immediate facts, priorities, or realities of a situation. Used primarily in the phrase, "come/get down to brass tacks." *We eventually got down to brass tacks and came up with a solution. Look, let's come down to brass tacks and decide how to handle the situation. The brass tacks are these: if you don't win this district, you won't win the election.*

brassed off Irritated, disgruntled, or exasperated. Primarily heard in UK. *John's just a bit brassed off with us at the moment, so let's leave him alone.*

brave out To courageously endure a difficult, unpleasant, or uncertain situation. A noun can be used between "brave" and "out" or after "out." *Although I felt dizzy from smoke inhalation, I managed to brave it out until all the kids were out of the burning building. The coach's sudden death made this a very challenging season, but our players have braved it out admirably.*

brave the elements To go out into and endure bad or stormy weather. Usually used hyperbolically. *Thank you for braving the elements to come pick me up. I know there's a slight drizzle, but if you can brave the elements, then you may go play outside for a while.*

brazen (it) out To face something, especially a difficult situation or an accusation, shamelessly and/or with brash self-confidence. *Timmy brazened out his teacher's scolding about misbehaving. I just had to brazen it out when the boss suspected me of mishandling the account.*

brazen it out To act bravely and confidently when one is afraid or uncertain. *I'm terrified to give this presentation, but I just have to brazen it out and hope for the best.*

breach of decorum A violation of established social norms or

expectations, especially as relates to polite society or specific professions. *In an unexpected breach of decorum, she announced her candidacy before the governor officially resigned. Discussing personal problems can sometimes be seen as a breach of decorum in polite company.*

breach of etiquette A violation of established social norms or expectations, especially as relates to polite society or specific professions. *In an unexpected breach of etiquette, she announced her candidacy before the governor officially resigned. Discussing personal problems can sometimes be seen as a breach of etiquette in polite company.*

breach of promise A violation of a promise one has made. *You told me you would study for this test, and then you got an F. That sounds like a breach of promise to me!*

bread always falls on the buttered side If something goes awry, the worst possible outcome often happens. *I was running late this morning and naturally got caught in a major traffic jam. Bread always falls on the buttered side, doesn't it?*

bread and butter **1.** noun A vital component of something. Bread and butter, as foodstuffs, are considered basic forms of sustenance. *A flourishing stock market is the bread and butter of a successful country.* **2.** noun A job or task that provides one with a steady income. *I'm an artist on the weekends, but being a tutor is my bread and butter.* **3.** adjective Providing financial stability. The phrase can be hyphenated when used as an adjective. *I love any writing assignment where I can be creative, but I always make sure to pick up some bread-and-butter gigs to pay the bills.* **4.** adjective Typical or common. The phrase can be hyphenated when used as an adjective. *My sister worries about everything, even the bread-and-butter tasks of everyday life.*

a bread-and-butter letter A thank-you note to one's host. *Now that you're back from your stay with Auntie Jean, be sure to write her a bread-and-butter letter.*

bread and circuses Things given or presented in an attempt to please (or at least distract) disgruntled people. The phrase comes from the Roman poet Juvenal. *I really think this event is just bread and circuses to get us to stop protesting.*

bread and water The bare essentials for sustenance. This meal is traditionally thought of as prison food. *Bread and water sounds better than*

that terrible food in the cafeteria!

bread is the staff of life One must eat in order to survive. *I know you're trying to get a lot done today, but don't forget to eat—bread is the staff of life.*

break See [break \(someone\)](#).

break a butterfly on a wheel To apply an excessive amount of force to achieve something minor, unimportant, or insignificant. The phrase appears in the rhetorical question, "Who breaks a butterfly upon a wheel?" The line is a quotation from Alexander Pope's poem "Epistle to Dr Arbuthnot." To "break upon a wheel" refers to a mode of torture, in which a victim has their bones broken while strapped to a large wheel. *The government's use of drone strikes and artillery bombing on the town to wipe out a tiny faction of rebels is totally unjustifiable—who breaks a butterfly upon a wheel?*

break a butterfly on the wheel See [Who breaks a butterfly upon a wheel?](#)

break a lance To engage in a competition, battle, or confrontation, usually with someone or something. *The newly elected congresswoman broke a lance with the House of Representatives today on the issue of discrimination in business. The faction sought to break a lance with the government as a means of securing greater autonomy.*

break a leg A phrase of encouragement typically said to one who is about to perform before an audience, especially a theater actor. It is thought to be used due to the superstition that wishing one "good luck" will result in the opposite, but the exact origin of the phrase is unknown. *You all look great in your costumes! Break a leg!*

break a record See [break \(the/a\) record](#).

break a story See [break \(the/a\) story](#).

break a sweat To put forth a large amount of energy or effort into or toward a task. Usually used in the negative to indicate the opposite. Likened to perspiring due to strenuous physical activity. *That test was so easy, I aced it without even breaking a sweat. She didn't break a sweat becoming the district attorney.*

break (a/the) code To determine or decipher a secret code. *It is*

imperative that we break the enemy code and access their plans. She definitely broke the code on my phone—her picture is suddenly my new background!

break (a/the) habit To stop doing a routine action or activity. *I struggled to break the habit of biting my nails, but getting regular manicures helped.*

break (a/the) law To do something that is illegal. *If you shoplift, you are breaking the law, period. The statutes are different in different places so sometimes you can break a law without even knowing it!*

break (a/the) spell **1.** Literally, to stop the effects of a magic spell, as in a fantasy story or film. *My kids love this movie—it's about a group of animals working to break a spell on their forest.* **2.** By extension, to stop one from being charmed by or enthralled with someone or something. *I was totally smitten with my date, until his sexism started to come out—that totally broke the spell!*

break against (something) To crash into something and fall apart or shatter. *The wave broke against the rocks of the jetty. I dropped the vase, and it broke against the floor.*

break away **1.** Literally, to escape from physical restraints. *The robber had tied me to a chair, but I was able to break away and flee the house. I had to chase my dog down the street after he broke away during our walk.* **2.** By extension, to move away or separate from someone or something. *I'm starting to break away from the religious tradition I was raised in. That 10-game win streak really helped them to break away from the other teams in the conference. Ultimately, she had to break away from her family and their dysfunctional ways in order to be healthy.* **3.** To leave or stop a particular activity. *I know you have to finish this paper, but can you break away for a bit and talk to your grandparents?*

break back See [break \(one's\) back](#).

break balls See [break \(one's\) balls](#).

break bread To eat. *We should break bread before the meal gets cold.*

break bread with (someone) To eat with someone. *To break bread with one's enemy is the fastest way to find common ground.*

break camp To pack up one's belongings and leave a campsite. *We need*

to break camp and head back to town before nightfall.

break cover To suddenly and quickly emerge from a place of hiding or protection. *We had to break cover as the enemy line advanced toward our position. Hunting dogs are especially good at forcing birds or other animals to break cover.*

break down **1.** verb Of a machine, to malfunction or break altogether. *I'm afraid the blender is breaking down. It stopped working again today. She didn't come to the party because her car broke down on the way here.* **2.** verb To fail or cease. *Negotiations have broken down again, and I'm starting to worry that we'll never reach an agreement for a new contract.* **3.** verb To destroy a physical structure. In this usage, a noun can be used between "break" and "down." *I'll break this door down if you don't come out here right now!* **4.** verb To dismantle a societal obstacle. In this usage, a noun can be used between "break" and "down." *We owe a lot to the pioneering activists of earlier eras, who battled prejudice and broke down barriers.* **5.** verb To lose control of one's emotions, often sadness, especially after trying not to or after an intense buildup. *My mother seemed fine this morning, but she completely broke down at the funeral and cried through the whole thing.* **6.** verb To methodically explain something step by step. In this usage, a noun can be used between "break" and "down." *Can you break down the healthcare proposal to me? I'm not very well informed about it.* **7.** verb To reduce something to its component parts. In this usage, a noun can be used between "break" and "down." *If you break down water, it's just hydrogen and oxygen molecules. We need to break down the equipment and pack the truck as quickly as possible once the gig is over.* **8.** verb To get someone else to do what one wants, often by coercion. In this usage, a noun is typically used between "break" and "down." *I'll threaten him if I have to—anything to break him down and get that classified information from him. The prosecutor was able to break down the defendant until he confessed.* **9.** verb To give in to pressure; to acquiesce. *If we keep asking mom and dad to get pizza, eventually they'll break down and order it.* **10.** noun A state of collapse that is typically induced by some form of stress. In this usage, the phrase is typically written as one word. *Once I learned the extent of my injuries, I had a complete breakdown and didn't leave my room for weeks. The coup was followed by a complete societal breakdown. The breakdown of our supply line was caused by an excessive demand.* **11.** noun A methodical, step-by-

step explanation of something. In this usage, the phrase is typically written as one word. *Can you give me a breakdown of the healthcare proposal? I'm not very well informed about it.* **12.** An itemized list. In this usage, the phrase is typically written as one word. *We'd like to see a breakdown of the bill so we can see everything we've been charged for.*

break down and cry To cry after losing control of one's emotions, especially after trying not to or after an intense buildup. *My mother seems fine now, but I think she'll break down and cry during the funeral.*

break duck See [break \(one's\) duck](#).

break even Of a financial enterprise, to neither gain profit nor incur debt; to earn and spend money in equal amounts. *Thanks to increased sales this quarter, I'm confident that we will break even. When I play the slot machines, I'm happy when I break even. And then I wonder why I'm even playing.*

break faith with (someone or something) To fail to act as one has promised. *After promising so much, the candidate will be in danger of breaking faith with the many groups she courted on the campaign trail.*

break fall See [break \(one's\) fall](#).

break fall See [break \(one's\) fall](#).

break for (someone or something) **1.** To pause a particular activity for a particular reason or time period with the intention to resume after the break. *I know you have to finish this paper, but can you break for a bit and talk to your grandparents? I think we've done enough for now—let's break for lunch.* **2.** To start running toward a place or person. *As soon as I opened the door, my cat made a break for it and ran out into the yard. When they open the store, let's break for the sale rack before everyone else gets there.*

break free **1.** To escape from physical restraints, or to detach or separate something from an obstacle or restraint. In this usage, a noun can be used between "break" and "free." *The robber had tied me to a chair, but I was able to break free and run to safety. It took me an hour to break the fishing line free from the tangle of wires.* **2.** To move away or separate from someone or something. *I'm starting to break free from the religious tradition I was raised in.*

break ground To start a construction project. The phrase refers to the

first excavation of the site, often done with a ceremonial shovel. *They broke ground on the new corporate headquarters today, but it will be years before we can actually move into it.*

break her See [break \(someone\)](#).

break her serve See [break \(someone's\) serve](#).

break his lance See [break a lance](#).

break in **1.** verb To force entry into something, often a building. *They called the police as soon as they heard someone break in downstairs. I had to break in—I didn't have my house key, and no one else was home!* **2.** verb To interrupt someone or something. *I'm sorry to break in, but I have some information that might help. Mom is always using the phone in her office to break in on my conversations!* **3.** verb To use an object or item enough that it begins to feel comfortable or be more easily usable. Often said of shoes. In this usage, a noun can be used between "break" and "in." *It took a while to break in my new leather boots, but they sure are comfy now.* **4.** verb To teach or train someone to do a new job or task and thereby raise their level of experience beyond that of a novice. *Don't worry, I'll break in the new hire before I assign her to your project.* **5.** verb To destroy a physical structure. In this usage, a noun can be used between "break" and "in." *I'll break this door in if you don't come out here right now!* **6.** noun An instance of forced entry into something, often a building. In this usage, the phrase is usually hyphenated. *This neighborhood has had a lot of break-ins recently. A shattered window is often evidence of a break-in.*

break into **1.** To force entry into a physical structure, often a building. *They called the police as soon as they heard someone break into their house. I had to break into the house—I didn't have my key, and no one else was home!* **2.** To forcibly access something (often a computer system) that one is prohibited from. *Someone must be breaking into our system—how else would the media know such classified information?* **3.** To interrupt something. *I'm sorry to break into your conversation, but I have some information that might help.* **4.** To establish a career in a particular industry or profession. *She may be a successful actor now, but it took her years to break into the industry.* **5.** To suddenly perform a particular action. *My friends and I love theater, so you can always count on someone just breaking into song. My mother was fine this morning, but she broke into tears at the funeral.* **6.** To split into smaller



pieces. In this usage, a noun can be used between "break" and "into." *I know the project is daunting, but let's break it into manageable parts that each of us can work on. Because there was only one cookie left, I broke it into pieces so each of the kids could have some. The vase hit the floor and broke into pieces.*

break into a gallop Of a horse, to begin running (i.e. "galloping"). *The inexperienced rider found herself clutching the reins when her horse broke into a gallop.*

break into a smile To start smiling. *Even though she scolded me for disrupting class, I'm pretty sure I saw Ms. Miller break into a smile for a second.*

break in(to) tears To suddenly begin to cry. *My mother was fine this morning, but she broke into tears at the funeral.*

break it to See [break \(something\) to \(someone\)](#).

break it up A call to stop fighting, especially in physical altercations. *Whoa, break it up, you two! When the teacher saw the two boys shove each other, she came running over, shouting, "Break it up!"*

break law See [break \(a/the\) law](#).

break loose To physically separate from something. This phrase can be applied to both people and things. *The robber had tied me to a chair, but I was able to break loose and flee the house. I had to chase my dog down the street after he broke loose during our walk. Those bricks in the yard must have broken loose from the chimney.*

break loose from (something) To physically separate from something. This phrase can be applied to both people and things. *I had to chase my dog down the street after he broke loose from the leash during our walk. Those bricks in the yard must have broken loose from the chimney.*

break-neck See [breakneck](#).

break new ground To innovate. *They've really broken new ground with their latest product—I've never seen anything like it.*

break of day The first sign of daylight; dawn. *The party went on until the break of day.*

break off 1. To physically separate from something. *Those bricks in the*

yard must have broken off the chimney. **2.** To fail or cease abruptly. *Did you hear that negotiations have broken off again?* **3.** To end a relationship, typically a romantic one. In this usage, a noun can be used between "break" and "off." *I'm so sad to hear that Mara broke things off with John—I thought those two would be together forever.*

break one down See [break down](#).

break (one) of (something) To stop one from doing a habitual action or activity. *I was able to break my sister of biting her nails by regularly taking her to get a manicure with me. I need to learn how to break a toddler of tantrums because they are a common occurrence in our house these days.*

break (one's) back To put forth a great deal of effort. *I've been breaking my back trying to get a passing grade this semester, so failing by two measly points is incredibly frustrating. Don't break your back trying to please these people—they'll never appreciate it.*

break (one's) balls **1.** vulgar slang To exert oneself to the utmost degree; to put forth the maximum amount of effort or strain. Because of the slang reference to testicles, it is usually (but not solely) said of or by a man. *I've been breaking my balls trying to get the new software ready by the release date. Don't break your balls getting over here, there's no rush.* **2.** vulgar slang To harass, harangue, or pressure someone about something, especially for a lengthy period of time. *The boss has been breaking our balls over the number of sales our department has made this quarter. Quit breaking my balls, I said I'd get it done.* **3.** vulgar slang To tease someone. *Aw, come on, dude, I was just breaking your balls. No need to get upset about it.*

break (one's) duck **1.** In cricket, to score one's first run of an inning, especially after a string of innings during which one has failed to score (one of which is known as a duck). Primarily heard in UK. *Their esteemed batsman, having an unusually poor performance today, finally broke his duck midway through the match.* **2.** In sports, to score or accomplish something for the first time. Refers to cricket, where it means to score one's first run of an inning. Primarily heard in UK. *The team's star striker broke her duck just minutes into the game.*

break (one's) fall To interrupt, prevent, or soften one's fall, either

physically or figuratively. *She stumbled off the balcony, but luckily, a hedge below her broke her fall. Be careful not to alienate your friends as you climb to the top of the company, because if things don't work out, you'll have no one there to break your fall.*

break (one's) fall To stop one from falling to the ground or to cushion one's landing. *I'm in a cast because my hand broke my fall when I slipped on the ice. Luckily, all the grocery bags she was carrying broke her fall, so she didn't get hurt.*

break (one's) heart To cause one to feel great sadness. This phrase is often said about the end of a romantic relationship. *I know Adam broke your heart, but there are lots of guys out there who would treat you well. That poor, skittish cat just breaks my heart—I can't believe someone abandoned her!*

break (one's) neck To put forth a great deal of effort. *I've been breaking my neck trying to get a passing grade this semester, so failing by two measly points is incredibly frustrating. Don't break your neck trying to please these people—they'll never appreciate it.*

break (one's) silence 1. To voice one's opinion or comment on something after initially avoiding doing so. *It took days, but the mayor has finally broken his silence on the scandal at city hall.* 2. To address or publicize an issue that is not garnering attention. A noun is not used between "break" and "silence" in this usage. *Our station broke silence on the mayor's scandal, and now even national news outlets are covering it!*

break (one's) stride To cease moving one's legs at a certain rhythm or pace. *I had to break my stride to avoid the big branch in the middle of the path.*

break (one's) word To fail to act as one has promised. *Tom said he'd help us move, but he broke his word and failed to show. If you keep flaking out, you're going to become known as someone who breaks their word.*

break open To suddenly and decisively take control of a competition. A noun can be used between "break" and "open" or after "open." *The game was close through the first two periods, but then the other team broke it open by scoring two quick goals. We can break open this game if we score first.*

break our heart See [break \(one's\) heart](#).

break our neck See [break \(one's\) neck](#).

break our silence See [break \(one's\) silence](#).

break our stride See [break \(one's\) stride](#).

break our word See [break \(one's\) word](#).

break out **1.** verb Literally, to escape from a place or thing (often prison). *The criminal broke out of prison but was captured less than a mile away.* **2.** verb By extension, to move away or separate from someone or something. *I'm starting to break out from the religious tradition I was raised in.* **3.** verb To suddenly experience skin irritation, typically pimples or hives. *I'm sorry I'm late—I'm breaking out right now, so I had to spend extra time concealing all of my zits! I can't believe I'm breaking out the day before my wedding!* **4.** verb To suddenly perform a particular action. *My mother seemed fine this morning, but she did break out crying at the funeral.* **5.** verb To occur unexpectedly and intensely. *We knew it was time to leave the club when a fight broke out between guys at the bar. We were enjoying a nice walk when a storm broke out and forced us to run back home.* **6.** verb, slang To leave a particular place. *We knew it was time to break out when some guys at the bar started fighting.* **7.** verb To present something for use, especially something that had been stored out of sight or concealed. *Break out the champagne—we've got an engagement to celebrate! I dove under the counter when the robber broke out a gun.* **8.** verb To highlight just one portion or section of something. *Can you break out your department's spending for only the last three months?* **9.** adjective Standout; attracting attention and accolades, especially for the first time. The phrase is usually written as one word in this usage. *I had never heard of that actress before her breakout role in the award-winning movie.* **10.** noun The sudden appearance of skin irritation, typically pimples or hives. The phrase is usually written as one word in this usage. *I'm sorry I'm late—I woke up to a breakout, so I had to spend extra time concealing all of my zits! I can't believe I have a breakout the day before my wedding!*

break out in a cold sweat To begin sweating because one is nervous or frightened. *Any time I have to get blood drawn, I break out in a cold sweat the minute I get to the doctor's office. I used to be terrified of driving, but now I can get behind the wheel without breaking out in a cold sweat!*

break out in a rash To experience visible skin irritation. *After my*

husband broke out in a rash, we realized that the bushes he'd been trimming in the backyard were actually poison ivy. I had to go to the emergency room because the medication I'd been prescribed caused me to break out in a rash and have trouble breathing.

break out in(to) tears To suddenly begin to cry. *My mother was fine this morning, but she broke out in tears at the funeral.*

break out with (something) To suddenly perform a particular action. *My friends and I love theater, so you can always count on someone breaking out with song when we're together. My mother was fine this morning, but she broke out with tears at the funeral.*

break over (something) To crash into something and fall apart or shatter. This phrase is typically used to describe waves. *The wave broke over the rocks of the jetty.*

break ranks 1. Literally, to step out of a military formation. *Don't break ranks, or the drill sergeant will lose it. 2.* By extension, to behave in a way that is different from or opposes the other members of a group that one is a part of. *You're a part of management now—if you disagree with their initiatives, then you need to break ranks.*

break (someone) To completely destroy, defeat, or humiliate someone. *Don't cross me, man, I will break you. That upstart company thinks it can challenge our hold in the market? We'll just have to break them, without mercy.*

break (someone's) serve In tennis, to win a game that is being served by one's opponent. *She broke her opponent's serve in the last game, and it looks like the match is now firmly in her control.*

break (something) to pieces To break something into fragments. *I broke the vase to pieces when I dropped it on the floor.*

break (something) to (someone) To reveal information, often that which is bad or upsetting. *Who is going to break the news of the accident to Millie? Your mother is going to be furious if she learns of our engagement from someone else—you have to break it to her first!*

break spell See [break \(a/the\) spell](#).

break step 1. Literally, to stop walking or marching in unison with others. *Come on, Tommy, don't break step! This band formation has to look perfect*

at the football game on Saturday! **2.** By extension, to break from conformity with a larger group or others who one previously agreed with. *The eminent scientist broke step with the research team by suggesting an entirely different conclusion about the data.*

break the back of (something) To quell something or destroy it altogether. *This new initiative aims to break the back of the drug trade in our country.*

break the bank To be very expensive. The phrase is often used in the negative to convey the opposite. *I don't have enough money to go on a vacation right now; I'm afraid it would break the bank. Here are my favorite discount options that won't break the bank.*

break the buck In US money market funds, to have the value of a company's individual shares fall below one dollar (in slang, referred to as a "buck"). *During the recession, a great number of companies that broke the buck ended up closing altogether.*

break the code See [break \(a/the\) code](#).

break the cycle To not participate in dysfunctional and/or unhealthy behavior. Often, such behavior is commonplace in one's family, and the person breaking the cycle does so to keep it from continuing through future generations. *I don't drink at all because I come from a long line of alcoholics, and I am determined to break the cycle! You need to break the cycle of procrastination, Michael. It is seriously starting to affect your grades.*

break the deadlock To bring to an end a stalemate, impasse, or standstill. *The efforts of the United Nations have finally succeeded in breaking the deadlock between the warring countries. His late-game goal finally broke the deadlock and put his team in the lead.*

break the fourth wall Of fiction, especially theater, film, or television, to break the illusion of separation between the audience and the fiction itself, either intentionally or unintentionally. Taken originally from theater, in which the fourth wall describes the invisible "wall" that stands between the audience and the stage. *We were enjoying the play, but one of the actors kept breaking the fourth wall by glaring at the audience any time someone made any noise. I love shows that break the fourth wall—it makes me feel like I'm in on the joke.*

break the habit See [break \(a/the\) habit](#).

break the ice To do something as a means of reducing or eliminating shyness, awkward tension, or unfamiliarity. *I was so nervous about meeting Samantha's parents for the first time, but her dad immediately broke the ice by asking about my car, and everything went great after that. Everyone was deathly silent after John went ballistic and left the meeting. I tried breaking the ice with a joke, but it didn't help.*

break the law See [break \(a/the\) law](#).

break the mold To do something in a new way. *She really broke the mold with her innovative approach to this notification system—several companies have since adopted her method.*

break the news To reveal information, often that which is bad or upsetting. *Who is going to break the news of her husband's accident? Your mother is going to be furious if she learns of our engagement from someone else—you have to break the news to her first!*

break the Sabbath To violate the rules and terms of the Sabbath day (a holy day of rest and/or worship). *Even though my religious rights are protected by law, my employer still made me break the Sabbath by coming into work on Saturday.*

break the seal slang To urinate for the first time when consuming large amounts of alcohol, from which point one feels the need to urinate very frequently thereafter. *I broke the seal too early, now I'll have to go to the bathroom for the rest of the evening!*

break the silence 1. To make noise when it is otherwise silent. *OK, I'll break the silence—what are we going to do to fix this problem? I was enjoying a jog when that car horn broke the silence and startled me.* 2. To voice an opinion or comment on something after initially avoiding doing so. *It took days, but the mayor has finally broken the silence on the scandal at city hall.*

break (the/a) record To do something to a higher or greater degree than the greatest extent currently known. *With his speed, I think he'll break a record for running before he graduates from high school. If he eats one more hot dog he's going to break the record!*

break (the/a) story To be the first to address or publicize an issue,

often a news story. *Our newspaper broke the story of the mayor's scandal, and now every national news outlet is covering it!*

break their back See [break \(one's\) back](#).

break their balls See [break \(one's\) balls](#).

break their duck See [break \(one's\) duck](#).

break their fall See [break \(one's\) fall](#).

break their fall See [break \(one's\) fall](#).

break their heart See [break \(one's\) heart](#).

break their lance See [break a lance](#).

break their neck See [break \(one's\) neck](#).

break their serve See [break \(someone's\) serve](#).

break their silence See [break \(one's\) silence](#).

break their stride See [break \(one's\) stride](#).

break their word See [break \(one's\) word](#).

break them See [break \(someone\)](#).

break them down See [break down](#).

break them of See [break \(one\) of \(something\)](#).

break this to See [break \(something\) to \(someone\)](#).

break through **1.** verb To push through a physical barrier. *The protestors are threatening to break through the barricade. The wrecking ball broke through the wall of the house at the start of the renovation.* **2.** verb To overcome an obstacle. *We owe a lot to the pioneering activists of earlier eras, who battled prejudice and broke through barriers.* **3.** verb To have a realization or innovation that changes how a particular issue or thing is viewed. *We haven't broken through the problem that has caused our experiment to keep failing.* **4.** noun A realization or innovation that changes how a particular issue or thing is viewed. In this usage, the phrase is usually written as one word. *Her breakthrough led the way for geneticists for decades to come.*

break to pieces See [break \(something\) to pieces](#).



break up **1.** verb To come apart in pieces. *The house is so old that the plaster on this wall is breaking up—there are bits of it all over the floor.* **2.** verb To split something into smaller pieces. In this usage, a noun is commonly used between "break" and "up." *I know the project is daunting, but let's break it up into manageable parts that each of us can work on. Because there was only one cookie left, I broke it up so that each kid could have a piece.* **3.** verb To be inaudible or indecipherable, as of a voice on the telephone or a broadcast of some kind. *I'm sorry, can you repeat that? You're breaking up. Your father called, but he was breaking up the whole time, and his message was all garbled.* **4.** verb To disrupt something and induce its end. In this usage, a noun can be used between "break" and "up." *When the teacher saw the two boys shove each other, she came running over to break it up. The police have been working hard to break up the drug trade in our city.* **5.** verb To end a partnership of some kind, often a romantic relationship. *I'm so sad to hear that Mara and John broke up—I thought those two would be together forever. The Beatles breaking up is considered a pivotal moment in rock history.* **6.** verb To cause one to laugh or cry intensely. In this usage, a noun or pronoun is commonly used between "break" and "up." *That joke broke her up more than I'd anticipated—she thought it was hilarious! My mother was fine this morning, but the funeral really broke her up.* **7.** verb To laugh or cry intensely. *She thought that joke was hilarious and completely broke up at it! My mother was fine this morning, but she really broke up at the funeral.* **8.** verb To disrupt the monotony of something. *I need to walk around and get some coffee—anything to break up a morning of research. You need to inject some humor and break up the dull tone of this speech.* **9.** noun The end of a partnership of some kind, often a romantic relationship. The phrase is commonly written as one word in this usage. *I was so sad to hear of Mara and John's breakup—I thought those two would be together forever. The Beatles' breakup is considered a pivotal moment in rock history.*

break up with (someone) To end a romantic relationship with someone. *I'm so sad to hear that Mara broke up with John—I thought those two would be together forever.*

break wind To pass gas; to be flatulent. *Open a window—somebody broke wind in here!*

break with (something or someone) **1.** To move away or separate from someone or something. *I'm starting to break with the religious*

tradition I was raised in. I'm from a family of doctors, so I really broke with tradition when I went to art school! 2. To cease communicating with a person or group. Ultimately, she had to break with her family and their dysfunctional ways in order to be healthy.

break with tradition To do something in a new, different, or unique way. *I'm from a family of doctors, so I really broke with tradition when I went to art school! My best friend just got engaged, and she wants to break from tradition and elope.*

breakfast of champions An ironic praise for food or drink that is generally considered unhealthy, especially when one consumes it for breakfast or early in the day. Taken from the advertising slogan for Wheaties brand cereal, known for featuring prominent athletes on its packaging. *Ah, beer. The breakfast of champions! Don't knock it, man. Cold pizza is the breakfast of champions.*

breaking and entering A crime in which a person forcibly gains access to a home or building without authorization. *The man was only charged with breaking and entering because he didn't commit any further crimes once inside the building.*

breaking point 1. Literally, the point at which an object or machine ceases to function or falls apart. *Don't put anything else on that chair—it's wobbling and looks to be close to the breaking point. Based on that terrible noise, it sounds like your car is at the breaking point. 2.* By extension, the point at which an overworked or overburdened person, system, organization, etc., fails, give ups, or collapses. *I was already fed up with my husband's lazy, selfish ways, but his refusal to come with me to my mother's funeral was the breaking point. With governmental resources already strained to the breaking point, any sort of environmental disaster would likely be catastrophic.*

breakneck 1. Extremely, often excessively, fast. *If he can maintain that breakneck pace, I think he's going to win the race! You don't have to drive at such a breakneck speed—it's OK if we're a few minutes late. 2.* Very extreme or dangerous. *I'm not surprised that the train derailed at that spot where the tracks make a breakneck turn.*

a breakout See [break out](#).

a breath of fresh air Something that is pleasantly new, different, and

refreshing. *After dating a series of boring men, Sarah found Peter's adventurous nature to be like a breath of fresh air. The beautiful new paint color is a breath of fresh air for the house.*

breathe a sigh of relief To experience an intense feeling of happiness or relief because something particularly stressful, unpleasant, or undesirable has been avoided or completed. *Everyone in class breathed a sigh of relief after that horrible midterm exam was over. Investors are breathing a big sigh of relief now that the predicted downturn has seemingly been avoided.*

breathe a word See [\(not\) breathe a word](#).

breathe down (one's) neck **1.** To monitor someone closely, usually in an overbearing and irritating way. *I just got another email from the boss asking about the status of this report, as if breathing down my neck is going to make me finish it faster!* **2.** To be physically close to someone in an unnerving or unwanted way. *Back up, dude—I'll never make this shot with you breathing down my neck!*

breathe easily To relax. To be free from worry. *I can finally breathe easily now that I'm done my term paper—I had been working on that thing all day every day for weeks!*

breathe easy To feel calm or relieved because a stressful situation has ended. *With your thesis defense finished, you can finally breathe easy! All week, I was worried about having to give that presentation, so I can breathe easy again now that it's done!*

breathe fire To express one's anger. *Unless you want to get yelled at, stay away from the boss today—he's breathing fire over that printing mishap.*

breathe freely To relax. To be free from worry. *I can finally breathe freely now that I'm done my term paper—I had been working on that thing all day every day for weeks!*

breathe in To inhale. A noun can be used between "breathe" and "in" to state a specific substance being inhaled. *The doctor held the stethoscope to my chest and asked me to breathe in. After many years of breathing in pollution, I now have asthma. Breathe the fresh air in and try to relax.*

breathe into (something) **1.** To exhale into something, such as a container, device, or (in the case of mouth-to-mouth resuscitation) another person's mouth. *In an effort to calm myself down, I tried breathing into a*

paper bag. The doctor asked me to breathe into a special device. After pulling the drowning boy to safety, the lifeguard started chest compressions on him and breathed into his mouth. **2.** To figuratively revive and revitalize something that has become dull or stale. In this phrase, a noun is used between "breathe" and "into." *The new CEO's creative approach really breathed new life into that failing company.*

breathe (new) life into (someone or something) **1.** Literally, to revive someone who is not breathing, as by mouth-to-mouth resuscitation *The lifeguard was able to pull the drowning boy from the pool and breathe life into him, thank goodness.* **2.** By extension, to revitalize something that has become dull or stale. *The new CEO's creative approach really breathed new life into that failing company.*

breathe (one's) last (breath) To die. *After our parents breathed their last, my four siblings and I had to decide what to do with their property. I hope I'm making music until I breathe my last breath.*

breathe out To exhale. A noun can be used between "breathe" and "out" to state a specific substance being exhaled. *The doctor held the stethoscope to my chest and asked me to breathe in and then breathe out. When you do this meditation, try to imagine that you are breathing your stress out with each exhale.*

breathe (up)on (someone or something) To exhale onto someone or something. *Quit breathing on me with your germs—I don't want to get sick, too! The engagement ring is so expensive that I'm nervous to even breathe upon it!*

breathing room A sufficient buffer of time, space, or money that allows for freedom of movement or relief from a given source of pressure or stress. *My yearly bonus always affords us a little bit of breathing room for the Christmas expenses. Please move back and give us some breathing room here. The professor extended the deadline for our midterm papers, so I've got a bit of breathing room to get it finished.*

breathing space **1.** A sufficient buffer of time or space that allows for freedom of movement or relief from a given source of pressure or stress. *My yearly bonus always affords us a little bit of breathing space for the Christmas expenses. Please move back and give us some of breathing space here. The professor extended the deadline for our midterm papers, so I've got*

a bit of breathing space to get it finished. **2.** A pause to rest or to think over something. *Give me a minute, I just need a little breathing space while I figure this out.*

breathing spell A pause to rest or to think over something. *Give me a minute, I just need a little breathing spell while I figure this out.*

bred in the bone **1.** (hyphenated if used as a modifier) Deeply and firmly rooted, ingrained, or established. *His bred-in-the-bone etiquette came as a result of his years of military training. In this part of the country, hospitality is simply bred in the bone.* **2.** (hyphenated if used as a modifier) Long-standing and habitual, especially of ideology or religion. *Most people vote according to their bred-in-the-bone political identification, rather than making individual assessments of different candidates. A lot of times, religious views are simply bred in the bone.*

breed like rabbits slang To have several babies in a short period of time. (Rabbits are known to produce a large number of offspring very rapidly.) *I can't believe my sister is pregnant for the fourth time in five years. She and her husband just breed like rabbits!*

breeding ground **1.** Literally, a place where animals congregate for the sake of breeding. *The ducks return to their breeding ground in the park every spring. The state helps farmers maintain breeding grounds for livestock.* **2.** A place, environment, or situation that promotes or provides ample conditions for the development of something, whether tangible or intangible. *Offices are breeding grounds for sickness in the winter time. We hope to create a dynamic research space for our students that will become a breeding ground for innovation and new ideas.*

breeding will tell One's true nature will be revealed. *If you're skeptical of someone's motives, just give it time—breeding will tell.*

breeze along To proceed in a relaxed or casual way without worry. *Before her sudden illness, Jenna had been breezing along through life. I admire how kids just breeze along without a care in the world.*

breeze away To depart quickly or unexpectedly. *Brian breezed away before I had a chance to say goodbye to him.*

breeze in(to) To walk into a place or event with a calm or carefree attitude. (If "into" is used, a place or event is named after it.) *Walking into a*

party always makes me nervous, but my husband can breeze in without the slightest hesitation. You need to talk to that intern—he regularly breezes into work an hour late.

breeze off To depart quickly or unexpectedly. *Brian breezed off before I had a chance to say goodbye to him.*

breeze out To depart quickly or unexpectedly. (A specific place or event can be named after "out.") *Brian breezed out before I had a chance to say goodbye to him. You need to talk to that intern—he regularly breezes out of the office an hour early.*

breeze through (something) 1. To do something easily with little effort or concern. *It's so frustrating that my best friend can just breeze through chemistry while I study for days and barely get a passing grade.* 2. To travel through some place quickly and with little interest. *Europe isn't a place you can just breeze through—there are so many famous sites to visit!*

brevity is the soul of wit Short stories and jokes make humor more accessible. *Come on, get to the punchline—brevity is the soul of wit! Every young comic should be told that brevity is the soul of wit.*

brew a plot To conspire; to devise a secret plan. *What are you kids whispering about back there? You better not be brewing a plot! My siblings and I are brewing a plot to surprise our parents with a trip for their anniversary.*

brew up (something) 1. To make a beverage (often coffee or tea) by brewing. *You better brew up a pot of coffee, it's going to be a long night.* 2. To prepare or incite something. *What are you kids whispering about back there? You better not be brewing up trouble!*

Brexit The nickname given to the 2016 vote in favor of the UK leaving the European Union. A portmanteau of "British" (or "Britain") and "exit." *How do you think Brexit will affect the stock market going forward?*

Brexiter One who voted in favor of the UK leaving the European Union in 2016, a move that was nicknamed "Brexit" (a portmanteau of "British" or "Britain" and "exit"). *Since you're a Brexiter, what motivated you to vote to leave the EU?*

bribe (someone) into (doing something) To use a gift or reward to entice someone into doing something. *With the promise of candy, I was*

able to bribe my little sister into cleaning my room. No amount of money will bribe me into abandoning my morals, sir!

brick-and-mortar Referring to a physical location for something, typically a business (usually as opposed to an online destination). *You can order these shoes online or pick them up in one of our convenient brick-and-mortar locations.*

brick by brick Steadily and continuously in a step-by-step manner, especially the creation or destruction of something. Likened to erecting (or demolishing) a house or other building one brick at a time. *We built this business from nothing, brick by brick, until we had the largest retail chain in the city. Lawmakers have been tearing down the existing immigration legislation brick by brick.*

brick house A person, typically female, who is full-figured, strong, and sexually attractive. Popularized by the 1977 song "Brick House" by The Commodores. *Do you see that brick house at the bar? I'm going to ask her out.*

brick in To surround or hem in (something) with bricks. *We decided to brick in our back patio to give us a bit more privacy from our neighbors.*

brick in (one's) hat Said of someone who is drunk, usually with the verbs "have" or "got." A: *"Don't mind him, he's just got a brick in his hat."* B: *"Seriously? How is he drunk already?"*

brick up To cover an opening with bricks. *The contractor is going to brick up the windows in this room before he starts working on the addition.*

brick wall An immovable, insurmountable, or unyielding obstacle or person. *We tried to get in with our fake IDs, but the bouncer at the door is a brick wall.*

bricks and mortar 1. noun A phrase used to refer to buildings collectively and non-specifically. *I think the hospital is too focused on funding bricks and mortar—the construction here has been going on for far too long.* 2. adjective Fundamental and necessary. In this usage, the phrase is usually hyphenated. *The candidate has yet to state the bricks-and-mortar components of his economic plan.*

bridge over (something) To function as a bridge and connect two points. *Don't worry, there are rocks bridging over the stream—we can cross*

there.

bridge the gap **1.** Literally, to function as a bridge and connect two points. *Don't worry, there are rocks bridging the gap up ahead—we can cross there.* **2.** To serve as a point of connection between disparate people or groups. *I thought Senator Davis was working to bridge the gap between the parties on this controversial issue. A lingua franca is used to bridge the gap between people who do not speak the same language.* **3.** To alleviate the effects of a shortcoming, usually temporarily. *I just need to borrow some money to bridge the gap until I get paid again.*

a bridge too far An act or plan whose ambition overreaches its capability, resulting in or potentially leading to difficulty or failure. Taken from the 1974 book *A Bridge Too Far* by Cornelius Ryan, which details the Allies' disastrous attempts to capture German-controlled bridges in the Netherlands during World War II. *The multi-million-dollar purchase of the small startup proved a bridge too far for the social media company, as the added revenue couldn't make up for the cost in the end.*

Bridgegate A scandal in which officials linked to New Jersey Governor Chris Christie were accused of ordering the closure of several lanes of the George Washington Bridge in an allegedly deliberate attempt to cause traffic jams in Fort Lee, New Jersey (a town whose mayor who had not backed Christie's 2013 reelection bid). *Was anyone ever charged in Bridgegate?*

bridle at (someone or something) To show that one has been offended, displeased, or angered by someone or something. *Of course I bridled at his condescending tone—I'm the president of a major corporation!*

brief (someone) about (someone or something) To tell someone key information about someone or something, often an issue or situation. *Please brief me about the candidate that I'll be interviewing this afternoon. Someone needs to brief the CEO about the investigation before he speaks to the media.*

bright and breezy Confident and cheerful. *I may be bright and breezy now, but I often felt melancholy as a teenager.*

bright and early In the early morning. ("Bright" likely references the rising sun.) *I had to wake up bright and early to make sure I was at the airport in time for my 7 AM flight. I was supposed to meet my sister bright and early at the gym, but I was so exhausted when my alarm went off that I*

just went back to sleep.

bright as a button See [\(as\) bright as a button](#).

bright as a new pin See [\(as\) bright as a new pin](#).

bright-eyed and bushy-tailed Energetic and enthusiastic. *After that nap, I am bright-eyed and bushy-tailed! As usual, the new interns are bright-eyed and bushy-tailed—just watching them is exhausting.*

a bright idea A unique or shrewd thought. This phrase is often used in the negative or sarcastically to show the speaker's disapproval with a particular idea. *That's really a bright idea—I think we should implement it into this process in the future. Of course his car is gone—parking in a tow zone was not a bright idea!*

bright-line Especially in law, defined by clear terms, standards, and rules so as to avoid ambiguity or room for interpretation. Used especially as "bright-line rule" or "bright-line standard." *After the economic crash, several bright-line rules were established.*

bright-line rule In law, a clarification of ambiguity in rules and regulations, so that they cannot be interpreted in multiple ways. *Since we have two different interpretations of this law, there should be a bright-line rule for it, if there isn't one already.*

bright shiny object Something that is widely appealing or attention-grabbing for its superficial characteristics, but which is usually not useful, substantial, or long lasting. *Recent technological advances seem to be just a series of bright shiny objects, consuming all of our attention for a while before something shinier comes along.*

bright spark A person who is regarded as clever or intelligent. The term can also be used sarcastically to mean the opposite. Primarily heard in UK, Australia, New Zealand. *Timmy's the bright spark of the family—he graduated at the top of his class. Some bright spark at the auto repair shop forgot to tighten the lugnuts on my wheels after he rotated my tires.*

bright spot A positive occurrence in an otherwise sad or negative situation. *His granddaughter coming to visit him in the nursing home was always a bright spot in Jim's day.*

bright young thing A young person who is exuberant, ambitious, and glamorous. A: "Daisy is a bright young thing, isn't she?" B: "I know! I wish I

had an ounce of her verve and style."

brighten up **1.** To add color, light, and/or cheer to a space (perhaps one that is dim, dark, or gloomy). *I can't wait for the flowers I planted to blossom into beautiful colors and brighten up our yard. A new paint color really brightened up that old house.* **2.** To make something lighter in color. *I'm thinking of brightening up my hair with some blonde highlights. It really looks like rain right now—I'd wait to go out until the sky brightens up a bit.* **3.** To become happier in mood, especially after one has been glum or sad. *Your mother really brightened up when she got the flowers you sent.*

brighten up (the) day To make a situation more pleasant or enjoyable; to make one happier. *Finding \$20 on my way home really brightened up my day! Janice is such a good friend. Talking to her always brightens up the day.*

brim over **1.** Of a liquid, to flow over the top of a container. *Turn off the burner before the soup brims over!* **2.** To exhibit something, such as a trait or emotion, to a great degree. *With our trip just days away, the kids are totally brimming over with excitement. This song just brims over with emotion.*

brim with (something) To exhibit something, such as a trait or emotion, to a great degree. *With our trip just days away, the kids are totally brimming with excitement. This song just brims with emotion.*

bring a charge against (someone) To officially or publicly claim that another person has committed a crime or misdeed. *He broke into my house—of course I'm bringing a charge against him! After our argument this morning, I'm sure that Karen is going to bring a charge against me to the boss.*

bring a dog to heel To call a dog and get it to follow at one's heels; to bring a dog under control. *It can be hard to bring a dog to heel, unless the dog is well-trained.*

bring a knife to a gunfight To come poorly prepared or equipped for some task, goal, competition, or confrontation. Often used in the negative as a forewarning or piece of advice. *Make sure you have researched your position thoroughly and comprehensively before the debate. You don't want to bring a knife to a gunfight. If you haven't studied law, representing yourself in court is like bringing a knife to a gunfight.*



bring a lump to (one's) throat To cause one to feel sadness, anxiety, or another strong emotion that renders one unable to speak. *Watching the casket of the fallen soldier return home brought a lump to my throat.*

bring a verdict in To give a verdict in a court case, as of a jury. *This case has dragged on for months. When will the jury bring a verdict in?*

bring about (something) To cause something to happen. *That landmark civil rights case brought about great societal change. We're concerned that the merger will bring about layoffs, among other things.*

bring all together See [bring \(something or someone\) all together](#).

bring along To take another person to a particular location or gathering. The guest can be named between "bring" and "along" or after "along." *Feel free to bring your sister along tonight—we'd all love to see her. Can I bring along my boyfriend? He's very interested in the lecture topic.*

bring around 1. To cause one to regain consciousness. *After Lily fainted, we used smelling salts to bring her around. We were finally able to bring around the patient who'd been knocked out.* **2.** To move something to a specific location. In this usage, a noun can be used between "bring" and "around." *If you bring your shopping cart around the display, sir, I'll put it back for you. You need to bring around your car to the garage so the mechanic can take a look at it.* **3.** To take another person to a specific location or gathering. In this usage, a noun can be used between "bring" and "around." *You should bring your sister around more often—she's hilarious.* **4.** To prompt one to change their opinion or view on something. In this usage, a person's name or pronoun can be used between "bring" and "around." *I've found that political debates at dinner parties rarely bring someone around to a different point of view. Her passionate speech about the environment really brought me around to the importance of conservation efforts.* **5.** To walk around and deliver something, typically to people in an assembled group. *Volunteers will bring around pamphlets to anyone who wants to sign up for the program today. You better get back to your seat—they've begun bringing around the first course.*

bring arse to an anchor See [bring \(one's\) arse to an anchor](#).

bring ass to an anchor See [bring \(one's\) ass to an anchor](#).

bring away **1.** To learn something valuable, typically in a formal or structured setting. A noun can be used between "bring" and "away" or after "away." *I brought away a few new breathing techniques from that yoga class. My friend brought a lot of helpful tips away from that cooking class. I think I'm going to try it next time.* **2.** To move an object or item away from something else. A noun can be used between "bring" and "away" or after "away." *Please bring that tray away before the flies start nibbling the leftover sandwiches.*

bring back **1.** To cause something to regain its former popularity. In this usage, a noun can be used between "bring" and "back." *Yeah, let's not bring back the leisure suit—it's not a good look for anyone. Several new artists seem to be bringing '80s pop back.* **2.** To return an item to its owner or to its original place. In this usage, a noun can be used between "bring" and "back." *You can borrow my textbook, but please bring it back tomorrow so I can study for the test. I need to bring back these books to the library by Thursday.* **3.** To bring someone to a particular place or person. In this usage, a noun or pronoun can be used between "bring" and "back." *I'm taking my niece to the zoo tomorrow afternoon and then bringing her back to her dad's house afterward. You should bring back Dana to our house after your meeting, I want to talk to her.* **4.** To induce memories of one's past. *That song brings back such fond memories of my childhood.* **5.** To reanimate a person or animal that has died. In this usage, a noun or pronoun can be used between "bring" and "back." *I would give anything to bring my father back—he died far too young. Do you think we'll ever bring back the woolly mammoth?*

bring back out See [bring \(someone\) back out](#).

bring back to life See [bring \(someone or something\) back to life](#).

bring back to reality See [bring \(one\) back to reality](#).

bring before See [bring \(someone or something\) before \(someone or something\)](#).

bring crashing down See [bring \(something\) crashing down \(around\) \(one\)](#).

bring down **1.** Literally, to bring something from a high or elevated position to a lower point. *If you're going upstairs, can you bring down another dish towel for me? They won't bring down the volume when I ask*

nicely, so I'm calling the cops! **2.** To make one sad or in a worse mood. In this usage, a pronoun is typically used between "bring" and "down." *I don't feel like going out tonight—learning that I didn't get the job really brought me down.* **3.** To cause the failure or defeat of someone or something. In this usage, a noun or pronoun can be used between "bring" and "down." *The stock market crash really brought down my small business. When people stopped having a disposable income, they were reluctant to buy my cute crafts. The rebels are determined to bring down the government. Embezzlement charges were enough to bring down the corrupt CEO.* **4.** To decrease the cost or expense of something. In this usage, a noun or pronoun can be used between "bring" and "down." *I won't buy the house unless they bring down the price—I don't want my mortgage payment to be quite that high.* **5.** To cause an object or structure to collapse or fall apart. *They think that a compromised foundation is what ultimately brought down the old house. Three people sitting on the chair at the same time brought it down in pieces.*

bring down a notch See [bring \(someone\) down a notch \(or two\)](#).

bring down a peg See [bring \(someone\) down a peg \(or two\)](#).

bring down on See [bring \(something\) down on \(oneself\)](#).

bring down on head See [bring \(something\) down on \(one's\) head](#).

bring down the curtain (on something) **1.** To bring a performance or act of a play to an end by lowering the theater curtain. *The audience gave a standing ovation as they brought down the curtain. The theater company will bring down the curtain on their award-winning play for the last time this Friday.* **2.** To bring about or signal the end of something. *Following the announcement, the company will bring down the curtain on over 50 years of business.*

bring down the house To perform or entertain so successfully as to cause the audience to erupt in applause, laughter, or cheers for a long stretch of time. *She is a rising star as a stand-up comedian, always able to bring down the house during each performance.*

bring down to earth See [bring \(one\) down to earth](#).

bring down to her level See [bring \(something\) down to \(one's\) level](#).

bring forth **1.** To present something (to someone). *Bring forth those documents—I want to review them personally.* **2.** To cause something to

happen. *The announcement of the rate hike brought forth many complaints from consumers.* **3.** To give birth to a baby. *We received news that Lady Edith has brought forth a baby boy.*

bring forward 1. To physically move someone or something forward. A noun can be used between "bring" and "forward" or after "forward." *Bring forward those bracelets in the display case so people can actually see them. I don't have enough room back here—can you bring your seat forward a little?*

2. To present something or someone. A noun can be used between "bring" and "forward" or after "forward." *We have to bring forward these findings to the board of trustees, regardless of the scandal it might ultimately reveal. Counselor, bring your first witness forward.* **3.** To reschedule something to an earlier date or time. A noun can be used between "bring" and "forward" or after "forward." *We need to bring this meeting forward at least two hours to accommodate the CEO's schedule.* **4.** In accounting, to transfer a sum to the next page or column. *Did you bring forward the total from the last page? If not, that might be the source of the error.*

bring full circle See [bring \(something\) full circle](#).

bring herself to See [bring \(someone or oneself\) to \(do something\)](#).

bring home See [bring \(one\) home](#).

bring home the bacon 1. To earn money, as from steady employment. The phrase may originate from the fairground contest of trying to catch a greased pig—which was then given to the winner. *Now that I have a full-time job, I'm bringing home the bacon! My wife brings home the bacon, while I watch the kids.* **2.** To be successful. *After so many losing seasons, we definitely need a new quarterback—someone who can really bring home the bacon.*

bring home to See [bring \(something\) home to \(someone\)](#).

bring in 1. To move something indoors. A noun can be used between "bring" and "in" or after "in." *There's supposed to be a big storm tomorrow, so we should bring in the patio furniture.* **2.** To recruit or involve a person in a particular activity. A noun can be used between "bring" and "in" or after "in." The phrase is often followed by "on" and the activity. *Feel free to bring your sister in on this—we'd like her input, too. With the sudden growth my business has experienced, I think it's time to bring in a graphic designer who can make my website look more professional.* **3.** To entice people to enter a

place, typically a business. A noun can be used between "bring" and "in" or after "in." *I think your store's new big and bold marquee will bring in a lot of customers.* **4.** To earn a certain amount of money, often for a business or charity. The monetary amount can be stated between "bring" and "in" or after "in." *I brought in a quarter of a million dollars in sales this quarter—how well did you do? We are thrilled to announce that our telethon brought in \$30,000 in donations this year! Now that you've been promoted, how much are you bringing in each week?* **5.** To arrest someone (and bring them into the police station, for example). A noun can be used between "bring" and "in" or after "in." *We brought that guy in for trespassing.* **6.** To give a verdict in a court case, as of a jury. A noun can be used between "bring" and "in" or after "in." *This case has dragged on for months. When will the jury bring a verdict in?*

bring in from the cold See [bring \(someone\) in from the cold](#).

bring into action See [bring \(someone or something\) into action](#).

bring into being See [bring \(something\) into being](#).

bring into blossom See [bring \(something\) into blossom](#).

bring into contact with See [bring \(someone or something\) into contact with \(someone or something\)](#).

bring into disrepute See [bring \(something\) into disrepute](#).

bring into effect See [bring \(something\) into effect](#).

bring into focus See [bring \(something\) into focus](#).

bring into line See [bring \(someone or something\) into line](#).

bring into play See [bring \(something\) into play](#).

bring into prominence See [bring \(someone or something\) into prominence](#).

bring into question See [bring \(someone or something\) into question](#).

bring into service See [bring \(something\) into service](#).

bring into the world See [bring \(someone\) into the world](#).

bring into view See [bring \(someone or something\) into view](#).

bring it on slang A set phrase used to challenge someone. *If you think you're a better basketball player than me, bring it on!*

bring it weak To bring or exert less force, energy, or skill than one is capable of or which is required to accomplish a task. *Our next opponents are at the top of the division, so we can't bring it weak when we play them tomorrow.*

bring off 1. To complete a task successfully, especially when a positive outcome initially seems or seemed unlikely. A noun can be used between "bring" and "off." *It's miraculous that we brought the presentation off—we only finished writing it five minutes before walking into the conference room! I'm determined to bring off any challenge they give me.* **2.** vulgar slang To cause one to orgasm.

bring on 1. To cause something to arise or happen. In this usage, a noun can be used between "bring" and "on." *This warm weather is great, but it's also brought on my allergies, unfortunately.* **2.** To cause something unpleasant to happen to oneself. In this usage, a noun can be used between "bring" and "on." *I'm not sympathetic because he brought this on himself by mismanaging his money.* **3.** To make someone or something appear. Stated as part of a request. *We're celebrating tonight, so bring on the champagne! Bring on the opening act!* **4.** To recruit or involve a person in a particular activity or group. In this usage, a person's name or pronoun can be used between "bring" and "in" or after "on." *With the sudden growth my business has experienced, I think it's time to bring on a graphic designer who can make my website look more professional. Once we bring Tim on, the team will be complete.*

bring one along See [bring along](#).

bring one around See [bring around](#).

bring one back out See [bring \(someone\) back out](#).

bring one back to life See [bring \(someone or something\) back to life](#).

bring (one) back to reality To cause one who is fantasizing or being overly optimistic to remember or consider the true nature of something. *Someone needs to bring him back to reality because there's no way he's getting into that school with his mediocre grades. I was excited to book a vacation until my nearly-depleted bank account brought me back to reality.*

bring one before See [bring \(someone or something\) before \(someone or something\)](#).

bring one down See [bring down](#).

bring (one) down to earth To cause one who is fantasizing or being overly optimistic to remember or consider reality. *I was excited to book a vacation until my nearly-depleted bank account brought me down to earth. Dean was thrilled to get into his dream school, but the realization that he would have to pay for it entirely on his own brought him down to earth.*

bring (one) home To return one to one's residence. *You were supposed to bring Jenny home by 10—her mother and I were worried sick! Please bring me home, I'm not feeling well.*

bring one in See [bring in](#).

bring (one) low To bring one back to reality, especially if one is being a braggart. *Dave was boasting so much about getting an A on the test that I finally had to bring him low and tell him that Miss Hayes is a really easy grader.*

bring one out See [bring out](#).

bring one out in droves See [bring \(someone or something\) out in droves](#).

bring one out of See [bring \(someone or something\) out of \(somewhere or someone\)](#).

bring (one) out of (one's) shell To cause someone to be more outgoing. Usually said of a shy or introverted person. *Wow, I remember when Anna wouldn't even talk to anyone, and now she's likely to be voted "Most Talkative"—I wonder what brought her out of her shell.*

bring (one) over To sway one's loyalties. *My aunt is determined to bring me over to her political party, ignoring the fact that I am not remotely interested in changing sides!*

bring one over from See [bring \(someone or something\) over from \(somewhere\)](#).

bring (one) through (something) To help one to survive and/or overcome a challenging experience. *The support of family and friends is all that brought me through the dark days right after my husband's death. My physical therapist's efforts and encouragement brought me through rehab, and now I can walk again!*

bring one to See [bring \(someone or something\) to](#).

bring one to See [bring \(someone or oneself\) to \(do something\)](#).

bring one to a boil See [bring \(someone or something\) to a boil](#).

bring one to a dead end See [bring \(someone or something\) to a dead end](#).

bring one to a halt See [bring \(someone or something\) to a halt](#).

bring one to a standstill See [bring \(someone or something\) to a standstill](#).

bring (one) to account To confront or question one about one's wrongdoings. *That's it—the next time I see Rachel, I'm bringing her to account! I simply can't tolerate her selfish behavior any longer. I'm sure the boss is going to bring me to account for my outburst during the meeting.*

bring (one) to book To confront or question one about one's wrongdoings, often as a precursor to punishment. *That's it—the next time I see Rachel, I'm bringing her to book! I simply can't tolerate her selfish behavior any longer. I'm sure the boss is going to bring me to book for my outburst during the meeting. I just hope I don't get fired.*

bring (one) to justice To punish one for a crime committed. *My lawyer is confident that we can bring the man who stole my money to justice. The court must bring this criminal to justice.*

bring one to life See [bring \(someone or something\) to life](#).

bring one to mind See [bring to mind](#).

bring (one) to (one's) feet To cause one to stand up and show one's approval through applause and/or cheering. This phrase is usually used in reference to an audience or crowd. *The singer's powerful voice brought us to our feet.*

bring one to one's knees See [bring \(someone or something\) to \(someone's or something's\) knees](#).

bring (one) to (one's) senses To cause one to resume acting, thinking, or feeling rationally or normally. *I was starting to get disoriented after being awake for 36 hours straight, but a good night's rest brought me to my senses. I was excited to book a vacation until my nearly-depleted bank*

account brought me to my senses.

bring one to the bargaining table See [bring \(someone or something\) to the bargaining table](#).

bring one to the peace table See [bring \(someone or something\) to the peace table](#).

bring (one) to the test To test how skilled or capable one is in a particular area. *They sure brought me to the test when I tried out for the golf team, but I must have pleased the coaches because I made it!*

bring one to trial See [bring \(someone or something\) to trial](#).

bring one together See [bring \(someone or something\) together](#).

bring one under See [bring \(someone or something\) under \(someone or something\)](#).

bring one up See [bring up](#).

bring (one) up for (something) To mention or suggest someone for something in particular, such as a position. *The recruiter brought up John for the position, but I prefer a different candidate.*

bring (one) up on charges To officially accuse one of a crime. *Our tenant owes us months of rent—can we bring him up on charges?*

bring (one) up on (something) To allow one to experience or have something repeatedly in childhood. *Because my parents worked so much, my siblings and I were brought up on TV and junk food. I was brought up on home cooking, so having to eat cafeteria food at college was a bit of a shock.*

bring (one) up sharply To cause one to abruptly stop doing something. *The sudden blaring of the alarm brought me up sharply on my way down the hall. News of the reduction in funding brought our researchers up sharply.*

bring (one) up short To cause one to abruptly stop doing something. *The sudden blaring of the alarm brought me up short on my way down the hall. News of the reduction in funding brought our researchers up short.*

bring one up to See [bring up to](#).

bring one up to date See [bring \(someone or something\) up to date](#).

bring (one) up with a start To cause one to abruptly stop doing

something. *The sudden blaring of the alarm brought me up with a start on my way down the hall. News of the reduction in funding brought our researchers up with a start.*

bring (one's) arse to an anchor To be seated and still, likened to a ship being moored in place by an anchor. Primarily heard in UK. *Kids! Quit running around and bring your arse to an anchor!*

bring (one's) ass to an anchor To be seated and still, likened to a ship being moored in place by an anchor. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *Kids! Quit running around and bring your ass to an anchor!*

bring out **1.** To take something outside. In this usage, a noun can be used between "bring" and "out" or after "out." *Now that the storm is over, I guess we can bring the patio furniture out again.* **2.** To present or deliver something, typically to people in a group. In this usage, a noun can be used between "bring" and "out" or after "out." *Volunteers will bring pamphlets out for anyone who wants to sign up for the program today. You better get back to your seat—they've begun bringing out the first course.* **3.** To cause something to become more noticeable. *That top looks great on you—it really brings out your eyes. I feel so inadequate and jealous around my sister—ugh, she always brings out the worst in me!* **4.** To publish something. In this usage, a noun can be used between "bring" and "out" or after "out." *It's official—the publisher is bringing out my new book this spring!* **5.** To prompt someone, typically a performer, to come out on stage. In this usage, a noun can be used between "bring" and "out" or after "out." *The cheers of the adoring crowd brought the Broadway star out several more times after her curtain call.*

bring out of mothballs See [bring \(something\) out of mothballs](#).

bring out of shell See [bring \(one\) out of \(one's\) shell](#).

bring out the best in (one) To cause one to exhibit one's best traits. *Mrs. Smith must bring out the best in her students—they all get good grades in her class and are very engaged with the subject matter. My kids never misbehave when you watch them, so you definitely bring out the best in them!*

bring over See [bring \(one\) over](#).

bring over to See [bring \(something or someone\) over to](#).

bring owls to Athens To do or undertake something redundant, pointless, or futile. It refers to the city of Athens in the time of Ancient

Greece, where silver coins were minted with the image of an owl (which were abundant in the city). Thus, to bring either owls or silver to Athens would be a useless venture. *The councilor's plans to improve the economy by increasing taxes simply would be bringing owls to Athens.*

bring round **1.** To bring (someone) back to consciousness, as after a fainting spell or coma. *You were out for about an hour, so I used smelling salts to bring you round.* **2.** To bring (something or someone) to a certain location, especially where someone lives. *Thanks for lending me that book! I'll bring it round next week after I'm finished. I'm bringing Sally round to my parents' house tonight for dinner.* **3.** To persuade (someone) of one's own view or beliefs. *After laying out the facts, I was able to bring them round to my position.* **4.** To introduce or change a topic of conversation. *No one wanted to talk about it, so I had to be the one to bring the conversation round to what we would do with the old house.*

bring sand to the beach To do or undertake something redundant, pointless, or futile, usually in the context of bringing something to a location where it is abundant or unnecessary. *The company always caters lunch for these meetings, so I don't know why you bring in your own sandwich. You might as well bring sand to the beach!*

bring (someone) back out To prompt someone, typically a performer, to return to the stage for further applause or accolades. *The cheers of the adoring crowd brought the Broadway star back out multiple times.*

bring (someone) down a notch (or two) To reduce or damage someone's ego or pride; to humble or humiliate someone. *I'm really glad that pompous oaf lost his court case—maybe that will bring him down a notch or two. It's about time that someone brought Sarah down a notch. Her snotty arrogance is intolerable!*

bring (someone) down a peg (or two) To reduce or damage someone's ego or pride; to humble or humiliate someone. *I'm really glad that pompous oaf lost his court case, maybe that will bring him down a peg or two. It's about time that someone brought Sarah down a peg. Her snotty rich-kid arrogance is intolerable!*

bring (someone) in from the cold To allow someone to join or participate in a group from which they were previously excluded; to accept someone into a certain social setting. *A relatively unknown director for most*

of her career, her work with the A-list celebrity garnered the attention of a major Hollywood studio and finally brought her in from the cold. The company finally brought its striking workers in from the cold after months of intense negotiations.

bring (someone) into the world **1.** To give birth to a baby. *It's a big responsibility to bring a baby into the world.* **2.** To assist the birth of a baby. *Dr. Brown is a fine obstetrician—she brought all three of my kids into the world.*

bring (someone or oneself) to (do something) **1.** To cause or inspire one to take a particular action. In this usage, a noun or pronoun is used after "bring." *A desire to help my community brought me to volunteer at the local soup kitchen. Your mother and I just cannot fathom what would bring you to disrespect us like that.* **2.** To muster the courage or resolve to do something, typically something unpleasant or frightening. In this usage, a reflexive pronoun is used after "bring." *I'm sorry, I just can't bring myself to eat snails.*

bring (someone or something) back to life **1.** Literally, to reanimate a person or animal that has died. *The patient did die on the table, but we were able to use the defibrillator to bring her back to life. Unfortunately, the dog's injuries were so severe that the doctor could not bring him back to life.* **2.** By extension, to energize someone. *A: "OK, schedule Tuesday's meeting, get John on the phone, and then come in my office so we can all discuss that big project." B: "Wow, that cup of coffee really brought you back to life!"* **3.** To revitalize something that has become dull or stale. *The new CEO's creative approach really brought that failing company back to life.*

bring (someone or something) before (someone or something) **1.** To bring someone to appear in front of someone, such as a judge or superior, for evaluation, criticism, or punishment. A noun or pronoun can be used between "bring" and "before" or after "before." *That high-profile criminal will be brought before a judge today. In light of the ugly incident yesterday, we should bring John before a disciplinary committee.* **2.** To present something, such as information, evidence, etc., to a person or group. *We have to bring these findings before the board of trustees, regardless of the scandal it might ultimately reveal.*

bring (someone or something) into action To cause something to happen; to entice someone into doing something. *Thankfully, the mechanic was able to bring my car into action again. The protestors hope that their demonstrations will bring our elected officials into action.*

bring (someone or something) into contact with (someone or something) 1. To introduce two people so that they can communicate in the future. In this usage, the first person is named after "bring" and the second person after "with." *My best friend wants to get fit, so I brought her into contact with my personal trainer.* 2. To cause something to physically touch something else. This usage can refer to both people and things. *Don't bring that wire into contact with this one! I start sneezing any time I am brought into contact with pollen.*

bring (someone or something) into line 1. Literally, to align something with something else. *That crooked picture frame is really bothering me—can I please bring it into line with the others?* 2. To cause someone or something to conform, adhere to, or agree with that which is established or generally accepted, such as rules, beliefs, modes of behavior, etc. *You might have some wild ideas for the future, but you'll never get anywhere in this business if you don't bring your actions into line with your boss's expectations. You need to talk to that new student and bring him into line with the rules of our school.*

bring (someone or something) into prominence To cause someone or something to gain attention, recognition, or popularity. The recipient or thing can be named between "bring" and "into." *A national ad campaign like this will really bring you into prominence as a model. His theories were only brought into prominence posthumously, after a family member discovered them.*

bring (someone or something) into question To cause someone or something to be viewed with doubt. *I considered Walt for the promotion, but his constant lateness soon brought that decision into question. Such a significant error really brings all of the experiment's results into question.*

bring (someone or something) into view To cause something to become visible or noticeable. *The binoculars brought the far-off island into view. Unfortunately, my mother's illness also brought the declining state of*

her house into view for the rest of us.

bring (someone or something) out in droves To entice many people or animals to gather or come to a place. (A "drove" is a large number of people or animals moving together.) *The owner of the car dealership is optimistic that slashing prices will bring people out in droves.*

bring (someone or something) out of (somewhere or someone) **1.** To entice someone or something to emerge from a place or thing. *I think this generous salary offer will bring Fred out of retirement. You can try using food to bring that scared cat out of hiding. Do you think there's anything we can do to bring Beth out of her funk?* **2.** To entice someone to say something, often something of a secretive nature. *I even offered money in an attempt to bring that gossip out of her!*

bring (someone or something) over from (somewhere) **1.** To take someone or something along from one location to another. *Sure, I can watch Sadie tonight—just bring her over from daycare. I'll bring the movie over from my house so we can watch it at your party.* **2.** To cause someone or something to travel or move from one location or position to another. *Did you hear that they're bringing a new supervisor over from marketing? Discouraged by his current bullpen, the general manager opted to bring a new pitcher over from Cleveland before the trade deadline.*

bring (someone or something) to **1.** To cause one to regain consciousness. *After Lily fainted, we used smelling salts to bring her to.* **2.** To stop a vessel from moving. *We're getting close to the dock, so bring the boat to.* **3.** To add up to a certain monetary amount. *Adding a drink brings your total to \$8.49. I'm thrilled because my last payment brought the amount I still owe on that loan to less than \$1,000!* **4.** To cause one to resume acting or feeling as they normally do. In this usage, a noun or pronoun is used between "bring" and "to," and a reflexive pronoun is used after "to." *I was starting to get disoriented after being awake for 36 hours straight, but a good night's rest brought me to myself.*

bring (someone or something) to a boil **1.** Literally, to heat a liquid and cause it to boil. *After you bring that water to a boil, we will add the pasta.* **2.** To cause someone to become very angry. *Watch what you say to him—criticism of his novel tends to bring him to a boil. Please, stop yelling at me—I didn't mean to bring you to a boil!*

bring (someone or something) to a dead end To lead to an impasse; to lead to a point where no more progress is possible. The phrase can be literal or figurative. *Because the GPS brought us to a dead end, we'll have to turn around and take that side road. Investigating that theory has brought my research to a dead end—every experiment I've tried so far has failed.*

bring (someone or something) to a halt To cause a person or thing to stop abruptly. *The speeding police car, with its flashing lights and siren, brought all the other drivers to a halt. A sudden reduction in funding brought our research to a halt.*

bring (someone or something) to a standstill To cause a person or thing to stop. *The speeding police car, with its flashing lights and siren, brought all the other drivers to a standstill. A sudden reduction in funding brought our research to a standstill.*

bring (someone or something) to life **1.** Literally, to revive one who has lost consciousness. *After Lily fainted, we used smelling salts to bring her to life.* **2.** By extension, to energize someone, especially after a period of inactivity or lethargy. *A: "OK, schedule Tuesday's meeting, get John on the phone, and then come in my office so we can all discuss that big project." B: "Wow, that cup of coffee really brought you to life!"* **3.** To revitalize something that has become dull or stale. *The new CEO's creative approach really brought that failing company to life.*

bring (someone or something) to (someone's or something's) knees **1.** To render a person or group submissive by weakening or defeating them. *The general believes that such an attack will bring the opposing troops to their knees.* **2.** To disrupt or halt a process or thing. *Unfortunately, a broken printer has brought the mailing project to its knees. Many fear that all of these new regulations will bring the stock market to its knees.*

bring (someone or something) to the bargaining table To induce another person or group to negotiate or attempt to reach an agreement or solution. This phrase is typically applied to people or groups in conflict. *We need to bring that country to the bargaining table and finally resolve this conflict.*

bring (someone or something) to the peace table To induce another person or group to negotiate or attempt to reach an agreement or solution. This phrase is typically applied to people or groups in conflict. *We need to bring that country to the peace table and finally resolve this conflict.*

bring (someone or something) to trial To cause a case to be tried in court. *I am determined to bring that man to trial for the crimes he's committed.*

bring (someone or something) together 1. To unite people for a certain occasion. *Thank you for bringing us together, sis—we really need to try to spend more time together as a family.* 2. To unite people on a certain issue. *What will it take to bring the two sides together to finally agree on a contract?* 3. To put in close proximity all the components necessary to complete a task. *We should bring all the pieces from the box together before we start trying to assemble the desk.*

bring (someone or something) under (one's) control To assume a position of power over a person, group, or thing. *The terms of the treaty bring our country under the king's control. I think you'll have a hard time bringing the department under your control—they're very loyal to their old boss.*

bring (someone or something) under (someone or something) To place someone or something under the management or supervision of another person, group, or thing. *Your promotion also brings you under a new supervisor. I think it makes more sense to bring this department under Finance.*

bring (someone or something) up to date To share or incorporate the most current information about someone or something. *Bring me up to date on these candidates for the job. This schedule doesn't include the latest changes—can you bring it up to date?*

bring (someone) to heel To force someone to obey one's wishes or commands; to make someone act in accordance with one's authority. *The CEO was quick to bring the junior board member to heel after the latter spoke out of turn at the annual general meeting. Sir, the members of your squad are all out of control. You need to bring them to heel right away!*

bring (someone) to task To scold, reprimand, or lecture someone on

some wrong or error they have committed. *Mom brought me to task over the alcohol she found in my car. You don't have to bring everyone to task who misuses the word "literally," you know.*

bring (someone) to terms To compel a person or group to agree to or do something, especially a set of demands or conditions. *The rebels' unflinching siege of the king's palace eventually brought the government to terms.*

bring (something) crashing down (around) (one) 1. Literally, to cause something to fall violently to the ground. (In this usage, "around (one)" is not usually part of the phrase.) *On demolition day, a crew will bring that old building crashing down.* 2. To cause a distressing failure, especially one that profoundly affects or disrupts one's life or identity. *Getting laid off from my job brought everything crashing down around me.*

bring (something) down on (one's) head 1. Literally, to cause something to fall on one's head. *While he attempted to water the Christmas tree, he shook its branches and brought various ornaments down on his head.* 2. To cause negative consequences for one. *You brought this down on your head—I had no role in your failure.*

bring (something) down on (oneself) 1. Literally, to cause something to fall on oneself. *While he attempted to water the Christmas tree, he shook its branches and brought various ornaments down on himself.* 2. To cause negative consequences for oneself. *You brought this down on yourself—I had no role in your failure.*

bring (something) down to (one's) level To simplify an idea or concept so that one can understand it, especially if they are not versed in the topic. *He's too young to grasp a complicated idea like that—you need to bring it down to his level. My background is not in law, so please bring the terms of this contract down to my level.*

bring (something) full circle To return something, such as a situation, argument, attitude, or idea, to its original starting position, especially after a long or circuitous series of changes. *Increasing dictatorial crackdowns are bringing the country full circle to where things stood before the civil war. At the novel's end, the character's journey is brought full circle to the childhood home where everything started to go wrong.*

bring (something) home to (someone) 1. Literally, to come

home with a gift or treat for someone else. *I knew you were sad to miss the dinner party, so I brought a dessert home to you.* **2.** To cause something to be more intimately acknowledged, recognized, or understood. *Her passionate speech about the environment really brought the importance of conservation efforts home to me.*

bring (something) into being To create something or render it tangibly. *Now we need to hire the right people to bring our vision into being. Our founder brought the company into being way back in 1810.*

bring (something) into blossom To cause something, such as a flower or a tree, to bloom. *Moving those flowers to a sunnier spot helped bring them into blossom. Nothing I've done has brought these plants into blossom—do I need to water them more often?*

bring (something) into disrepute To tarnish one's or something's reputation in some way. *Don't bring my stellar reputation into disrepute with those lies! A few disgruntled patrons have brought the restaurant's reputation into disrepute with their negative online reviews.*

bring (something) into effect To cause (something) to apply, begin operating, or take effect; to begin implementing or enforcing (something). *The new government has vowed to bring several policies into effect, aimed at helping struggling citizens get by. The new law will be brought into effect on the first of January.*

bring (something) into focus 1. To make an adjustment so that a viewed object can be seen clearly, as with instruments that use lenses, or by digital or other means on a screen. *You need to bring the vase of flowers into focus so that it doesn't come out blurry in the pictures. The eye doctor adjusted his machine and brought the eye chart into focus for me. Can you bring the footage into focus so we can see the perpetrator's face?* **2.** To cause something to be better or more clearly understood or seen in a new perspective. *Her passionate speech about the environment really brought the importance of conservation efforts into focus.*

bring (something) into play 1. In sports, to hit or take the ball into the field of play so that the game can resume, as after a timeout or stoppage. *He'll bring the ball into play and then pass it ahead to you.* **2.** To introduce something into a particular situation. *Bringing a merger into play might be the best option to save the company. I really wanted to visit you this weekend,*

but the flu brought some other unpleasant factors into play.

bring (something) into service To make something usable or functional. *We intend to bring a fleet of new buses into service later this year.*

bring (something or someone) all together **1.** To plan or organize something, such as an event. *Let's take a moment to acknowledge the people who worked tirelessly to bring this gala all together. It was a wonderful party—thank you for bringing it all together, sis.* **2.** To unite people for a certain occasion. *Thank you for bringing us all together, sis—we really need to try to spend more time together as a family.*

bring (something or someone) over to To bring something or someone to a certain location, especially where someone lives. *I'll bring the movie over to you tomorrow night so we can watch it at the party. Bring her over to my house and I'll measure her for the dress.*

bring (something) out of mothballs **1.** To take an object out of storage after a period of disuse. Mothballs—little balls composed of a pungent chemical used to deter moths—are often kept in closets, attics, and other places where clothes are stored. *Now that the weather is getting colder, it's time to bring our winter clothes out of mothballs. This new shipment of parts will allow us to bring the plane out of mothballs soon.* **2.** By extension, to begin to use or implement something. *I did like your idea, Tom, but we can't bring it out of mothballs until we finish our outstanding projects.*

bring (something) to a close To cause something to end. *If there are no other issues to discuss, we can bring this meeting to a close.*

bring (something) to a head To intensify a situation to the point that action must be taken. *The issues that you're trying to ignore in your relationship will be brought to a head eventually, so you might as well deal with them now. The mayor's insensitive comments brought tensions in our community to a head.*

bring (something) to a successful conclusion To complete something with a positive or favorable outcome. *Although we struggled to finish the presentation on time, we were able to bring it to a successful conclusion.*

bring (something) to bear To use pressure or force to cause a certain result. *If you want a confession from that guy, you're going to have to*

bring pressure to bear on him.

bring (something) to fruition To complete or do something successfully. *Although we initially struggled to get funding for our project, we were able to bring it to fruition.*

bring (something) to (one's) aid To provide something to someone in need of help or assistance. *The kind woman at the information desk brought a wheelchair to my grandmother's aid.*

bring (something) to (one's) attention To inform one of something. *I think you need to bring Mark's complaint to the boss' attention, in case it becomes an issue later. Thank you for bringing that to our attention. We appreciate your feedback.*

bring (something) to rest To stop the forward progress of something, such as a machine or project. *The speeding police car, with its flashing lights and siren, brought all the other cars to rest. Unfortunately, a broken printer has brought the mailing project to rest.*

bring (something) to the fore To emphasize something or make it more noticeable. *Be sure to bring this argument to the fore when you rewrite your paper. Discrepancies in the yearly budget report brought questions of corruption to the fore.*

bring (something) to the party To provide or offer a useful skill or attribute. *He brings years of leadership experience to the party.*

bring (something) to the table To provide or offer a useful skill or attribute. *He brings years of leadership experience to the table.*

bring (something) with slang To take something somewhere; to bring something along. In this informal usage, the phrase ends at "with," without stating the person in possession of the item. *I own that book, so I can bring it with tomorrow night.*

bring (something) within a/the range To adjust or improve something so that it meets a certain requirement or expectation. An adjective is often used before "range." *You need to bring your students' standardized test scores within the acceptable range for their grade level.*

bring (something) within range To cause something to move within the distance that one's gunfire can reach. *Once our calls brought several turkeys within range, we readied our guns.*

bring their arses to an anchor See [bring \(one's\) arse to an anchor](#).

bring their ass to an anchor See [bring \(one's\) ass to an anchor](#).

bring themselves to See [bring \(someone or oneself\) to \(do something\)](#).

bring through See [bring \(one\) through \(something\)](#).

bring to See [bring \(someone or something\) to](#).

bring to a boil See [bring \(someone or something\) to a boil](#).

bring to a dead end See [bring \(someone or something\) to a dead end](#).

bring to a halt See [bring \(someone or something\) to a halt](#).

bring to a standstill See [bring \(someone or something\) to a standstill](#).

bring to account See [bring \(one\) to account](#).

bring to book See [bring \(one\) to book](#).

bring to feet See [bring \(one\) to \(one's\) feet](#).

bring to heel See [bring \(someone\) to heel](#).

bring to justice See [bring \(one\) to justice](#).

bring to knees See [bring \(someone or something\) to \(someone's or something's\) knees](#).

bring to life See [bring \(someone or something\) to life](#).

bring to light To reveal something, often something inappropriate or illegal. The revealed information can be stated between "bring" and "to" or after "light." *Discrepancies in the yearly budget report brought to light corruption in the company. I never wanted to be a whistleblower, but I'm the only one who can bring these documents to light.*

bring to mind To cause one to think of or remember someone or something (which can be stated between "bring" and "to" or after "mind"). *Can we go somewhere else for dinner? That place just brings my ex-girlfriend to mind. That song brings to mind many fond memories of my childhood.*

bring to pass To provoke, precipitate, or cause something to happen. *The kids' rambunctiousness brought to pass a strict no-talking rule in the classroom. My divorce brought to pass a very lonely time in my life.*

bring to senses See [bring \(one\) to \(one's\) senses](#).

bring to task See [bring \(someone\) to task](#).

bring to terms See [bring \(someone\) to terms](#).

bring to the bargaining table See [bring \(someone or something\) to the bargaining table](#).

bring to the peace table See [bring \(someone or something\) to the peace table](#).

bring to the test See [bring \(one\) to the test](#).

bring to their aid See [bring \(something\) to \(one's\) aid](#).

bring to their attention See [bring \(something\) to \(one's\) attention](#).

bring to trial See [bring \(someone or something\) to trial](#).

bring together See [bring \(someone or something\) together](#).

bring under See [bring \(someone or something\) under \(someone or something\)](#).

bring under control See [bring \(someone or something\) under \(one's\) control](#).

bring up **1.** To literally bring someone or something to a higher point in space. A noun can be used between "bring" and "up" or after "up." *Try to bring your leg up a little higher when doing this exercise. Please bring up the clean clothes when you come upstairs. Be sure to bring your sister up to my apartment the next time she's in town.* **2.** To mention something. A noun can be used between "bring" and "up" or after "up." *Don't bring up work tonight at dinner unless you want to hear Jeanne complain for three hours. I accidentally brought up Pam's surprise party to a few people who hadn't been invited.* **3.** To vomit. A noun can be used between "bring" and "up" or after "up." *The constant rocking of the boat is going to make me bring up my lunch!* **4.** To care for a child or animal from a young age; to raise a child or animal. A noun can be used between "bring" and "up" or after "up." *Who will bring up my children if something happens to me? I brought my now-elderly cat up from a kitten.* **5.** To increase something. A noun can be used between "bring" and "up" or after "up." *You need to bring up your volunteer hours if you hope to meet the requirement by graduation. With the retirement age approaching, I've brought up my contribution to my 401(k).* **6.** To open a

program or website for viewing on a computer screen. A noun can be used between "bring" and "up" or after "up." *Next, you'll want to bring up the homepage. Bring up that email so I can take a look at it.*

bring up for See [bring \(one\) up for \(something\)](#).

bring up on See [bring \(one\) up on \(something\)](#).

bring up on charges See [bring \(one\) up on charges](#).

bring up sharply See [bring \(one\) up sharply](#).

bring up short See [bring \(one\) up short](#).

bring up the rear To move last in a group of people. *You guys go first —I'll bring up the rear. We need one adult to lead the kids, and another to bring up the rear.*

bring up to 1. To mention something to someone. *Don't bring up work to Jeanne unless you want to hear her complain for three hours. I accidentally brought up Pam's surprise party to a few people who hadn't been invited.* **2.** To improve something or someone enough to meet a certain requirement or expectation. *What can I do to bring my grade up to an A? You need to bring your interns up to the standard we expect at this company.*

bring up to date See [bring \(someone or something\) up to date](#).

bring up with a start See [bring \(one\) up with a start](#).

bring with See [bring \(something\) with](#).

bring within a range See [bring \(something\) within a/the range](#).

bring within range See [bring \(something\) within range](#).

bring your arse to an anchor See [bring \(one's\) arse to an anchor](#).

bring your ass to an anchor See [bring \(one's\) ass to an anchor](#).

bring yourself to See [bring \(someone or oneself\) to \(do something\)](#).

brink of disaster A point very close to complete ruin, destruction, or failure. *Our company was on the brink of disaster, but after our latest product came out, we've been doing better than ever before! The increasing tension of looming war between the two countries has brought the entire region to the brink of disaster.*

bristle at (something) To show sudden displeasure or anger at some

provocation. *I bristled at the suggestion that I trade offices with someone else in the department. He bristled at our criticism of his novel and stormed out of the room.*

bristle with rage To show sudden anger. *I bristled with rage when I saw that someone had hit my car overnight.*

broach (one's) claret To draw blood, typically in some sort of fight. "Claret" is a type of red wine. A: *"Who broached your claret?"* B: *"Bill punched me in the nose. Can you help me clean up this blood?"* Do you challenge me to a fight? Well, I will most certainly broach your claret—I hope you're ready for that!

broach (something) with (someone) To mention or discuss something with someone. *I wouldn't broach that topic with him unless you want to hear about it for hours. Everyone knows you shouldn't broach the issues of politics or religion at a dinner party.*

broad across the beam Of a person (typically female), having a large buttocks and/or thighs. A derogatory term, it refers to ships that have a wide breadth across. *All the holiday eating always leaves me a bit broad across the beam!*

broad as a barn door See [\(as\) broad as a barn door](#).

broad (brush) strokes Vague or non-specific terms. *I don't need every detail of the event—just tell me about it in broad brush strokes. Describe your idea in broad strokes, just so I can get a sense of it.*

broad church 1. A label referring to a group of 17th-century English theologians who adhered to some practices of the Church of England but disregarded other elements of the Church, such as doctrine and liturgical practice. Primarily heard in UK. *The broad church movement in 17th-century England may have helped shape the more liberal views and practices of modern-day Christianity.* 2. A group or organization composed of various types of people with differing views, opinions, or philosophies. Primarily heard in UK. *The Independent Party is a broad church as its members hold wildly differing opinions on how to best solve the problems facing society today.*

broad in the beam 1. (of a ship) Particularly wide in the middle. *Since that ship is broad in the beam, I doubt it will fit through the narrow channel.*

2. (of a person) Having an ample buttocks. *Because I'm broad in the beam, I doubt those pants will fit me.*

broad shoulders The ability and/or willingness to accept multiple demands and responsibilities. *You've got some broad shoulders, kid—I'm so impressed with how you're balancing schoolwork with being captain of the football team and student council president!*

broaden (one's) horizons To have a new experience. *I'm really nervous to live at school, but I know I need to broaden my horizons and get some experience living without my family. I can't believe that Molly has never left the state before! She seriously needs to broaden her horizons!*

broaden out To widen or expand something. A noun can be used between "broaden" and "out" or after "out." *They want to knock down a wall and broaden their kitchen out. I'm doing these exercises to broaden out my shoulders.*

Broadway The major theater district in New York City. The phrase "on Broadway" is typically used of productions there. *My dream is to end up on Broadway, starring in a famous play! We're headed over to Broadway now, so we'll meet you there!*

broken dreams Dreams or aspirations that have failed or been abandoned. *This team has never won a championship, so their stadium is full of broken dreams.*

broken-hearted Very sad, typically due to a tragic event or the end of a romantic relationship. *I feel awful for Alex—she has just been so broken-hearted since Marissa broke up with her. Debbie is just broken-hearted over the death of her son, and I have no idea how to console her.*

broken record A person or thing that repeats itself over and over again. Likened to vinyl records that when severely scratched (i.e., "broken") can loop over the same recorded segment endlessly. *I feel like a broken record having to tell you this each day, but please clean your room!*

a broken reed An unreliable or unsupportive person. *I thought I could count on my best friend for support during this difficult time, but she proved to be a broken reed and never returned my calls.*

broken vessel Someone who is or feels completely destroyed, hollow, forsaken, or inadequate. Taken from the biblical symbolism of a person being

a vessel into which God fills divine wisdom and grace. *I have no one who cares about me, and I have no job or prospects. I'm feeling like a broken vessel these days.*

broken wind A medical condition in horses that causes difficulty breathing. *I called the doctor when my horse started showing signs of broken wind.*

bromance slang A very close friendship between two men. The word is a portmanteau of "bro" and "romance." *My brother has quite a bromance with his best friend—they do everything together.*

Bronx cheer A sputtering noise made by pressing the tongue and lips together, used to express either real or faux contempt, mockery, or displeasure; a raspberry. Primarily heard in US. *The fans collectively gave the opposing team a Bronx cheer when their relief pitcher walked onto the field.*

brony An adult male fan of the *My Little Pony* franchise. *I had no idea those guys were bronies until the topic of My Little Pony came up, and they got all excited.*

brood about (someone or something) To worry, fret, or obsess over someone or something. *Quit brooding about that fight you had with your girlfriend and just talk to her already! Recent financial losses have the boss brooding about the future of our small company.*

brood over To worry anxiously or be despondent about something or someone, especially at great length and in isolation. *I know you're upset about failing your exam, but don't brood over it all weekend. Tom's been brooding over our financial situation ever since he got laid off last month.*

broom closet The figurative place where one hides one's practice of Wicca or other Pagan religious beliefs or activities from other people, likened to a homosexual person being "in the closet" when they have not publicly revealed their sexual orientation. "Broom" is a reference to the stereotypical accessory of witches. *I had been studying the intricacies of real witchcraft for several years before I came out of the broom closet to my parents.*

bros before hoes slang A reminder, said by a male to his male friend(s), asserting that their friendship should be more important than relationships or interactions with females. *Come on, man, don't ditch us for that girl you just met! Bros before hoes, bro!*

BROTUS slang A humorous term applied to the close friendship between US President Barack Obama and Vice President Joe Biden. The term combines "bro" (a word for a close male friend taken from a shortening of "brother") with the abbreviation for "President of the United States" (POTUS). *I really hope that BROTUS lives on, even when Obama and Biden aren't in the White House anymore.*

browbeat (one) into (something) To thoroughly and continually dominate, intimidate, or bully someone into doing something. *I'm tired of seeing him browbeat her into agreeing with him.*

brown as a berry See [\(as\) brown as a berry](#).

brown-bag it To pack one's own food (e.g., in a brown paper bag), especially lunch, usually for work or school. *People who brown bag it each day eat healthier foods than those who go out for lunch.*

brown bagger Someone who brings in their own packed lunch (e.g., in a brown paper bag), as for work or school. *The brown baggers of the office always go out to the park to eat on nice days.*

brown bread 1. Literally, bread that has a higher amount of whole grain flour. *As a kid, I always liked white bread, but now that I'm older, I always choose brown bread for my sandwiches.* 2. Cockney rhyming slang for dead. Primarily heard in UK. *You didn't hear about Jim? He's brown bread, I'm afraid.*

brown energy Energy that is derived from traditional resources, such as coal, oil, natural gas, and nuclear power, which are seen by some as environmentally unfriendly. *If we're going to keep our planet clean, we need to move away from brown energy and invest in renewable resources, such as wind and solar.*

brown-noser noun One who seeks out the approval, attention, and/or support of others, especially superiors, through abject subservience, flattery, or fawning. *Tim is such an obvious brown-noser, always complementing the boss on her ideas and saying yes to anything she suggests.*

brown off slang To cause one to become angry. A noun or pronoun can be used between "brown" and "off." Primarily heard in UK. *Her selfish behavior really browns me off!*

brown out 1. verb To weaken in electrical energy, typically resulting in

dim lights. *The construction currently underway in our building causes our lights to brown out all the time.* **2.** noun A period of reduced electrical energy typically accompanied by dim lights. In this usage, it is often spelled as one word ("brownout"). *Thanks to the construction project currently underway in our building, we have brownouts all the time.*

brown power 1. Energy that is derived from traditional, non-renewable resources, such as coal, oil, and gas, which are seen by many as environmentally unfriendly. *If we're going to keep our planet clean, we need to move away from brown power and invest in renewable resources, such as wind and solar.* **2.** (usually capitalized) A political movement emphasizing the rights, empowerment, and equality of Latin-American citizens. Likely a derivative of Black Power, a similar political movement for empowering African Americans. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *Many see the upsurge of the Brown Power movement as a contributing factor in the president's re-election.*

brown study A state of deep contemplation or rumination, as of a reverie, daydream, or meditation. It originally meant a melancholic or depressed mood or state (dating from at least the 1500s), but has since largely lost that association. It is usually preceded by "in a." *Meredith sat at her desk in a brown study, carefully planning how to word her thesis proposal.*

brown thumb The inability or lack of skill in gardening or growing plants, such that they end up dying or fail to grow at all. Derived from "green thumb," meaning the opposite. *I'd love a flowerbed in the back yard, but I have such a brown thumb that the flowers would all die within a week.*

browed off slang Angered. *I am so browed off by her selfish behavior!*

brownie point An informal and intangible mark of credit or approval, as from having done a good deed or by ingratiating oneself to others (especially one's superiors). Usually used in the plural. *The company earned brownie points with the community for contributing part of their yearly earnings toward local development. You might get brownie points from the boss for volunteering to do things around the office, but it won't translate into a pay raise or promotion.*

brownnose 1. verb To try to curry favor with someone through flattery or favors in the hopes of getting something in return. *I'm not doing well at all in math this year, so it seems like brownnosing the teacher is my only hope for a*

good grade! Don't brownnose me with chocolates and sweet talk—just tell me what you want! **2.** noun One who seeks out the approval, attention, and/or support of others, especially superiors, through abject subservience, flattery, or fawning. *Tim is such an obvious brownnose, always complementing the boss on her ideas and saying yes to anything she suggests.*

browse on (something) To nibble or graze on plants, as of an animal. *What can I do to keep animals from browsing on my plants?*

browse over To casually or quickly look over something. *Just browse over the pamphlet—you don't have to read it word for word.*

bruised and battered Injured and/or thoroughly worn down, as from an assault or an exhausting, physically trying experience. *He drank too much at the bar, got into a fight, and showed up at our door all bruised and battered. The home team, though bruised and battered, emerged victorious from the tough match.*

bruit about To talk about something in a loose or gossipy manner. A noun can be used between "bruit" and "about." *They are bruited about that story as if it's the truth. Management is just casually bruited about the idea of layoffs. Don't bruit that nonsense about here, we're not buying it.*

brush against (someone or something) To pass by and lightly touch someone or something. *Be sure not to brush against this wall while the paint is still drying. Did you see the beautiful woman who just brushed against me?*

brush aside 1. To move someone or something out of one's path. A noun can be used between "brush" and "aside" or after "aside." *The man brushed us aside so that he could board the bus. I brushed aside the curtain and entered the room.* **2.** To casually, unexpectedly, or brusquely dismiss or ignore someone or something. A noun can be used between "brush" and "aside" or after "aside." *I know they're young, but you can't just brush their questions aside—they deserve answers. I haven't heard back from that company, so I guess they're brushing aside my complaint.*

brush away To remove something by applying a sweeping stroke to it or the surface it's on, typically with one's hand. A noun can be used between "brush" and "away" or after "away." *I stood up and brushed the crumbs away from my shirt.*

brush by (someone or something) To quickly pass by and lightly touch someone or something. *The man brushed by us so that he could board the bus. Be sure not to brush by this wall while the paint is still drying.*

brush down To remove something from fabric by brushing. A noun can be used between "brush" and "down" or after "down." *I have three dogs, so I always have to brush down my clothes before I leave the house.*

brush off **1.** verb Literally, to remove something by applying a sweeping stroke to it or the surface it's on, typically with one's hand. In this usage, a noun can be used between "brush" and "off" or after "off." *Be sure to brush off that chair before you sit down. I stood up and brushed the crumbs off my shirt.* **2.** verb To casually, unexpectedly, or brusquely dismiss or ignore someone or something. In this usage, a noun can be used between "brush" and "off" or after "off." *You can't just brush off the students' questions—they deserve answers. I haven't heard back from that company, so I guess they're brushing my complaint off.* **3.** verb To deflect or ignore something in order to remain unaffected by it. In this usage, a noun or pronoun is typically used between "brush" and "off." *If you're going to write for a major publication, you need to be able to brush off criticism. So you made an error—just brush it off and try to do better next inning.* **4.** noun The act of casually, unexpectedly, or brusquely dismissing or ignoring someone or something. In this usage, the phrase is usually hyphenated. *Be honest and tell John that you're not interested in dating anymore—don't just give him the brush-off. I haven't heard back from that company, so I guess my complaint is getting the brush-off.*

brush over To mention something casually, offering few details. *You can't just brush over the fact that you got engaged—tell me everything!*

brush (something) under the carpet To ignore, deny, or conceal from public view or knowledge something that is embarrassing, unappealing, or damaging to one's reputation. *The senator has been accused of trying to sweep his former drug use under the carpet. You need to stop sweeping your problems under the carpet.*

brush (something) under the mat To ignore, deny, or conceal from public view or knowledge something that is embarrassing, unappealing, or damaging to one's reputation. *The senator has been accused of trying to brush his former drug use under the mat. You need to stop brushing your*

problems under the mat. Nothing will get resolved like that!

brush (something) under the rug To ignore, deny, or conceal from public view or knowledge something that is embarrassing, unappealing, or damaging to one's reputation. *The senator has been accused of trying to sweep his former drug use under the rug. You need to stop sweeping your problems under the rug.*

brush up 1. To refamiliarize oneself with a topic or issue. *I need to brush up on factorials before attempting to teach them on Monday.* **2.** To improve the appearance of something. *We need to brush up this old house before any prospective buyers get here.*

brush with death An experience in which one almost dies. *I value my life a lot more since my brush with death in the accident.*

Brussels A metonymy for the European Union (Brussels being its de facto capital). *Representatives from Brussels have said that the EU has been experiencing greater economic growth in the last month.*

BTW An abbreviation for "by the way." Commonly used in text messaging. *BTW bring your own yoga mat on Saturday.*

bubble over 1. Literally, of a liquid, to boil so vigorously that it flows out of its container. *If you put too much water in the pot, it might bubble over.* **2.** By extension, for an emotion to be exhibited because it is too strong for one to contain. *Her enthusiasm for the subject she teaches just bubbles over in the classroom. Their excitement at becoming homeowners is bubbling over—no one is usually that interested in discussing recessed lighting!*

bubble up 1. Of a liquid, to emerge from something, usually from under a surface, in a bubbling manner. *Take a sample of the substance that's bubbling up from the ground.* **2.** For an emotion to be exhibited because it is too strong for one to contain. *Her enthusiasm for the subject she teaches always bubbles up in the classroom. Their excitement at becoming homeowners is bubbling up—no one is usually that interested in discussing recessed lighting!* **3.** To become stronger or more intense, especially after having been suppressed. *Anger bubbled up in me with each note of criticism from my peers.*

buck fever 1. Nervous anticipation and excitement felt by a novice or inexperienced hunter when seeing game (not necessarily deer) for the first time. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *Calm down, son, and get that buck*

fever under control or you won't be able to hit the thing! **2.** Any feelings of nervous anticipation and excitement felt before a new experience. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *I had a bit of buck fever before my first varsity football game.*

buck for (something) To pursue or work toward something. *Joe and I are both bucking for the promotion. I know Amelia is bucking for that award, but I heard they're giving it to Jenny.*

buck naked slang Entirely nude, especially in others' view. *My roommate is so embarrassing, always walking around the house buck naked!*

buck off Of a horse, to stand on its back legs, in an attempt to knock a rider off its back. The rider can be mentioned between "buck" and "off" or after "off." *Be careful with that horse—he's pretty ornery and might try to buck you off.*

the buck stops here The ultimate responsibility is mine. A set phrase used when the speaker intends to resolve a situation mired in indecision or inaction. *This strike can't go on any longer, so the buck stops here—I will personally meet with the head of the union today.*

buck the system To rebel against, avoid, or break the rules, either those of life in general or of a specific structure or organization. *Why are you trying to buck the system? Just wait in line like everyone else! You're expected to be at your desk by 8 AM, so quit bucking the system and showing up late!*

buck the trend To develop in an unexpected, surprising, or unforeseen way, especially in a way that contradicts recent history. Typically used in reference to financial matters. *Although property values in our city are down overall, one neighborhood is bucking the trend and still getting fair market value.*

buck up To adopt a positive outlook, attitude, or mood when one is upset or discouraged. Although typically issued as an instruction, the phrase can also be used with a noun or pronoun between "buck" and "up." *Buck up, honey—I'm sure the interview didn't go as badly as you think. I tried to buck up my daughter as she fretted over her test scores.*

bucket down Of rain, to pour down heavily and at great length. *It started bucketing down just as I began cycling home.*

bucket list A list of accomplishments or tasks one hopes to do or achieve

before one dies. "Bucket" here is taken from the phrase "kick the bucket," meaning to die. *Sky-diving is the number-one thing on my bucket list.*

bucket of bolts A piece of machinery, typically an automobile, that is extremely old and/or in total disrepair. *I can't sell this old bucket of bolts!*

buckle down **1.** To anchor or fasten something or someone in place. In this usage, a noun or pronoun can be used between "buckle" and "down." *Did you buckle the bikes down securely? Can you please buckle down the baby in her highchair?* **2.** To put forth maximum effort toward something, especially after not having done so. *If you want to get a passing grade this semester, you'll really need to buckle down and study hard.*

buckle in To anchor or fasten oneself or another in place with a seatbelt, as in a vehicle. A noun can be used between "buckle" and "in" or after "in." *Can you buckle the baby in while I put our bags in the trunk? This car is not moving until everyone is buckled in!*

buckle under **1.** To collapse or fall apart, as of a structure or object. In this usage, the cause of the collapse can be stated after "under." *Three people sitting on the chair at the same time caused it to buckle under. That rickety old roof buckled under the weight of the snow.* **2.** To succumb to pressure or stress. In this usage, the cause of the collapse is usually stated after "under." *Karen buckled under the stress of being student council president and resigned from her post.*

buckle up **1.** To anchor or fasten something or someone in place. In this usage, a noun or pronoun can be used between "buckle" and "up." *Are the bikes securely buckled up? Can you please buckle the baby up in her highchair?* **2.** To anchor or fasten oneself or another in place with a seatbelt, as in a vehicle. A noun can be used between "buckle" and "up" or after "up." *Can you buckle the baby up while I put our bags in the trunk? This car is not moving until everyone is buckled up!* **3.** To bend at the waist. *She keeps buckling up and clutching her stomach, so the pain must be pretty bad—let's take her to the doctor.* **4.** slang Prepare for what is about to happen, such as danger, excitement, trouble, etc. *The boss is in a terrible mood today, so buckle up! Buckle up, folks. This game is going down to the wire!*

Buckley's Little to no chance of something. Of uncertain origin, it is either a reference to "Buckley's and none" (a pun from the former department store Buckley's & Nunn), or to the escapades of the escaped colonial convict

William Buckley. Primarily heard in Australia. *I'd say you have Buckley's of getting that loan approved.*

Buckley's and none Little to no chance of something. It is likely a pun taken from "Buckley & Nunn," an Australian department store that was founded in 1851. It is often preceded by "two chances" in some form or another. Primarily heard in Australia. A: *"Do you think she'd go out on a date with me?"* B: *"I'd say you have two chances: Buckley's and none."*

Buckley's chance Little to no chance of something. Of uncertain origin, it is either a reference to "Buckley's and none" (a pun from the former department store Buckley's & Nunn), or to the escapades of the escaped colonial convict William Buckley. Primarily heard in Australia. *I'd say you have Buckley's chance of getting that loan approved.*

Buckley's hope Little to no chance of something. Of uncertain origin, it is either a reference to "Buckley's and none" (a pun from the former department store Buckley's & Nunn), or to the escapades of the escaped colonial convict William Buckley. Primarily heard in Australia. *I'd say you have Buckley's hope of getting that loan approved.*

bucks party A bachelor party. Primarily heard in Australia. *For Paul's bucks party, his friends rented a limousine to drive them to every bar in the city.*

bud out Of a plant, to produce buds (which blossom into leaves or flowers). *I'm so relieved to see that flower budding out—I thought I had killed it!*

bud scale The hard, protective layer surrounding the buds of some plants. *Oh, that's just a bud scale—your plant is fine.*

a budding genius A young person who exhibits signs of great intelligence. *This kid's a budding genius—have you seen the complex equations he can solve?*

buddy up 1. To pair together with someone. *OK, kids, buddy up and start working on the assignment.* 2. To be overly or obnoxiously friendly with someone, often for personal gain. *He's clearly buddying up to the teacher so that she'll relent and give him extra credit. The new guy needs to calm down and stop trying so hard to buddy up with us.*

budget (something) for (something) To set aside a specific

amount of something, often money or time, for something else (such as an expense or task). *Did you budget enough money for all of your bills this month? I was almost late to class because I didn't budget enough time for editing my paper.*

buff down To make a solid surface (such as metal, wood, or plastic) smooth by removing imperfections with the application of a strong and consistent frictional force, especially from a buffing wheel. *Somebody scratched my car, so I'll have to take it to the shop to get it buffed down.*

buff out **1.** To remove or smooth out imperfections from a solid surface, such as metal, wood, or plastic, by applying a strong and consistent frictional force, especially from a buffing wheel. *Somebody scratched my car! I'll have to take it to the shop to get it buffed out.* **2.** To conceal or remove minor flaws, imperfections, or damage, either physically (as from a surface) or figuratively (as from one's personality or background). *Prior to his campaign, the candidate hired a PR firm to buff out some of his problems relating to younger voters. The groundskeeper buffed out the field ahead of the big game tonight.*

buff the muffin vulgar slang To masturbate. A term usually applied to women. A: "Why is she all embarrassed today?" B: "Oh, her crush walked in on her buffing the muffin. How horrifying is that?"

buff up To make a surface (such as metal) smooth by rubbing it so that it shines. A noun can be used between "buff" and "up" or after "up." *I buffed up my car so that it would look nice at the wedding.*

bug off slang Get out of here; go away; get lost. *Listen, I don't want to buy any, so why don't you just bug off and leave me alone!*

bug out **1.** To become very stressed or scared. *Don't bug out about the flat tire—I'm calling a tow truck right now. She's bugging out about the wedding again, so go in there and tell her that everything will be OK.* **2.** To widen. Typically used to describe someone's eyes (especially in moments of surprise, panic, etc.). *Nancy's eyes bugged out when she saw that the dining room ceiling had collapsed.* **3.** To leave a place hastily. *We bugged out of the party when we heard sirens approaching.* **4.** To leave a location or retreat, as of military troops. *We've been told to bug out before sundown.*

bugger all Nothing or next to nothing. Primarily heard in UK, Australia, New Zealand. *I've been working on this project for three months straight, and*

I've got bugger all to show for it! Quit lecturing me, you know bugger all about the issue.

bugger off Get out of here; go away; get lost. Primarily heard in UK, Australia, New Zealand. *Listen, I don't want to buy any, so why don't you just bugger off and leave me alone!*

Buggins' turn Appointment or advancement based on a series of rotation (as due, for example, to seniority) rather than individual merit, qualification, or achievement. So called for the commonness and ubiquity of Buggins as a surname in the UK Primarily heard in UK. *Even though I work twice as hard as him, he's going to get the promotion because of Buggins' turn.*

build a better mousetrap To invent something that improves upon an existing object or concept. *You don't have to try so hard to build a better mousetrap—just design what interests you and see what happens.*

build a case against (someone or something) To compile evidence that supports an argument or charges against someone or something. *The job of the prosecutor is to build a case against the defendant. We're trying to build a case against the company because many employees have been wrongly terminated.*

build bridges To connect disparate people or groups. *The senator was working to build bridges between the two parties on the contentious issue. A lingua franca is used to build bridges between people who do not speak the same language.*

build castles in Spain To create dreams, hopes, or plans that are impossible, unrealistic, or have very little chance of succeeding. *You need sound financial advice and a strong plan if you're going to start your own business—don't just build castles in Spain.*

build castles in the air To create dreams, hopes, or plans that are impossible, unrealistic, or have very little chance of succeeding. *You need sound financial advice and a strong plan if you're going to start your own business—don't just build castles in the air.*

build castles in the sky To create dreams, hopes, or plans that are impossible, unrealistic, or have very little chance of succeeding. *You need sound financial advice and a strong plan if you're going to start your own business—don't just build castles in the sky.*



build down To decrease or lessen. *That group encourages the government to build down on wasteful spending. Give the traffic some time to build down before you leave the office—otherwise, you'll just sit on the highway for an hour.*

build in To include something as a fundamental component of something else. A noun can be used between "build" and "in" or after "in." *Be sure to build in some extra time for questions from the audience. There's hardly any storage in the house right now, so we asked the contractor to build more shelves in.*

build into (something) 1. To include something as a fundamental component of something else. A noun can be used between "build" and "into." *What new features did they build into this app update? Be sure to build time for audience questions into your presentation.* 2. To give someone an essential role in something. A noun can be used between "build" and "into." *Of course that company isn't hiring—the CEO has built all of his pals into every department!*

build (one's) hopes on (someone or something) To have expectations that are tied to the success, performance, etc., of a particular person or thing. *Why are we building our hopes on him when we know he's not popular enough to defeat the incumbent? I had built my hopes on this promotion and was crushed when I didn't get it.*

build on(to) (something) To use something as a foundation and expand upon or add to it. A noun can be used between "build" and "on(to)." *This kitchen is far too small—we'll need to build an addition onto it. And to build on Katie's point about romanticism in the text, the description of nature at the beginning of chapter 2 is a fine example of that.*

build out of (something) To assemble or construct something from a certain material. *The construction crew plans to build the wall out of bricks.*

build out onto (something) To expand or extend a structure or building into a certain area. *Our neighbors had to get a permit to build out onto the undeveloped tract behind their house.*

build (something) on sand To create, provide, or use an unstable or impermanent foundation for something, such as a building, business, or relationship. It is taken from a parable in the Bible (Matthew 7:24–27 and

Luke 6:46–49) in which Jesus warns that those who do not follow Him build their lives as houses on sand, liable to be washed away by the elements. *In hindsight, I guess our relationship was kind of built on sand, since we didn't really have much in common to begin with. Without proper financing, you'll end up building your business on sand!*

build (something) out over (something) To extend a structure or building over a particular area or thing. *The house is famous for building an outdoor area out over a waterfall.*

build to order To construct or assemble something in accordance with specific parameters (usually from a buyer). A noun can be used between "build" and "to." *The client must be rich if he wants us to build the boat to order!*

build up **1.** verb To increase something gradually. A noun or pronoun can be used between "build" and "up" or after "up." *I've been putting \$50 aside every month in an attempt to build up my savings.* **2.** verb To encourage or flatter someone. A noun or pronoun can be used between "build" and "up" or after "up." *Not getting that job left my son really discouraged, so I've been trying to build him up.* **3.** verb To become stronger or more muscular. A noun or pronoun can be used between "build" and "up" or after "up." *I'm trying to build up my leg muscles so that I can run even faster.* **4.** verb To develop an area with more buildings or businesses. A noun or pronoun can be used between "build" and "up" or after "up." *Wow, they've really built up that part of town—I remember when it was just a field!* **5.** verb To greatly raise expectations for something by praising or hyping it. A noun or pronoun can be used between "build" and "up" or after "up." *I thought that movie was really disappointing, possibly because my friends told me how amazing it was and built it up too much.* **6.** verb To accumulate over time. A noun or pronoun can be used between "build" and "up" or after "up." *You should wash your hair every day, unless you want oily residue building up. The dirty laundry is really building up—when was the last time you did the wash?* **7.** noun An accumulation of something. The phrase is often hyphenated in this usage. *I use so many products in my hair that I need to wash the build-up out at the end of the day. It looks like you've got a lot of build-up around the filter. It should run fine after I clean it.*

build up a head of steam To gain momentum or the energy needed to move forward. *The protests against the corrupt organization built up a*

head of steam when the national media started covering the story. You can't make the jump standing still—you'll need to build up a head of steam.

build up to (something) **1.** To reach something gradually. *I know you're building up to your point, but you're also putting your audience to sleep. You can't just walk into the gym and grab the 50-pound weights—you need to build up to that!* **2.** To become or develop into something gradually. *The issues that you're trying to ignore in your relationship will build up to serious problems in time.*

built-in A shelving unit, bookcase, or other storage unit that is built into the walls of a house or building. *I'm disappointed that the closets in the house are so small, but at least there are plenty of built-ins.*

built like a brick outhouse **1.** Very sturdy and well-constructed. *This building is built like a brick outhouse, so I'm not surprised that it's still standing after the hurricane.* **2.** slang Very muscular and strong. *Bert is built like a brick outhouse, so get him to help you move all this furniture!* **3.** slang Very buxom and curvaceous. *Mary has a great body—she's built like a brick outhouse.*

built like a tank Having a physique or structure that is strong and physically imposing. *Man, you're built like a tank! You'd be a great addition to the football team as a linebacker! If you're going out in this snow, take my car—it's built like a tank!*

bulge out To protrude. *That growth is now bulging out of your neck—you really need to get that checked. That trash bag might rip—something on this side is bulging out.*

bulge with (something) To protrude with a particular substance or for a particular reason. *The doctor said that I'm fine—the growth is just bulging with harmless pus!*

bulger In golf, a wooden club (especially a driver) characterized by a face that is convex and thus "bulges" slightly outward. It is no longer in common use. *My grandpa's collection of old clubs even has a bulger in it.*

bulk bill To charge the costs of a patient's care by a general practitioner, hospital, or other health service provider to Medicare, the Australian government's universal health insurance system. Primarily heard in Australia. *Recent legislation is aimed at introducing a mandatory co-pay for all*

services bulk billed by GPs and hospitals.

bulk billing The practice of charging the costs of a patient's care by a general practitioner, hospital, or other health service provider to Medicare, the Australian government's universal health insurance system. Primarily heard in Australia. *Recent legislation is aimed at introducing a mandatory co-pay for all bulk billing by GPs and hospitals.*

bulk up To boost in size or strength. *Most of the wrestlers are bulking up for the weigh-in on Thursday. That country seems to be bulking up their military presence in the region.*

a bull in a china shop One who is aggressive and clumsy in a situation that requires delicacy and care. *My son is always like a bull in a china shop, so I'm worried about taking him to the museum. Surrounding him with valuables does not seem like a wise idea! This is a complex problem, and if you attack it like a bull in a china shop, you will alienate a lot of people.*

bull session Any informal, spontaneous, and lengthy conversation or discussion among a group of people, especially men. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *My co-workers and I like to have bull sessions in the restaurant after we close for the night.*

bulldoze into (something) To aggressively force one's way into some task or thing, especially clumsily and/or carelessly. *Don't just bulldoze into this assignment—research the data carefully. I bulldozed into the obstacle course and ended up skinning both my knees.*

bulldoze (one's) way through (something) To force one's way through some task or thing, especially clumsily and/or carelessly. *Don't just bulldoze your way through this assignment—research the data carefully. I bulldozed my way through the obstacle course and ended up skinning both my knees.*

bulldoze through (something) To aggressively force one's way through some task or thing, especially clumsily and/or carelessly. *Don't just bulldoze through this assignment—research the data carefully. I bulldozed through the obstacle course and ended up skinning both my knees.*

bulletproof 1. adjective Resilient or impervious to bullets, as of fabric or other material. *That bulletproof vest saved my life!* 2. adjective Resistant to

mishandling, abuse, damage, error, or malfunction. *Don't worry about breaking the phone, these new models are bulletproof! We've developed a bulletproof computer program that even the most non-computer-savvy person will be able to use!* **3.** adjective Extremely well planned or thought out, such as to be impervious to criticism or failure. *We have a bulletproof plan for tackling poverty in the neighborhood. My thesis proposal is absolutely bulletproof.* **4.** verb To make resilient or impervious to bullets, as of fabric or other material. *After crime rates rose in the city, many stores began bulletproofing their windows and doors.* **5.** verb To make resistant to mishandling, abuse, damage, error, or malfunction. *Don't worry about breaking the phone, these new models have been totally bulletproofed! We've bulletproofed our latest computer program so that even the most non-computer-savvy person will be able to use it!* **6.** verb To plan or think something out so well as to be impervious to criticism or failure. *Make sure you bulletproof your plan before you submit it to the developers. I spent an extra two weeks totally bulletproofing my doctoral thesis.*

bully for you Good for you! Well done! Primarily heard in UK. *I heard you got promoted—bully for you!*

a bully is always a coward A bully will only mistreat others perceived to be weaker. *Of course he always picks on kids who are smaller than him. A bully is always a coward.*

bully (one) into (something) To thoroughly and continually dominate, intimidate, or browbeat someone into doing something. *Oh, they've tried to bully us into accepting their subpar proposal, but we refuse to settle.*

bully pulpit A public position that allows a person to speak with authority and share their views with a large audience. *James used his position of class president as a bully pulpit to raise awareness about cyberbullying.*

bum around 1. To wander aimlessly. *My brother still doesn't have a job or a home—he's just been bumming around and staying at friends' houses. Whenever I visit a new city, I like to bum around for a while on foot just to get a feel for the place.* **2.** To visit bars regularly. *He doesn't bum around anymore—in fact, I heard he stopped drinking altogether.*

bum around with (one) To spend a lot of unstructured or unproductive time with another person. *You need to get serious about your future and stop bumming around with your college buddies.*

bum chum vulgar slang A derogatory term for a homosexual man's boyfriend or partner.

bum out 1. To discourage or make sad. In this usage, a noun or pronoun can be used between "bum" or "out" or after "out." *Todd just heard that he didn't get the job, and he's really bummed out. I can't watch the news because it always bums me out.* 2. To annoy. *My parents were really bummed out when they heard from the principal that I had cut class.* 3. To do something badly. *I guess I bummed out on the interview because I didn't get the job.* 4. To have an unpleasant drug-fueled experience. *I don't take that drug anymore because I really bummed out the last time.*

a bum rap An unfair accusation, punishment, or reputation. *Tommy was sent to jail on a bum rap because of his prior criminal history, but we know he didn't rob that bank—he was with us the day it happened! He didn't get elected because he got such a bum rap from the mainstream media during his campaign.*

bum rush To attack or barge into a person or place forcefully and/or violently. *The bouncer wasn't letting anyone in, even though there was plenty of space inside, so we all decided to bum rush him. Everyone bum rushed the stage after the amazing concert.*

bum (something) off (someone) To borrow or use something that belongs to someone else. *Hey, can I bum a pen off you?*

a bum steer Poor, inaccurate, or misleading information or advice. *My advisor really gave me a bum steer when she pushed me to take this class that I'm currently failing. I did my own research to confirm that my doctor wasn't giving me a bum steer when she suggested this procedure.*

bumble along To go about bunglingly, awkwardly, mindlessly, etc., during some task or in general. *There are so many problems in the world, but people would rather bumble along than do anything to help change them. That new kid just bumbles along in the warehouse, not paying attention to any of our safety requirements.*

Bumfuck, Egypt rude slang A non-specific distant place. *What, is this place in Bumfuck, Egypt? Are we ever going to get there?*

bummed (out) Sad or discouraged. *Todd just heard that he didn't get the job, and he's really bummed out. I can't watch the news because it always*

makes me bummed.

bump along **1.** Literally, to bounce or be jostled while traveling on an uneven surface. *My car bumped along the stretch of road where the construction crew was working.* **2.** By extension, to proceed in a chaotic or nonlinear manner, as of a task or situation. *The project just bumped along for months until we finally got the funding we needed.*

bump along the bottom To be in poor condition and show no improvement. Typically used to describe economic issues. Primarily heard in UK. *Without major changes, the economy will still be bumping along the bottom for many years to come.*

bump and grind **1.** noun A dance characterized by aggressive and overtly sexualized hip movements, either by a single dancer or between two dance partners. *It was a little disconcerting to see teenagers doing the bump and grind at the prom.* **2.** noun Any series or combination of rough, jarring movements, especially as in whitewater kayaking or road racing. *The bump and grind through those last rapids gave me a headache!* **3.** verb To dance in a manner characterized by aggressive and overtly sexualized hip movements, either by a single dancer or between two dance partners. *It was a little disconcerting to see teenagers bumping and grinding at the prom.* **4.** verb To perform any series or combination of rough, jarring movements, especially as in whitewater kayaking or road racing. *We're going to have to bump and grind through this next section of the river.*

bump heads with To clash with another person on a particular issue. *Monica and I are always bumping heads with each other about how to go about these reports because she wants to start writing, while I think we should research first. I just know I'm going to have to bump heads with Ted again about this budget—we always want to cut different things.*

bump in the road A problem that arises and interferes with forward progress (usually only temporarily). *The project hit a bump in the road when Tom suddenly resigned, but I know we'll be fine—we just need to redistribute his assignment and keep going. Oh honey, I know you're upset that you didn't get the lead in the play, but it's just a bump in the road—and you still got a great part!*

bump into (someone or something) **1.** To touch or strike something or someone, usually lightly and unintentionally. *I lost my balance*

and bumped into the person ahead of me in line. We need to move that coat rack because the door keeps bumping into it. 2. To randomly encounter someone. We didn't mean to exclude you! When Chad and I went out, we just bumped into the rest of the group, that's all. You won't believe who I bumped into at the airport.

bump off **1.** To unexpectedly remove someone from something, often a list or schedule. In this usage, a noun or pronoun can be used between "bump" and "off" or after "off." *I'm staying in Denver another night because I got bumped off my flight. Unfortunately, we ran out of time during tonight's show and had to bump our musical guest off. 2.* To cause one to abruptly lose one's Internet or other connection. *No, the page didn't load because I got bumped off the Internet. Back when we had dial-up Internet, just picking up the phone would bump you off your connection. 3. slang* To kill someone. In this usage, a noun or pronoun can be used between "bump" and "off" or after "off." *Ray bumped off the informant, just as the boss told him to.*

bump that slang Disregard that. *Wait, bump that—I just found Phil's current phone number.*

bump up **1.** To strike and damage something. A noun can be used between "bump" and "up." *That accident bumped up the passenger side door of my car. You can borrow my phone but please try not to bump it up. 2.* To hurt someone by striking or otherwise impacting them. *I got really bumped up in that car accident. 3.* To increase something. A noun or pronoun can be used between "bump" and "up" or after "up." *I need to bump up my savings if I want to buy a new car before the end of the year. Can you bump up the volume a little bit? We can't hear the radio back here. 4.* To promote someone to a better position or situation. A noun or pronoun can be used between "bump" and "up" or after "up." *We were very excited to get bumped up to first class on our flight home.*

bump (up) against (someone or something) To touch or strike something or someone, usually lightly and unintentionally. *Whenever someone opens the door, it bumps against the coat rack. I lost my balance and bumped up against the person in front of me in line.*

bumper to bumper Very close together. Typically said of traffic that is moving very slowly or not at all. *The cars on the highway are bumper to bumper right now—there's no way we'll get there on time.*

a bumpy ride A tough time. *If you think going to graduate school while working a full-time job is easy, you're in for a bumpy ride!*

bums in seats Passengers in a vehicle of mass transit or audience members at a given performance or sporting event. *The airline has introduced major summer sales in an attempt to get more bums in seats. The reviews for the show weren't great, but at the end of the day, the only thing that matters is having bums in seats.*

bums on seats slang An audience in attendance. Primarily heard in Australia, Canada. *Ticket sales are down because this team doesn't play well enough to put bums on seats.*

bum's rush **1.** A hasty and forceful removal from a place. Likened to the ejection of a vagrant (a "bum") from a place. *We got the bum's rush out of the sports bar after we started rooting for the home team's rival.* **2.** A peremptory or abrupt dismissal, due to a failed or rejected plan, idea, or performance. *I brought up the possibility of reducing managerial pay to other employees, but that idea quickly got the bum's rush.*

bun fight **1.** A loud gathering. It often refers to a tea party or other formal gathering. Primarily heard in UK. *I hope that bun fight in the next room can contain themselves! They are being so noisy that we can't enjoy our tea in here!* **2.** An angry and/or impassioned exchange. A: "How long has this bun fight been going on?" B: "I don't know, it feels like they've been arguing for hours!"

a bunch of baloney Falsehoods, nonsense, or foolishness. Baloney in this sense might have originated from the word "blarney," which means flattering or nonsensical talk; more usually it refers to bologna sausage, which is blended from different meats, therefore implying content of inferior or dubious quality. Primarily heard in US. *You're going to give me \$5,000 if I sign the lease today? What a bunch of baloney.*

a bunch of fives slang A fist. *That kid is in the nurse's office with a bloody nose because the bully gave him a bunch of fives in the face.*

a bunch of malarkey Exaggerated, foolish, or untruthful talk; nonsense or falsehoods. *Personally, I think the notion of "love at first sight" is a bunch of malarkey.*

bunch up **1.** To form or accumulate into a group, cluster, or mass or some

kind. A noun can be used between "bunch" and "up" or after "up." *It was so cold out that we all bunched up together for warmth. The blanket is still bunched up on that side—can you smooth it out?* **2.** To crumple something. A noun can be used between "bunch" and "up" or after "up." *Don't bunch up your dress in your arms like that!*

bundle of energy Someone who is exceptionally energetic, alert, productive, or hyperactive. *My kids are always such bundles of energy first thing in the morning. Susan is a bundle of energy! She's already finished two of her essays today and is beginning to work on a third.*

bundle of joy A newborn baby. *We threw a baby shower for Jessica today so she can get all she needs in preparation for her little bundle of joy.*

bundle of laughs Fun, funny, and pleasant. Often used sarcastically to indicate that someone is unpleasant or not enjoyable to be around. A: *"Is Mr. Grant always cranky?"* B: *"Oh, yeah—he's a real bundle of laughs!"* *I always have so much fun when Katie's around—she's totally a bundle of laughs!*

a bundle of nerves Someone who is very nervous, anxious, or uneasy. *I was a bundle of nerves before the driving test started. Look at that poor bundle of nerves over there. She's so anxious she's shaking.*

bundle off **1.** To wrap something up tightly before moving or sending it to another person or place. A noun can be used between "bundle" and "off." *Don't worry, I bundled off the picture frames before packing them in the box.* **2.** To leave a place hastily. A noun can be used between "bundle" and "off." A: *"I didn't see Alice this morning."* B: *"Oh, she bundled off because she was running late."* **3.** To send someone somewhere, usually hastily. A noun can be used between "bundle" and "off." *Unfortunately, I had to bundle my wailing son off to my sister so that I wouldn't miss my flight.*

bundle (someone) into (something) **1.** To dress someone, typically a child, in heavy winter clothing or outerwear. *It's freezing out, so bundle Janie into her parka, scarf, and boots—and don't forget her hat and gloves!* **2.** To help someone, typically a child, get into bed. *When you bundle Janie into bed, don't forget her teddy bear.*

bundle up **1.** To dress oneself or another (typically a child) into heavy winter clothing or outerwear. A noun can be used between "bundle" and "up." *It's freezing out, so bundle Janie up in her parka, scarf, and boots—and don't forget her hat and gloves! I bundled up in many layers before I went out to*

shovel the snow. **2.** To wrap something up tightly before moving or sending it to another person or place. A noun can be used between "bundle" and "up." *Don't worry, I bundled up the picture frames before packing them in the box.*

bung in To force something into a place or thing. A noun can be used between "bung" and "in" or after "in." *Don't just bung in the key—you might break the lock!*

bung up To injure or damage someone or something. A noun can be used between "bung" and "up." *That car accident really bunged my back up. My car is still bunged up from the accident—I really need to take it to the mechanic.*

bunged up Injured or damaged. *My back is still bunged up from that car accident a few months ago My car is all bunged up from the accident—I really need to take it to the mechanic.*

bungle up To jumble up or ruin something. A noun can be used before or after "up." *Boy, you really bungled up this report—I'm not sure I can even fix it.*

bunk down (for the night) To go to bed. *It's time for the kids to bunk down for the night. Janet was so tired after her trip that she bunked down as soon as she got home.*

bunk off To absent oneself or leave early from school or work when one would normally be required to be there; to play truant. Primarily heard in UK. *I was so restless and bored at work that I decided to just bunk off after lunch without telling anyone. Hey, Jim and I are planning on bunking off from school on Friday, do you want to come with us? That's the last time you bunk off class, mister! From now on, I'm dropping you off to school every morning!*

bunk (something) To absent oneself or leave early from something (usually school or work) when one would normally be required to be there; to play truant. Primarily heard in UK. *I was so restless and bored at work that I decided to just bunk it after lunch without telling anyone. Hey, Jim and I are planning on bunking from school on Friday, do you want to come with us? That's the last time you bunk class, mister! From now on, I'm dropping you to school every morning!*

bunk (up) together To share a room, bed, or other sleeping space with

another person. *You two will need to bunk together because we weren't able to reserve enough hotel rooms for everyone. I'll never forget the motley crew I bunked up together with at camp that summer.*

bunk (up) with (someone) To share a room, bed, or other sleeping space with another person. *You will need to bunk up with your sister because we weren't able to reserve enough hotel rooms for everyone. They became my best friends after I bunked with them at camp.*

bunked Very intoxicated. *Do you remember last night at all? You were bunked!*

bunny girl A waitress or hostess at a club, bar, or restaurant who wears sexually suggestive clothing with accessories resembling that of a bunny (for instance, rabbit-shaped ears and a fluffy cotton tail). *It's degrading having to work as a bunny girl to pay for college, but it will be worth it once I have my degree.*

bunny hop **1.** noun A short hop or jump made from a slightly crouched position, likened to the hop of a rabbit. *He looks absolutely ridiculous doing those bunny hops on the dance floor.* **2.** noun A short, jerky movement forward in a vehicle. *I almost stalled the car during my driving test, but after a little bunny hop, I was able to keep the car moving.* **3.** noun A small jump executed on a bicycle while standing on the pedals. *Kids like to go to the vacant lot to practice their bunny hops.* **4.** noun An obstacle on a mountain bike or other cycling course that is cleared by jumping over it without dismounting. *He fell on the first bunny hop. I don't think he's cut out for professional racing.* **5.** noun A minute jump made by a figure skater to gain speed during or before a maneuver. *After a quick bunny hop, the skater proceeded to execute a stunning triple axel.* **6.** verb To hop or jump forward from a slightly crouched position, likened to the hop of a rabbit. *He looks absolutely ridiculous bunny hopping like that on the dance floor.* **7.** verb Of or in a vehicle, to move jerkily forward a short distance. *I almost stalled the car during my driving test, but it just bunny hopped a bit, and I was able to keep the car moving.* **8.** verb On a bicycle, to hop or jump into the air while standing on the pedals. *Kids like to go to the vacant lot to practice bunny hopping.* **9.** verb To clear an obstacle on a mountain bike or other cycling course by jumping over it without dismounting. *He fell after his first attempt to bunny hop. I don't think he's cut out for professional racing.* **10.** verb Of a figure skater, to execute a minute jump made so as to gain speed during or

before a maneuver. *After bunny hopping, the skater proceeded to execute a stunning triple axel.*

bunny hug **1.** A sweatshirt with a hood and large front pockets. The term is not used outside the province of Saskatchewan in Canada. Primarily heard in Canada. *I love this bunny hug, it's so warm and comfortable.* **2.** A ballroom dance characterized by a syncopated, ragtime rhythm, popular in the US in the early 1900s. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *Although it's not as popular as other dances anymore, I still enjoy doing the bunny hug.*

buoy up **1.** To physically support and elevate someone or something. A noun or pronoun can be used between "buoy" and "up." *My daughter needs floaties to buoy her up in the pool.* **2.** To emotionally support someone or something. A noun or pronoun can be used between "buoy" and "up." *I can always count on my friends to buoy me up during tough times.* **3.** To bolster or strengthen someone or something. A noun or pronoun can be used between "buoy" and "up." *They're counting on the popular young actor's endorsement to really buoy up their campaign.*

burden of proof The requirement and obligation of providing sound, reasonable evidence supporting a charge or allegation. Originating and used primarily in law, it can be applied more broadly to any situation in which a contentious dispute arises. *In court, the burden of proof always rests on the plaintiffs and the prosecutors. The burden of proof is on you to show that the computer was broken before you bought it.*

burden (someone) with (something) To share something distressing or troublesome with another person. *I'm sorry to burden you with my problems, but I could really use some advice here. Don't burden her with that information now—wait until she's done with her exams.*

burgeon out To quickly grow and mature. Usually used in reference to plants. *I can't wait for the flowers I planted to burgeon out and fill our yard with color!*

buried away See [bury away](#).

buried her in See [bury in](#).

buried the hatchet See [bury the hatchet](#).

buried treasure **1.** Literally, treasure (such as gold, jewels, or other valuable items) that has been buried under sand or lays hidden in the ocean.

Every kid dreams of finding buried treasure at the beach. **2.** Anything that has lain dormant or undiscovered for a long period of time that, upon discovery, is found to be of great value. *The writer, who was unknown in his lifetime, became hugely popular after the buried treasure of his unpublished manuscript was discovered among his belongings.*

buried under See [bury under \(something\)](#).

burn 1. slang, noun An insult. A: *"Nice ears, Dumbo."* B: *"Ooh, sick burn, dude. Like I don't know my ears stick out!"* **2.** slang, verb To insult someone. *Did you hear what she said? You just got burned, bro.*

burn a hole in (one's) pocket A phrase usually applied to money, suggesting that the person with the money feels the need to spend it quickly. *My allowance is burning a hole in my pocket! I can't wait until school is over, so I can go buy some baseball cards! Don't let that bonus burn a hole in your pocket—save it up for something you really want.*

burn at the stake 1. Literally, to execute someone by tying them to a stake and setting them on fire (a common punishment for heretics in the Middle Ages). A noun or pronoun can be used between "burn" and "at." *Is it true that Joan of Arc was burned at the stake?* **2.** By extension, to punish someone harshly or excessively. A noun or pronoun can be used between "burn" and "at." *The kids definitely should not have broken curfew, but don't burn them at the stake for it. I think the board wants to burn the ex-CEO at the stake for his corrupt business practices.*

burn away 1. To continue burning (as of something that is already ablaze). *We watched helplessly as our house burned away despite the firefighters' efforts. The candles on the birthday cake burned away while Molly made a wish.* **2.** To obliterate with fire, as of an object or substance that has been ignited. *It's getting cold in here again because all the logs in the fireplace have burned away.* **3.** To use heat to remove something, as in a medical procedure. In this usage, a noun can be used between "burn" and "away." *The doctor told me that he will have to burn away some tissue to alleviate my pain.*

burn down 1. To destroy something with fire. *We watched helplessly as our house burned down despite the firefighters' efforts.* **2.** To weaken or wane, as of a flame. *Get the birthday girl in here—the candles on her cake are burning down!* **3.** slang To embarrass someone (who can be mentioned

between "burn" and "down"). *Andrew must be really insecure because he's always trying to burn other people down with snide comments.*

burn for (someone or something) To deeply want, desire, or long for someone or something. *I think Frank still burns for Lana, even though they broke up years ago. My kids are all burning for that toy, but unfortunately it's sold out everywhere.*

burn in(to) (something) **1.** To use heat to engrave or etch something into a material. *We need to burn in the letters first, then you can work on the rest of your design.* **2.** To cause to leave a lasting imprint on someone or something. *Unfortunately, the image of you two kissing is now burned into my memory! Gross! This material needs to be burned into your mind before the big test.* **3.** To cause to remain permanently visible on a screen, as can happen when an image has been continuously displayed on a screen for a long period of time. *That image could get burned into the TV if you leave the movie paused for much longer.* **4.** To use light exposure to darken or lighten areas of a photograph or negative. *Now burn in the shadows on this side of the picture.* **5.** To use a new piece of electronic equipment for a certain period of time to confirm that it works properly. *We definitely need to burn in this new server before we put it online.*

burn not your house to fright the mouse away Do not overreact to a minor problem by taking drastic measures. *It's just a minor leak—we don't need to tear open the kitchen to fix it. Burn not your house to fright the mouse away.*

burn off **1.** To cause something to disperse or evaporate through heating. *Don't worry, most of the alcohol will burn off once you pour the wine into the hot pan. When will this fog burn off?* **2.** To use fire to destroy existing vegetation. *We need to burn off the field before the next planting season.*

burn (one) in effigy To set on fire something that symbolizes a person who one opposes. *In protest of the war, a large group has set about burning the president in effigy.*

burn (one) out of (something) To force someone to leave a place by setting it on fire. *During their attack, the troops burned everyone out of the town. My grandfather moved in with us after a four-alarm fire burned him out of his house.*

burn (one's) boats To do something that cannot be easily undone or

reversed in the future. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *I think you burned your boats when you announced you were quitting and proceeded to insult your boss in front of the whole staff. She's young, so I don't think she realizes that she'll be burning her boats if she goes to work for their competitor.*

burn (one's) bridges **1.** Literally, to destroy a bridge or path behind oneself, so that others cannot follow. This usage is often related to military action. *When the troops retreated from the area, they were sure to burn their bridges behind them.* **2.** To do something that cannot be easily undone or reversed in the future (often because one has behaved offensively or unfavorably). *I think you really burned your bridges when you announced you were quitting and proceeded to insult your boss in front of the whole staff. She's young, so I don't think she realizes that she'll be burning her bridges if she goes to work for their competitor.*

burn (one's) bridges in front of (one) To do something that is likely to cause problems later. *That kid isn't bullying you, so if you tattle on him to the teacher, you're definitely burning your bridge in front of you.*

burn (one's) fingers To suffer an unpleasant or ruinous consequence (especially the loss of money) for some action, often such that one becomes unwilling or uneager to do it again. *During the boom times, countless would-be investors put everything they owned into shady investment deals, and most of them ended up burning their fingers badly.*

burn out **1.** verb To cease burning (as of something that is currently or was recently ablaze). *Get the birthday girl in here before the candles on her cake burn out! At this point, the firefighters are just going to let the fire burn out.* **2.** verb To stop working properly, often through overheating. In this usage, a reflexive pronoun can be used between "burn" and "out." *Unfortunately, I think the motor in your lawn mower has burned out. We have to repair the engine before it burns itself out.* **3.** verb To hollow out by fire, as of a building. *The fire completely ravaged and burned out our beloved home.* **4.** verb To force someone to leave a place by setting it on fire. *During their attack, the troops burned out everyone in the town.* **5.** verb To overwork or exhaust someone or oneself, especially to the point of no longer being able to maintain a particular level of performance or dedication.. In this usage, a reflexive pronoun is often used between "burn" and "out." *If you keep staying up so late working on this report, you're going to burn yourself out. Don't burn out your interns by making them come in every day.* **6.** noun One who is

apathetic and unmotivated, especially an employee. When used as a noun, the phrase is usually written as one word. *We need to hire some hard workers and get rid of these burnouts who collect a paycheck for doing nothing.* **7.** noun, slang A regular drug user or addict who displays the adverse effects of drug use, especially cognitive impairment. When used as a noun, the phrase is usually written as one word. *You can't dismiss these students just because they're burnouts—they clearly need help and guidance.*

burn rubber To drive extremely quickly in a rubber-wheeled vehicle, especially a car. A reference to car tires which, if accelerated too quickly on pavement, can heat to the point of producing smoke and tire tracks. *We're going to be late for the party, let's burn rubber!*

burn the candle at both ends To overwork or exhaust oneself by doing too many things, especially both late at night and early in the morning. *Oh, Denise is definitely burning the candle at both ends—she's been getting to the office early and staying very late to work on some big project.*

burn the midnight oil To stay up late working on a project or task. The phrase refers to the outdated practice of using an oil lamp. *Denise has been burning the midnight oil trying to finish this report, so she must be exhausted. I'll need to burn the midnight oil to have any chance of finishing this paper before class tomorrow morning.*

burn to a cinder **1.** (of food) To overcook something to the point of charring it. A noun or pronoun can be used between "burn" and "to." *I forgot about the bread I'd put in the oven and burned it to a cinder.* **2.** (of a person) To cause to become severely sunburned. A noun or pronoun can be used between "burn" and "to." *If you lay on the beach all day without any sunscreen, you'll get burned to a cinder.*

burn to a crisp **1.** (of food) To overcook something to the point of charring it. A noun or pronoun can be used between "burn" and "to." *I forgot about the bread I'd put in the oven and burned it to a crisp.* **2.** (of a person) To cause to become severely sunburned. A noun or pronoun can be used between "burn" and "to." *If you lay on the beach all day without any sunscreen, you'll get burned to a crisp.*

burn up **1.** To destroy something with fire or heat. *It's getting cold in here because all the logs in the fireplace have burned up. Without its heat shields, the spacecraft is in danger of burning up during reentry.* **2.** To cause to

become angry or annoyed. In this usage, a noun or pronoun is often used between "burn" and "up." *Gossip like that just burns me up—I can't believe people would say such awful things about me!* **3.** To deplete a particular thing or resource. *Unfortunately, all those plumbing problems have already burned up our renovation budget.* **4.** To impact something to a great or excessive degree. *Sir, protestors are burning up our phone lines—what should we do? That viral video is burning up the Internet right now.* **5.** To easily defeat or outshine all competitors. *With all of your qualifications, you'll burn up all the other applicants for the job.* **6.** To travel very fast. Often used to describe driving in the phrase "burn up the road." *Have you seen my new car? Man, I can't wait to take it out and burn up the road!* **7.** To have a high fever. *Jenny has been lethargic all day, and she's burning up now, so I'm taking her to the doctor.*

burn up the road To travel very fast. Often used to describe driving. *Have you seen my new sports car? Man, I can't wait to take it out and burn up the road!*

burn with a low blue flame **1.** To feel intense anger, typically without expressing it. The phrase refers to the appearance of a flame in a gas burner. *I was quiet all through dinner because Phil's comments about my appearance left me burning with a low blue flame.* **2.** slang To be very drunk. *Do you remember last night at all? You were burning with a low blue flame!*

burn with (something) **1.** Literally, to burn in a particular manner or way. *The strong winds caused the fire to burn with a great roar.* **2.** By extension, to strongly feel a certain emotion. *Pete's burning with anger because he heard the awful things that people are saying about him. I found myself burning with jealousy the first time I saw my ex-boyfriend with his new boyfriend.*

burned out **1.** Overworked or exhausted, especially to the point of no longer being able to maintain a particular level of performance or dedication. *If you keep working nights and weekends, you're going to get burned out. She's probably burned out after studying all week.* **2.** slang Physically damaged by drug use. Typically used to describe an IV drug user's veins. *I used to be an addict, honey, so my veins are all burned out these days.* **3.** slang Negatively impacted by drug use or addiction. *You can't just dismiss these burned out students when they clearly need help and guidance.* **4.** slang Tolerant of a certain drug and thus unable to feel its effects anymore. *I'm*

burned out on that stuff, man—it just does nothing for me anymore.

burned up Very angry or annoyed. *Pete's burned up because he heard the awful things that people are saying about him. Mom is going to be burned up when she sees that you dented her new car!*

burning question An important, and perhaps scandalous, question that requires an answer. *If Fred lied about his alibi, then the burning question is: what is he trying to hide?*

a burnt child dreads the fire Someone who has experienced some kind of negative situation or consequence will try to avoid making the same mistake or experiencing the same situation again. *Joseph refuses to invest any money after losing his retirement fund during the stock market crash; a burnt child dreads the fire.*

burp the worm rude slang To masturbate. A term only applied to men. *A: "Why is he all embarrassed today?" B: "Oh, his crush walked in on him burping the worm. How horrifying is that?"*

burst a blood vessel 1. To put forth great effort towards some goal or end. *Annabelle practically burst a blood vessel cleaning the whole house and setting up all the guest rooms for you guys, and you don't even appreciate it!* 2. To become angry and begin yelling. *The boss burst a blood vessel when he heard that the printer still hadn't finished our order.*

burst at the seams 1. slang To be overly crowded. *Because of all the delays this morning, the train station is bursting at the seams. Good luck finding a place to sit!* 2. slang To try to contain a strong feeling or impulse. *When I saw your text, I practically burst at the seams trying not to laugh at it in the middle of the theater.*

burst forth To emerge violently or intensely, often after suddenly increasing in strength, size, or force. *I thought I had contained the fire, but when the flames burst forth again, I called the fire department. Things had been peaceful between my aunts for months, but old grievances burst forth again on our family vacation The water burst forth from the broken water main.*

burst in 1. To interrupt someone or something. *I'm sorry to burst in, but I have some information that might help. Mom is always using the phone in her office to burst in on my conversations!* 2. To force entry into something, often

a building. *They called the police as soon as they heard someone burst in downstairs. I had to burst in—I didn't have my house key, and no one else was home!*

burst into flame(s) To ignite suddenly and violently. *The rug burst into flames as soon as the candle landed on it.*

burst into sight To suddenly emerge or become visible. *I wasn't sure what the bunny was running from, until a dog burst into sight.*

burst into (someplace) To force entry into some place, often a building. *I had to burst into the house because I didn't have my key, and no one else was home!*

burst into tears To suddenly begin to cry. *My mother was fine this morning, but she burst into tears at the funeral.*

burst (one's) bubble To bring someone back to reality, especially if they are dreaming or fantasizing about something unrealistic. *Look, I hate to burst your bubble, but there is no way you're getting into Harvard! You're a C student!*

burst (one's/someone's) cherry **1.** vulgar slang (of someone else) To have sexual intercourse with a virgin, especially a female. *Before you go bursting a girl's cherry, you had better make damn sure that you and she are both totally ready to sleep with each other.* **2.** vulgar slang (of oneself) To have sexual intercourse for the first time. *There is nothing wrong with waiting until you're absolutely ready before you burst your cherry. Too many people try to pressure you into it from too young an age.* **3.** vulgar slang (of oneself) To do something for the first time, often that which is particularly daunting, difficult, dangerous, illicit, etc. *Somebody pass Marcus the joint, he still needs to burst his cherry tonight! For her birthday, I bought my friend Samantha a voucher so she could burst her cherry sky diving.*

burst onto the scene **1.** To emerge or appear suddenly. *As soon as the boys started shoving each other at recess, several teachers burst onto the scene.* **2.** To suddenly gain fame, attention, or recognition. *She's been acting for years, but now that she's been nominated for an Academy Award, she's really burst onto the scene.*

burst out **1.** To flow out of something suddenly or with great force, as of a liquid. *Water is bursting out of this pipe, and I can't get it to stop!* **2.** To leave

a place suddenly or energetically. *After our argument, Caitlin burst out of the room in a huff. The kids burst out of school cheering on the last day before summer vacation.* **3.** To suddenly perform a particular action. *My mother was fine this morning, but she burst out crying at the funeral.* **4.** To pop out of something, often clothes that are too small. *I'm sorry, but that top just doesn't fit you—you're practically bursting out of it!* **5.** To speak loudly and abruptly. *I couldn't even finish telling my story before my mom burst out in opposition.*

burst out crying To begin crying very suddenly and profusely. *I thought everything was fine until she burst out crying in the middle of dinner.*

burst out into (something) **1.** Of a plant, to bloom. *I can't wait for the flowers I planted to burst out into blossom and fill our yard with color!* **2.** To suddenly perform a particular action. *My mother was fine this morning, but she burst out into tears at the funeral.*

burst out laughing To start laughing suddenly or uncontrollably. *The kids burst out laughing when the clown fell down on stage.*

burst out of (somewhere or something) **1.** To flow out of something suddenly or with great force, as of a liquid. *Water is bursting out of this pipe, and I can't get it to stop!* **2.** To suddenly become visible. *After so many gray days, we were thrilled when the sun finally burst out of the clouds. A rabbit burst out of the bushes and startled me.* **3.** To leave a place abruptly and energetically. *After our argument, Caitlin burst out of the room in a huff.*

burst out with (something) To voice something loudly and abruptly. *My daughter burst out with a shriek when her favorite stuffed animal fell out of the stroller. Naturally, my mother burst out with critiques the minute she saw my dress.*

burst (someone's) bubble To disprove, ruin, or eliminate someone's fantasy, delusion, misbelief, or recent happiness. *Sorry to burst your bubble, Janet, but Sarah only went out on a date with you to make Suzie jealous. I'm happy you won, and I don't mean to burst your bubble while you're celebrating, but your opponent could use some encouragement.*

burst the bubble of (someone) To upset or destroy someone's belief, conviction, or mood by delivering news that runs contrary to what they hold to be true. *I hate to burst the bubble of everyone here, but this period of economic success will not last long.*

burst the bubble of (someone) To disprove, ruin, or destroy someone's fantasy, delusion, or misbelief. *The Supreme Court ruling is likely to burst the bubble of all the activists who were in favor of overturning the case.*

burst through (something) To break through something, such as a material or restraint. *A wrecking ball just burst through the wall of the building they're tearing down.*

burst (up)on (one) To occur to one suddenly. *After that idea burst upon me, I was able to alter the experiment and finally achieve some success.*

burst (up)on the scene 1. To emerge or appear suddenly. *As soon as the boys started shoving each other at recess, several teachers burst on the scene. 2.* To suddenly gain fame, attention, or recognition. *She's been acting for years, but she really burst on the scene after being nominated for an Academy Award.*

burst with (an emotion) Of an emotion, to be so filled up with something as to be unable to contain it. *I was bursting with anger after they fired me from my job. My kids burst with joy when we told them we were going to the theme park over the weekend.*

burst with excitement To be so filled up with enthusiasm as to be unable to contain it. *I am just bursting with excitement about our new house and can't wait to move in!*

burst with joy To be so filled up with happiness as to be unable to contain it. *My kids burst with joy when we told them we were going to the theme park over the weekend.*

burst with pride To be so filled up with pride as to be unable to contain it. *I am just bursting with pride that my little girl got into medical school!*

bury away 1. Literally, to inter (a corpse). A noun or pronoun can be used between "bury" and "away." *Many of our family members have been buried away in this cemetery. 2.* By extension, to hide something so that others cannot find it. A noun or pronoun can be used between "bury" and "away." *The cat always buries her toys away under the couch so that the dog can't take them. Trust me, they're going to bury away those documents so deep that no one will ever be able to track them down.*

bury in 1. To hide something in a particular place so that others cannot

find it. A noun or pronoun can be used between "bury" and "in." *I buried my cupcake in the back of the fridge so no one else would eat it! You can always find change buried in the couch cushions.* **2.** To hide oneself somewhere. In this usage, a reflexive pronoun is used between "bury" and "in." *When guests come over, my shy sister is quick to bury herself in her bedroom so that she doesn't have to talk to anyone.* **3.** To immerse oneself in a task or project. In this usage, a reflexive pronoun is used between "bury" and "in." *Ever since my breakup with Ben, I've tried to bury myself in my work to keep from crying all day long. You will need to bury yourself in your schoolwork to get a passing grade this semester.*

bury (one's) head in the sand To avoid, or try to avoid, a particular situation by pretending that it does not exist. The phrase refers to the common but mistaken belief that ostriches bury their heads in the sand when frightened, so as to avoid being seen. *Lou, you can't bury your head in the sand about your health—please, make an appointment with your doctor and get that rash checked out!* A: "How has Peter been handling the break-up?" B: "Oh, just burying his head in the sand and ignoring his feelings."

bury the hatchet **1.** To make peace with someone. *Can you please bury the hatchet and make up with your sister already? I can't take the constant fighting.* **2.** slang To accidentally leave medical instruments inside a patient after surgery. *The surgeons have a strict protocol to avoid burying the hatchet, so to speak.*

bury the lead In journalism, to open a news article with secondary or superfluous information, thus relegating the central premise (the lead, which usually occupies this position) to a later part. "Lead" in this sense is sometimes written as "lede." *I usually just skim through articles in the newspaper, so it really annoys me when they bury the lead.*

bury under (something) To hide something in a particular place so that others cannot find it. A noun or pronoun can be used between "bury" and "under." *The cat always buries her toys away under the couch so that the dog can't take them.*

bush league slang Subpar or inept; lame. The phrase comes from minor league baseball, in which some teams played on unkempt fields bordered by bushes, or in rural, "bush" towns. Primarily heard in US. *Their operation is pretty bush league—no professionalism at all. The way you just let that*

forward go around you and score was bush league, dude—show some effort and play harder!

bush out To become voluminous ("bushy") in appearance. *That plant bushed out so much this year that it blocked some of my flowers from the sun. My hair is so curly that it will just bush out if I cut it short.*

bushel and a peck (and some in a gourd) A lot. This phrase is typically used to emphasize how much one loves someone else. *My darling wife, I love you a bushel and a peck.*

busied herself with See [busy with \(something\)](#).

the busiest men have the most leisure People who finish their work quickly ultimately have more free time. A: *"Tom has the highest GPA in our class, but whenever I see him, he's playing video games, not studying!"* B: *"I guess it's true what they say—the busiest men have the most leisure."*

the business See [be the business](#).

business as usual The typical proceedings. The phrase is sometimes but not always used to indicate that things have returned to normal after something unforeseen or unpleasant has happened. *Once these auditors are out of our hair, we can get back to business as usual.* A: *"How are things at the office?"* B: *"Business as usual. Nothing exciting has happened lately."*

business before pleasure Work or responsibilities should be addressed before fun. *I would much rather play video games than study, but business before pleasure, I guess.*

the business end of (something) The functional part of an instrument, tool, or other object. *These kids are reckless on the ice, so watch that you don't get hit with the business end of a hockey stick. My dad swung at the intruding squirrel with the business end of a broom.*

business girl 1. A woman employed in an office or in business in general. The term is potentially diminutive and/or derogatory when used to refer to an adult woman. *The boss always calls the women in his office his "business girls"—it's so degrading.* 2. slang A female prostitute. *A lot of business girls hang around this part of town at night.*

business is business A phrase that emphasizes business decisions as completely separate from emotions or personal issues. *You're only being traded because the team needs to dump some salaries. It's nothing personal—*

business is business.

business woman 1. A woman who owns, manages, or is employed in a business. *Though there's still a long way to go, the growing number of business women in today's economy is encouraging.* 2. slang A female prostitute. *It took me a minute to realize that the woman on the street corner was a business woman.*

a busman's holiday slang A vacation in which one does an activity that is similar to one's job (as in the case of a bus driver, or "busman," who drives on his vacation). *Because I'm a docent, visiting museums on vacation is like a busman's holiday for me.*

busman's holiday A vacation that is spent engaging in an activity that is similar to what one does for work. *As a museum curator, Leonard had a busman's holiday when he went to Paris to visit the Louvre.*

bust a bronco To tame a wild horse for riding. (A "bronco" is a untrained horse or pony.) *I've never busted a bronco before, and this mean old horse doesn't look too eager to let me try.*

bust a cap in (someone's) ass slang To murder or attempt to murder someone with a gun. *If you don't get out of here right now, we're gonna bust a cap in your ass! They busted a cap in his ass when he began hurling racial slurs at them.*

bust a gut 1. slang To put forth a great deal of effort. *I've been busting a gut trying to get a passing grade this semester, so failing by two measly points is incredibly frustrating. Don't bust a gut trying to please these people—they'll never appreciate it.* 2. slang To start laughing suddenly or uncontrollably. To convey this meaning, the phrase can also be expanded to "bust a gut laughing." *The kids busted a gut when the clown fell down on stage. I nearly bust a gut laughing at that comedy show—I could barely breathe!* 3. To react furiously and/or violently to something or someone, to the point of losing control of one's behavior. *Mom totally busted a gut when I told her I had failed math. Don't bust a gut, it's just a tiny scratch on the car.*

bust a move 1. slang To depart. *We really to need to bust a move and get back on the road before sundown, guys.* 2. slang To dance. (This usage was popularized by the song "Bust a Move" by Young MC). *Did you see grandpa busting a move out there? He moves pretty darn well for being 91!*

bust ass cold slang Extremely cold in temperature. *It dipped below zero last night, which is bust ass cold for this part of the country.*

bust ass out of (some place) rude slang To leave a place hastily. *We busted ass out of the party when we heard sirens approaching.*

bust (one) To arrest one for an illegal act. *The police busted us for underage drinking.*

bust (one's) ass rude slang To work very hard. *I've been busting my ass studying for this exam, so I really hope I get a good grade. We can't blow off Holly's party—she's been busting her ass cooking and cleaning and getting everything ready for company.*

bust (one's) balls 1. vulgar (acting upon oneself) To exert a significant amount of energy to do, accomplish, or complete something, especially with great haste. *I've been busting my balls all night long to get this presentation ready for tomorrow's meeting. She's going to have to bust her balls if she wants a place on the varsity team.* 2. vulgar (acting upon someone else) To harass, nag, or upbraid someone to do, accomplish, or complete something. *The boss is busting everyone's balls to get the project ready by next week. Quit busting my balls! I'll get it done eventually!* 3. vulgar (acting upon someone else) To tease, ridicule, or mock someone, usually jocosely. *Don't get so worked up, man, I'm just busting your balls. I like her family, but her uncle always busts my balls when we see him.*

bust (one's) butt 1. (acting upon oneself) To exert a significant amount of energy or work very hard to do, accomplish, or complete something. *I've been busting my butt all night long to get this presentation ready for tomorrow's meeting. She's going to have to bust her butt if she wants a place on the varsity team.* 2. (acting upon someone else) To harass, nag, or upbraid someone to do, accomplish, or complete something. *The boss is busting everyone's butt to get the project ready by next week. Quit busting my butt! I'll get it done eventually!*

bust (one's) butt slang To work very hard. *I've been busting my butt studying for this exam, so I really hope I get a good grade. We can't blow off Holly's party—she's been busting her butt cooking and cleaning and getting everything ready for company.*

bust (one's) chops 1. (acting upon oneself) To exert a significant

amount of energy or work very hard to do, accomplish, or complete something. *I've been busting my chops all night long to get this presentation ready for tomorrow's meeting. She's going to have to bust her chops if she wants a place on the varsity team.* **2.** (acting upon someone else) To harass, nag, or upbraid someone to do, accomplish, or complete something. *The boss is busting everyone's chops to get the project ready by next week. Quit busting my chops! I'll get it done eventually!*

bust (one's) hump **1.** (acting upon oneself) To exert a significant amount of energy to do, accomplish, or complete something, especially with great haste. *I've been busting my hump all night long to get this presentation ready for tomorrow's meeting. She's going to have to bust her hump if she wants a place on the varsity team.* **2.** (acting upon someone else) To harass, nag, or upbraid someone to do, accomplish, or complete something. *The boss is busting everyone's hump to get the project ready by next week. Quit busting my hump! I'll get it done eventually!*

bust (one's/someone's) cherry **1.** vulgar slang (of someone else) To have sexual intercourse with a virgin, especially a female. *Before you go busting a girl's cherry, you had better make damn sure that you and she are both totally ready to sleep with each other.* **2.** vulgar slang (of oneself) To have sexual intercourse for the first time. *There is nothing wrong with waiting until you're absolutely ready before you bust your cherry. Too many people try to pressure you into it from too young an age.* **3.** vulgar slang (of oneself) To do something for the first time, especially that which is particularly daunting, difficult, dangerous, or illegal. *Somebody pass Marcus the joint, he still needs to bust his cherry tonight! For her birthday, I bought my friend Samantha a voucher so she could bust her cherry sky diving.*

bust out **1.** slang To escape from a place or thing (often prison). *That criminal did bust out, but he was caught only a mile from the prison.* **2.** slang To help one to escape from a place or thing (often prison). In this usage, a noun or pronoun is typically used between "bust" and "out." *We can't just leave him here to rot in a jail cell—we have to bust him out! Don't worry, I'll pull the fire alarm and bust you out of detention.* **3.** To bring out something for use. *Bust out the champagne—we've got an engagement to celebrate!* **4.** To suddenly perform a particular action. *My mother seemed fine this morning but then busted out crying at the funeral. The kids busted out laughing when the clown fell down on stage.* **5.** To pop out of something, often clothes that

are too small. *I'm sorry, but that top just doesn't fit you—you're practically busting out of it!*

bust out laughing To start laughing suddenly or uncontrollably. *The kids busted out laughing when the clown fell down on stage.*

bust (some) suds **1.** slang To drink beer. *Let's go to the bar and bust some suds.* **2.** slang To wash dishes. *Before I became a chef, I worked in the kitchen of a local restaurant busting suds.*

bust (someone) one slang To punch someone. *That bully will never bother you again if you just bust him one in the face!*

bust (someone or something) wide open To deliver a violent physical attack. In this usage, a person's name or pronoun is often, but not always, used between "bust" and "up." *The captain of the football team swore he would bust me wide open if I ever talked to his girlfriend again. I can't believe that skinny kid busted the school bully wide open!*

bust up **1.** To come apart in pieces. *The house is so old that the plaster on this wall has busted up—there are bits of it all over the floor.* **2.** To end a partnership of some kind, often a romantic relationship. *I'm so sad to hear that Mara and John busted up—I thought those two would be together forever. The Beatles busting up is considered a pivotal moment in rock history.* **3.** To induce the end of a partnership of some kind, often a romantic relationship. *I heard that constant dishonesty busted up their marriage.* **4.** To deliver a violent physical attack. In this usage, a person's name or pronoun is often, but not always, used between "bust" and "up." *The captain of the football team swore he would bust me up if I ever talked to his girlfriend again. I can't believe that skinny kid busted up the school bully!*

busted See [be busted](#).

busted flush **1.** Literally, a hand in poker consisting of four cards of the same suit and one that is different, i.e., one card short of a flush. *I thought I'd finally win the hand, but when I drew the ace of spades, I was left with a busted flush.* **2.** A person, organization, or thing that at one time held great potential or influence but that ultimately ended up a failure. *Jack left secondary school with great grades and a bright future, but he became addicted to drugs and turned out a busted flush. The company promised big returns to investors but turned out to be a busted flush.*

bustle about **1.** To work on a task vigorously. *Because her relatives are coming to visit, Annabelle is bustling about, cleaning the whole house and setting up all the guest rooms.* **2.** To quickly move around some space or area while trying to complete a task. In this usage, the location is stated after "about." *Because her relatives are coming to visit, Annabelle is bustling about the living room, putting all of the kids' toys away.*

bustle around To move quickly while trying to complete a task. *Because her relatives are coming to visit, Annabelle is bustling around, cleaning the whole house and setting up all the guest rooms.*

bustle off **1.** To leave a place hastily. A: *"I didn't see Alice this morning. B: "Oh, she bustled off because she was running late."* **2.** To send someone somewhere. In this usage, a noun can be used between "bustle" and "off." *Before I left for the airport, I bustled my daughter off to school.*

busy as a beaver See [\(as\) busy as a beaver \(building a new dam\)](#).

busy as a hibernating bear See [\(as\) busy as a hibernating bear](#).

busy beaver A very busy, assiduous, or hardworking person. Taken from the phrase "busy as a beaver," referring to beavers' reputation for being extremely industrious. *Between working two part-time jobs, volunteering on the weekends, and looking after his little brother, Sam's been a busy beaver this summer.*

busy little beaver A very busy, assiduous, or hardworking person. Taken from the phrase "busy as a beaver," referring to beavers' reputation for being extremely industrious. *Between working two part-time jobs, volunteering on the weekends, and looking after his brother, Sam's been a busy little beaver this summer.*

busy with (something) **1.** adjective Spending a lot of one's time focused or working on a particular task, goal, or project. *I'm so busy with school right now that I haven't seen my friends in weeks.* **2.** verb To immerse oneself in a task or project. In this usage, a reflexive pronoun is used between "busy" and "with." *Ever since my break-up with Ben, I've busied myself with work to keep from crying all day long.* **3.** verb To engage or occupy someone with a distraction, task, or project. In this usage, a noun or pronoun is used between "busy" and "with." *If you busy the baby with a toy, he'll stop crying in no time. My husband is off all week, so I'm busying him with repairs*

around the house.

busy work Menial activities, tasks, or chores meant to occupy time, more so than to accomplish anything productive. *I actually wanted to learn more about fossils, but the substitute teacher just gave us busy work to do.*

but for (something) Except for something; if not for something. *That major home repair would have sent me into debt but for my emergency fund.*

but good Thoroughly or completely. *That team underestimated us, and we beat them but good. My mother always notices every speck of dust in my house, so I was sure to clean it but good before she came to visit.*

(but) not in the biblical sense Not in a sexual way. Usually used in reference to the word "know," which, in the Bible, often indicates a sexual relationship between two people. A: *"So I hear you know Liz."* B: *"Not in the biblical sense, if that's what you're hinting at!"*

but seriously, folks A statement meant to draw an audience's attention to a point one wishes to make (which may or may not be serious in nature), often used as a segue after a joke, aside, or something that is non-relevant. *I just flew in from Miami, and boy are my arms tired! But seriously, folks, how is everyone tonight? I like a good cheeseburger as much as the next guy, but seriously, folks, does anyone really need one that weighs three pounds?*

(but) that's another story A phrase used to avoid talking in detail about something, sometimes suggesting that the story will be told at another time. *I hear that Nick and Liz are pretty close these days, but that's another story. How's your job going? Yeah, I was sick for months, but that's another story.*

but that's just me Said as an aside to indicate that one can only speak on one's own behalf about an opinion they just spoke of. (Sometimes said ironically of rather obvious or generic opinions or sentiments.) *I've never seen the appeal of leaving the comfort of your own home to go travelling abroad, but then that's just me. I don't know, I just think it's wrong to get a better grade because you're dealing pot to the teaching assistant on your course. But hey, that's just me!*

but then On the other hand; but after more careful consideration or from a different perspective. *I always considered myself naturally athletic, but then, my parents had me involved in sports from a young age. She just seems*

constantly worn out, but then, she's trying to manage a business and raise her daughter single-handedly.

but what do I know See [what do I know](#).

but who's counting A phrase dismissing the quantity of something just mentioned. Can be used in a passive-aggressive manner (because someone is obviously counting if they can readily enumerate something). A: "Well, you've only worked three hours this week, but who's counting?" B: "I'm sorry, sir, but I've been sick all week." I've had four pieces of candy, but who's counting? Pass me another!

but you can't hide See [you can run, but you can't hide](#).

butt-head slang A disagreeable, ignorant, incompetent, and/or irritating person. An impolite phrase, it is generally used by juveniles or in a juvenile manner. *Jeff always steals my lunch money, he's such a butt-head! You scratched my car, you butthead!*

butt heads 1. Literally, to knock heads together, as of rams or sheep. *The two male rams fiercely butted heads to establish dominance among the group.* 2. By extension, to completely disagree or get into a heated confrontation with someone. *Jonathan and Cynthia always butt heads over politics when they're together. I got kicked out of the bar when I started butting heads with that guy.*

butt in To interrupt someone or something. *I'm sorry to butt in, but I have some information that might help. Mom is always using the phone in her office to butt in on my conversations!*

butt into (something) To interrupt something (which is stated after "into"). *I'm sorry to butt into your discussion, but I have some information that might help. Mom is always using the phone in her office to butt into my conversations!*

(one's) butt is on the line informal One's reputation, livelihood, wellbeing, or life is at stake. *My butt is on the line, so this presentation has to go well! Their butt is on the line out there, so let's give them the air support they need.*

butt naked slang Entirely nude, especially in others' view. Possibly a variation of "buck naked," though both mean the same and are correct in use. *My roommate is so embarrassing, always walking around the house butt*

naked!

the butt of a/the joke The target of a joke; the person or subject being mocked or ridiculed. *My big brother loves to tease me—every time he opens his mouth, I'm the butt of the joke. No one likes being the butt of a joke, but the best thing to do is just laugh with them.*

the butt of the joke Someone or something at whose expense an insulting or mocking joke is made. *I like hanging out with my brother and his friends, even though he likes to make me the butt of his jokes. Due to their disastrous advertising campaign last month, the company has been the butt of many jokes on the Internet lately.*

butt out 1. slang An instruction, usually said in frustration, for someone to stop intruding in one's business or conversation. *Butt out, sis—I don't need your opinion on everything I do!* 2. slang To leave a place hastily. *We butted out of the party when we heard sirens approaching.*

butt ugly slang Thoroughly unattractive. *Kids can be so cruel—just last week one of my students called another one butt ugly!*

butt (up) against (someone or something) 1. To be positioned physically next to someone or something. *The table is just a little too long—it butts up against the wall over here. Our neighbor's new addition butts against our bushes, unfortunately.* 2. To crash into someone or something. *My daughter got hurt when another girl on the soccer field butted against her. My car is in the shop because I butted up against a barricade on the highway.*

butter-and-egg man A wealthy, unworldly person who spends freely when in the big city. The person is typically from a rural locale, as highlighted by "butter-and-egg." The phrase is thought to have originated in the 1920s, when newly-minted millionaires were eager to display their wealth. *Sam always wants to show off his money when he comes to visit us in the city, but he can't fool me—I know he's really just a butter-and-egg man!*

butter (one's) bread on both sides 1. To benefit or profit from two or more separate and often contradictory or incompatible things or sources. *The CEO buttered her bread on both sides, secretly investing in oil companies while publicly backing green energy initiatives to gain popular support.* 2. To live comfortably, especially wastefully or in lavish, indulgent excess. *The duke was accused of buttering his bread on both sides, adorning*

every inch of his home in gold and jewels and holding feasts far too large for the people who attended them.

butter up To be nice to someone, by flattery or other means, before delivering bad news or asking for a favor. *I tried to butter up my father by mowing the lawn before I asked to borrow the car. At least butter me up before you ask for money.*

butter wouldn't melt (in (one's) mouth) Said of one who appears innocent or reserved in certain company, when in fact one may have the opposite demeanor. *Sure, he looks as if butter wouldn't melt in his mouth when he's around people he doesn't know, but stay a while and you'll see what he's really like.*

butterfingers Someone who is clumsy and often drops things or else fails to catch something. *I dropped another plate! I'm such a butterfingers today. Coach, don't put that butterfingers Jimmy in the outfield!*

butterflies in (one's) stomach A feeling of nervousness. *The butterflies in my stomach almost kept me from going on stage and performing.*

butterfly on a wheel See [Who breaks a butterfly upon a wheel?](#)

button-down **1.** adjective Having or fastened together by buttons, as of a shirt or shirt collar. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *We're going to a nice restaurant for dinner, so be sure to wear a button-down shirt, please!* **2.** adjective Conservative, unimaginatively conventional, or old-fashioned, as of a person's clothing, attitude, behavior, or beliefs. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *He spent his entire adult life as a button-down clerk, so when he turned 65, he decided it was time for adventure.* **3.** noun A shirt that has a collar and buttons extending down the full length of its front. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *I've got a date tonight, so I'm going to buy a nice button-down for the occasion.*

button it slang Stop talking. *Button it, sis—I don't need to hear your opinion on everything I do!*

button nose A small, round, and slightly flattened nose, usually considered a charming or cute feature. *The boy's button nose and bright eyes belied his fierce courage and resolve. Her face, with its dimpled, freckled cheeks, button nose, and large round eyes, captured the hearts of audiences*



everywhere.

button (one's) lip To be quiet. Often used as an imperative. *Hey, button your lip! We don't need to hear any more out of you today! Julie knew better than to speak up when her father was so angry, so she buttoned her lip for the moment.*

button (something) down To fasten or secure something in place with buttons. A noun can be used between "button" and "down." *Button down your pocket so that nothing falls out of it.*

button up **1.** To fasten the buttons on an item of clothing. A noun can be used between "button" and "up." *Button up your coat, it's cold out today! Remember to button your jacket up before you go into the interview.* **2.** To finish a task; to put the finishing touches on something. *Don't worry, I'll be ready in five minutes—I'm just about done buttoning up my paper.* **3.** To be quiet. *Hey, button up! We don't need to hear any more out of you today! Julie knew better than to speak when her father was so angry, so she buttoned up for the moment.* **4.** To close something, typically a place, securely. *I hope you buttoned up the store before you left for the night.*

buttoned-down **1.** Having or fastened together by buttons, as of the collar of a shirt. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *We're going to a nice restaurant for dinner, so be sure to wear a buttoned-down shirt, please!* **2.** Conservative, unimaginatively conventional, or old-fashioned, as of a person's clothing, attitude, behavior, or beliefs. *He spent his entire adult life as a buttoned-down clerk, so when he turned 65, he decided it was time for adventure!*

buttoned-up Very conservative, unimaginatively conventional, or old-fashioned, as of a person's clothing, attitude, behavior, or beliefs. *He spent his entire adult life as a buttoned-up clerk, so, when he turned 65, he decided it was time for adventure!*

buttonhole (someone) To confine or accost someone in or with conversation. Likened to holding onto someone by the lapels (on which the buttonhole used for a boutonniere is located). *I tried to leave the office early, but Larry buttonholed me with a tedious conversation about weekend plans.*

buttress up **1.** To provide an object or structure with physical support or reinforcement. A noun can be used between "buttress" and "up" or after "up." *We need to buttress up that painting with another nail before it falls off the*

wall. *I used a wood block to buttress the window up—otherwise, it comes crashing down when you least expect it.* **2.** To provide something or someone with financial support. *Unfortunately, I think this merger is the only way we can buttress up our failing company.*

buy a pig in a poke To buy something without inspecting it thoroughly, often with negative consequences. A "poke" is a bag. *Purchasing a home without inspecting it first is like buying a pig in a poke.*

buy (a/one's) wolf ticket To challenge or respond hostilely to one's threats of violence or menacing, boastful words. *Don't buy his wolf ticket—I know for a fact that he carries a knife and would be all too happy to put it to use.*

buy a/the round (of drinks) To buy drinks for each person in a group. "Next" is commonly used before "round" (when "the" is the article). *If your new friend is buying us a round of drinks, then I like him already! OK, who's buying the next round?*

buy at To purchase something for a particular price. *I think we'll be able to buy these stocks at a better price if we wait a bit longer. My goal is to buy at 20 and sell at 25.*

buy cheap, buy twice If something is inexpensive, it is probably poorly made or will wear out quickly (and one will have to purchase it again). *A: "I need to save some money, so I think I'm just going to buy this cheap cell phone." B: "I'd be wary if I were you. You'll probably end up spending more money—buy cheap, buy twice, and all that."*

buy in 1. To make a financial investment in a business or similar venture. *No matter how you try to convince me that your latest scheme is going to make millions, I'm not buying in.* **2.** To believe in and support an idea, concept, or system. *Rod's a good enough coach, but he just can't get the players to buy in—they still don't listen to him. We can't approach the CEO with our idea for overhauling the computer system until we get our boss to buy in first.*

buy into (something) 1. To make a financial investment in a business or similar venture. *I refuse to buy into my brother's latest scheme because I highly doubt it will ever make a penny—let alone millions.* **2.** To believe in and support an idea, concept, or system. *Rod's a good enough coach, but he just can't get the players to buy into his system. We can't approach the CEO*

with our idea for overhauling the computer system until we get our boss to buy into it first.

buy it 1. slang To believe that something is true. *My brother says that his latest scheme will make millions, but I'm not buying it. I told the teacher that my dog ate my homework, and she totally bought it! At least I think she did.* 2. slang To die. *When Ray got back last night, he told the boss that the informant bought it and won't be a problem anymore.*

buy low, sell high Financial advice to buy low-priced stocks and then sell them when their price is higher, thus making a profit. *The best advice my father ever gave me was to buy low, sell high. How do you think I made so much money in the stock market?*

buy off To pay someone to coerce them into doing something. A noun or pronoun can be used between "buy" and "off." *Don't worry, the doorman won't say anything—I bought him off. Her campaign for mayor will be ruined if the public learns how many people she's bought off over the years.*

buy (one's) way in(to) (something) To pay money in order to gain access to a group or place. *He bought his way into the organization through hefty donations. Listen, this isn't the sort of establishment where you can just buy your way in with a wad of cash.*

buy (one's) way out (of something) To pay money to escape or avoid something unpleasant. *With enough money, you can buy your way out of any problem.*

buy (someone or something) out 1. verb To buy one's shares or other financial interests in a company or joint venture, thus releasing one from it. A noun or pronoun can be used between "buy" and "out" or after "out." *Because I bought out my sister, I now get all of the profit from the store.* 2. verb To pay one an agreed-upon amount in exchange for one's premature release from a contract. A noun or pronoun can be used between "buy" and "out" or after "out." *When no other teams were interested in trading for that player, we decided to buy him out.* 3. verb To purchase something as its sole owner. A noun or pronoun can be used between "buy" and "out" or after "out." *I've always loved that little music club, so I bought it out when the owner was ready to pursue other ventures. If they buy out our little company, will they jettison our staff?* 4. verb To purchase all of a particular item or thing that is available. A noun or pronoun can be used

between "buy" and "out" or after "out." *That toy is so popular that it's been bought out all over town! We need as many balloons for the party as we can get, so just buy them out at the store.* **5.** noun The act of paying one an agreed-upon amount in exchange for one's premature release from a contract. In this usage, the phrase is often written as one word ("buyout"). *When no other teams were interested in trading for that player, we decided to offer him a buyout.*

buy (something) back (from someone) To repurchase something that one has sold. *For the right price, I'm sure you'll be able to buy back your old house. Once the dealer realized how valuable that painting actually was, he wanted to buy it back from me.*

buy (something) on credit To buy something with the promise of paying for it later, as with a credit card as opposed to cash. *I ran out of money at Christmastime and had to buy some presents on credit, so I'm dreading my next credit card bill.*

buy (something) on time To buy something with the promise of paying for it later, as with a credit card as opposed to cash. *I ran out of money at Christmastime and had to buy some presents on time, so I'm dreading my next credit card bill.*

buy (something) sight unseen To purchase something without seeing or examining it first. *When I decided to buy a house sight unseen, I knew it would probably need a lot of repairs—and I was right!*

buy straw hats in winter Especially of stocks, to buy when both demand and cost are low so that one may then sell when demand and price are high. A phrase attributed to Russell Sage, a 19th-century American investor and financier. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *I made a fortune buying shares in the startup company before smartphone technology became ubiquitous—I bought straw hats in winter, and now they're worth a fortune!*

buy the big one slang To die. *We were so lucky to avoid that massive accident—we could have bought the big one!*

buy the box To die, or to be near death. The "box" in question is a coffin. *Did you hear that Johnny bought the box? What a shame. I think the funeral is next Tuesday. When I was in that accident, I was so scared that I would buy the box.*

buy the farm slang To die. *Did you hear that old Walt bought the farm? What a shame—at least he got to spend 92 years on this earth.*

buy time To stall or delay in order to gain more time to do something. A noun, pronoun, or reflexive pronoun can be used between "buy" and "time," as can words like "more" and "some." *I'm so sorry I'm running late to the party, but I'm almost there now—buy me some time so that I don't miss the cake-cutting! It's just such a big decision. What can we say to the bank to buy more time?*

buy to let To purchase a property with the intention of renting it, rather than living it in oneself. *No I don't plan to live in that neighborhood! I'm just buying to let—I need the second income that being a landlord brings.*

buy trouble To do something that is likely to cause problems later. *That kid isn't bullying you, so if you tattletale on him to the teacher, you're definitely buying trouble.*

buy up 1. To purchase all of a particular item or thing that is available. A noun or pronoun can be used between "buy" and "up." *That toy is so popular that parents are buying it up all over town! Good luck getting a house in that town with investors buying up everything that goes on the market.* **2.** To purchase something quickly, perhaps in large quantities. A noun or pronoun can be used between "buy" and "up." *As soon as people hear the word "snow" in the forecast, they start buying up milk and bread. Since it was announced that this model would no longer be made, collectors have begun buying it up.*

buy wolf tickets To challenge or respond hostilely to one's threats of violence or menacing, boastful words. *Don't buy wolf tickets from that guy—I know for a fact that he carries a knife and would be all too happy to put it to use.*

buy you a drink See [\(Can I\) buy you a drink?](#)

buzz along 1. slang To leave some place. *You need to buzz along if you're going to make it to the airport on time.* **2.** slang To drive at a fast pace. *Be careful crossing the street with all those cars buzzing along.* A: *"If I keep buzzing along at this speed, I think we'll get to the party on time after all!"* B: *"Yeah, unless a cop stops us first!"*

buzz for (one) To use a device that makes a buzzing sound (such as a

doorbell or intercom) to try to get one's attention. *When you get to my apartment building, just buzz for me, and I'll let you in. Buzz for the receptionist and ask her what's taking so long.*

buzz in(to) **1.** To remotely and electronically unlock a door for someone (an act often accompanied by an audible buzzing sound). In this usage, the person being admitted is usually stated between "buzz" and "in." The phrase can also be written as "buzz into," followed by the location. *Once you get to my apartment building, I'll just buzz you in.* **2.** To enter a place suddenly and quickly. In this usage, the phrase is often "buzz into," followed by the location. *It had been a quiet afternoon until a group of women buzzed into the shop, looking for housewarming gifts. A: "I didn't realize Marnie was coming over today." B: "Oh, she just buzzed in to see how I'm feeling—she didn't stay long."*

buzz off **1.** slang Go away. Leave me alone. Usually used as an imperative. *Buzz off, little brother—I've got things to do. What are you kids doing on my lawn? Buzz off!* **2.** slang To leave a place hastily. *Yeah, we were at the party last night, but we buzzed off when we heard sirens approaching.*

buzz with (something) To be full of something or animated due to something, especially something intangible. *When I arrived at the town meeting, it was already buzzing with conversation. The kitchen buzzed with activity as the chef and his staff prepared the three-course meal.*

buzz word **1.** A word or phrase that has gained recent popularity, especially among a particular group of people or within a specific context. *"Synergy" is a buzz word used to describe the concept of multiple organizations working together towards a common goal.* **2.** A popular word or phrase that is used so often that it loses its impact or meaning. *The boss used so many corporate buzz words in our morning meeting that I'm not even sure I understand what he was trying to say. Harry lost his audience's attention when he started using buzz words during his presentation, which began to seem dull and unoriginal.*

by a hair By an extremely short or slim margin (of distance, time, or another measure). *They're just about to close the gates! It looks like we made the flight by a hair. The race was neck and neck till the very end, but Sally won it by a hair.*

by a hair's breadth By an extremely short distance or slim margin of

time. *They're just about to close the gates! It looks like we made the flight by a hair's breadth. The race was neck and neck till the very end, but Sally won it by a hair's breadth.*

by a long chalk By a wide margin, as of time, distance, ability, etc. Often used in the negative to indicate not at all or by no means. Primarily heard in UK. *He won that match by a long chalk. I'm not done yet, not by a long chalk!*

by a long shot At all; in any way. Often used in the negative. *Oh, we aren't finished cleaning, not by a long shot—we still have the entire downstairs to tackle.*

by a mile By a large amount; by a lot. *We won that game by a mile! I think the final score was 10-1. I missed the target by a mile that time.*

by a nose By an extremely short or slim margin (of distance, time, or another measure). *They're just about to close the gates! It looks like we made the flight by a nose. The race was neck and neck till the very end, but Sally won it by a nose.*

by a show of hands Based on a visual representation of interest (indicated by people raising their hands). *Class, we'll decide what to do at recess by a show of hands. Who wants to play tag?*

by a whisker By an extremely short or slim margin (of distance, time, or another measure). *They're just about to close the gates! It looks like we made the flight by a whisker. The race was neck and neck till the very end, but Sally won it by a whisker.*

by a wide margin By a large amount; by a lot. *We won that game by a wide margin! I think the final score was 10-1.*

by accident or design See [\(whether\) by accident or design](#).

by acclamation 1. Confirmed by a show of verbal support, rather than by a formal ballot. A: *"Was that new regulation passed by ballot?"* B: *"No, the committee was very vocal in their support for it, so I'm pretty sure it passed by acclamation."* 2. Without opposition. The phrase typically applies to elections. Primarily heard in Canada. A: *"He won the election by acclamation!"* B: *"Well, of course he did—he was running opposed!"*

by all accounts According to the information or reports that are available or from what people are saying. *I don't know how we survived that*

plane crash; by all accounts, we should be dead right now! By all accounts, this film is the best one of the year!

by all accounts Based on all reports or sources. *By all accounts, he was out of town the night of the murder. By all accounts, Lisa was last seen at the Italian restaurant on the corner.*

by all appearances According to the way things appear or how one sees things; as is apparent to observation. *By all appearances, Daren seemed a very happy, outgoing fellow, so his outburst took many people by surprise. The giant corporation was by all appearances doing quite well, but just last week it filed for bankruptcy.*

by all means 1. Certainly; absolutely. *By all means, come to our party if you end up being free on Saturday night! 2.* In any way possible, regardless of risk or expense. *There will be a lot of people at this event, but we need to court that one big investor by all means.*

by all means of (something) Using all possible options. *We tried to revive him by all means of resuscitation, but we were ultimately unsuccessful.*

by all odds Definitely; indisputably. *Most of the kids in the class are good artists, but Susie is by all odds the best.*

by and by 1. adverb After a short and/or undetermined period of time. *The rain poured down in a torrent, but by and by, the clouds thinned and the sun eventually came out again. 2.* noun (usually hyphenated) The unknown future, especially heaven or the afterlife (often preceded by "sweet"). *I miss your grandmother too, but I know I'll see her again in the sweet by-and-by.*

by and large In general; overall. *It's a really cute town, and I like it by and large, but it's just so far from all of my friends in the city.*

by ankle express By walking (to a certain location). *My car's in the shop, so we'll have to go to the store by ankle express. It'll take us forever to get there by ankle express! Can't you give us a ride?*

by any chance Used as a polite emphasis to a request or question. *Would you by any chance happen to know where the subway is from here? Let me know if you should come across a copy of that book by any chance.*

by any means In any possible way. Often used in the negative. *We need to court that big investor by any means, so shameless flattery is a fine place to start! Not by any means shall our country be drawn into yet another war*

overseas.

by any stretch A shortened version of "by any stretch of the imagination," meaning as much or as far as one is able to imagine or believe. Usually used in the negative. *It's looking like we're not going to win by any stretch. I can't see by any stretch how we're going to pull this off.*

by any stretch of the imagination As much or as far as one is able to imagine or believe. Usually used in the negative. *It's looking like we're not going to win by any stretch of the imagination. I can't see by any stretch of the imagination how we're going to pull this off.*

by brute strength By sheer force or physical strength. *I couldn't get my car out of the mud until my brothers came along and moved it by brute strength.*

by chance 1. Randomly; without planning or intent. *I found a quaint new craft store by chance the other day. I saw your brother by chance yesterday in the grocery store.* 2. Perhaps; possibly. *Can I get a cup of coffee by chance?*

by check With a check, as a form of payment, as opposed to other forms, such as cash or credit. *Don't worry about not having cash today—my office will bill you, and then you can just pay by check.*

by choice Intentionally; based on one's own decision or interest. *I know a lot of these volunteers are forced to be here, but I'm here by choice.*

by coincidence Unintentionally happening at the same time or in the same way as something else. *By coincidence, my sister and I bought our mom the same sweater for her birthday. I didn't just come to the same place as you by coincidence—your assistant told me where I could find you.*

by cracky An exclamation of surprise or praise. *You studied hard, and, by cracky, you got an A! Isn't it funny how that works? By cracky, we've solved the mystery!*

by day During the day. Often used to refer to one's employment or other typical daytime activities, in contrast with what they are apt to do "by night." *By day, he was an average office clerk, but by night he was crime-fighting vigilante. She's a teacher by day and an actress at the local theater by night.*

by definition According to the literal definition or widely-known understanding of something. *You know, illegal activities by definition break*

the law. I always thought that singers were outgoing by definition—until I saw how shy you are off-stage.

by degrees Gradually; in steps. *I've been putting \$50 aside every month to increase my savings account by degrees.*

by design Deliberately and purposefully; as one planned or intended. *I assure you that everything you saw has happened by design.*

by dint of (something) Due to something. The largely-outdated word "dint" refers to force or effort. *By dint of hard work, I was able to get an A in my math class this semester.*

by ear 1. Without referencing sheet music or a recording. Refers to the ability to play a piece of music. *Wow, George is such a talented piano player! The way he can play pieces by ear after hearing them just once is so impressive!* 2. By extension, in an improvised or flexible way. Typically used in the phrase "play it by ear." A: "Are we meeting at noon on Saturday?" B: "Around then. I have to run some errands in the morning, so let's play it by ear."

by fair means or foul By any means necessary—moral or not. A: "But we're not allowed to submit more than one entry per person." B: "Oh, forget that—we are winning this contest by fair means or foul!"

by far By a large amount; by a lot. *Most of the kids in the class are good artists, but Susie is by far the best—she's our resident Picasso!*

by fits and starts In short, inconsistent, and irregular intervals, as of motion or progress. *The car was almost completely broken down, but by fits and starts, we were able to get it to a mechanic.* A: "How's the essay coming along?" B: "Oh, by fits and starts."

by force of habit Because one does or has done something habitually. Used to describe an unconscious mistake that results from following one's routine rather than choosing the correct action for the circumstances. *After living next door to Anna for 50 years, I call our new neighbor "Anna" by force of habit.*

by George An exclamation of surprise. *By George, I think we've finally blown the case wide open!*

by godfrey An exclamation of surprise. *By godfrey, you startled me! I didn't even hear you come in.*

by guess and by golly By any means; without careful planning; relying on guesswork and luck. *We don't have much to work with, but by guess and by golly, we're going to figure out a way to save our business! He just throws his essays together by guess and by golly, but he still manages to get good grades on them.*

by guess and by gosh Without careful planning; relying on guesswork and luck. *He just throws his essays together by guess and by gosh, but he still manages to get good grades on them.*

by guess or by golly By any means; without careful planning; relying on guesswork and luck. *We don't have much to work with, but by guess or by golly, we're going to figure out a way to save our business! He just throws his essays together by guess or by golly, but he still manages to get good grades on them.*

by guess or by gosh By any means; without careful planning; relying on guesswork and luck. *We don't have much to work with, but by guess or by gosh, we're going to figure out a way to save our business! He just throws his essays together by guess or by gosh, but he still manages to get good grades on them.*

by half Far too much of something; more than is necessary. Used in the form, "Too [something] by half." Primarily heard in UK. *That child is too noisy by half!*

by hand Using the hands; manually. (As opposed to using a machine.) *Back in my day, we had to write out all of our essays by hand! This kind of intricate stitching can only be done by hand.*

by heart Completely; by memory. Often used in reference to something that one has memorized or knows very well. *Ask Becky to recite the poem—she knows it by heart. I can't sing that song in front of an audience if I don't know the words by heart!*

by hell or high water By any means necessary; regardless of any difficulty, problem, or obstacle. *By hell or high water, I am going to make it to your wedding!*

by hook or (by) crook In any way possible. A: "But we're not allowed to submit more than one entry per person." B: "Oh, forget that—we are winning this contest by hook or by crook!" *We need to court that big investor*

by hook or by crook, so shameless flattery is a fine place to start!

by itself Alone; with nothing else added. *One nail by itself won't hold up that picture frame—put another nail in on this side. I think this dish is fine by itself—it doesn't need a sauce.*

by leaps and bounds By very large degrees; rapidly or in quick progress forward. *Our small company has been growing by leaps and bounds over the past year, thanks in no small part to our aggressive new marketing campaign. What was once a tiny local choir club has expanded by leaps and bounds over the years, becoming one of the state's largest organized choir communities.*

by main strength and awkwardness By sheer force or physical strength. *I couldn't get my car out of the mud until my brothers came along and moved it by main strength and awkwardness.*

by means of (something) Due to something. *I only wake up in time for work by means of an alarm clock. I was able to get an A in my math class this semester by means of hard work.*

by mistake Accidentally; unintentionally. *I am so sorry, sir—I gave you the wrong dish by mistake. Oh, they hung up—they called the wrong number by mistake.*

by nature Naturally; inherently. Refers to one's traits. *I don't think she is a vicious person by nature—growing up in an abusive household just took a toll on her.*

by no means Not in any way; not at all; absolutely not. A: "Tell me the truth: you thought that the play was awful." B: "By no means! It wasn't perfect, but I definitely enjoyed it." *By no means shall our country be drawn into yet another war overseas.*

by no stretch A shortened version of "by no stretch of the imagination," meaning unable to happen within, at, or beyond the limits of the imagination. *By no stretch do I think our team has a chance of winning tonight. By no stretch will we be able to pull this off.*

by no stretch of the imagination Unable to happen within, at, or beyond the limits of the imagination; in no possible situation or from no conceivable perspective. *By no stretch of the imagination do I think our team has a chance of winning tonight. Tommy does all right in school, but by no*

stretch of the imagination would I call him a genius.

by numbers Exactly as the rules, directions, or plans dictate. Primarily heard in UK. *If we all focus and do this by numbers, then we should have no trouble getting it finished. The military strike was executed perfectly and by numbers.*

by (one's) lights Directed by or in accordance with one's own beliefs, convictions, or understanding. *Never let someone else try to dictate who you are—you have to live by your own lights.*

by (one's) own hand Committed by oneself or as a direct result of one's actions. *Though she put everything she had into the company, it was by her own hand that it became marred by corruption and scandal.*

by (one)self **1.** Alone. *Because there's usually so much going on with the kids, I really enjoy spending a quiet Saturday night by myself.* **2.** Through one's own efforts alone. *You can't move that table all by yourself! Here, let me help you. My little girl loves to get dressed by herself, so tutus and cowboy boots have become the norm around here.*

by reason of Due to; on account, because, or as a result of. *By reason of this being the defendant's first offense, we've decided to pursue a lenient sentence. The game was canceled by reason of a huge storm heading toward the stadium.*

by return mail Through mail correspondence back to the sender. *Please indicate your interest in this offer by return mail.*

by return post Through mail correspondence back to the sender. *Please indicate your interest in this offer by return post.*

by rights Fairly and justly, according to one's due rights. *Because you're the oldest nephew, you inherit the most of Uncle Ed's fortune by rights. By rights, you can't interrogate him without a lawyer present.*

by rote By memory, perhaps without true understanding of the topic. *Ask Becky to recite the poem—she knows it by rote. Research shows that simply learning things by rote doesn't always translate into the best grasp of the material.*

by shank's mare By one's legs and feet, used for walking; traveling by foot. A reference to the shank—the lower leg between the knee and the ankle—and the use of ponies or horses for travel. (Also written as "shanks' mare.")

My bicycle fell apart three miles away from home, so I had to go the rest of the way by shank's mare. Unfortunately, with the sedentary lifestyle many lead today, travel by shank's mare has largely become obsolete.

by stealth In an undetected way; silently and secretly. *The cat burglar entered the office by stealth, and the only evidence he was there was the missing document.*

by the back door By deceptive, corrupt, or indirect methods. *This major change came by the back door, so we definitely need to fight the school board on it.*

by the book In accordance with rules or regulations. *If you're looking for someone to approve an exception, don't go to Ted—he does everything by the book.*

by the by Incidentally; on a side note; by the way. An interjection meant to casually introduce or emphasize additional information in the conversation. Sometimes, though less commonly, written as "by the bye." *By the by, I remembered where I left my keys, in case you were wondering. Beckett was an amazing playwright. There's a lecture on his work tomorrow, by the by.*

by the day Per day; at a daily rate. *You can't afford to miss work when you get paid by the day. I'm renting this hotel room by the day because I could get my next travel assignment at any time.*

by the dozen(s) **1.** Specifically in a group or quantity of 12 (which constitutes a dozen). *You can't just get one cupcake at that place—they only sell them by the dozen, like eggs.* **2.** In large numbers. Despite the using the word "dozen," the phrase is not limited to quantities of 12 and can be written in the plural ("dozens"). *If we institute new rules by the dozen, we'll never be able to police them all at once. We're going to need to get bagels by the dozens for the company-wide breakfast meeting.*

by the end of the day Before the day ends. Typically refers to the end of the workday. *My meeting got moved up to tomorrow morning, so I'm going to need that report from you by the end of the day.*

by the grace of God By the direction, blessings, or assistance of a higher power (e.g., God). *By the grace of God, let me never have to go through something like that again! We never need question our purpose, for*

we are led by the grace of God.

by the handful In large quantities; in quantities roughly equal to a handful. *My kids would eat candy by the handful if I would let them!*

by the hour **1.** Per hour; at an hourly rate. *Of course he's drawing out this project—he gets paid by the hour!* **2.** Every hour; once an hour. *I feel better knowing that the nurse will check on mom by the hour. Sir, the situation is worsening by the hour—how should we proceed?*

by the month Per month; at a monthly rate. *I'm renting this apartment by the month because I could get my next travel assignment at any time.*

by the name (of) Using the specific name (that is then stated). *My daughter Margaret has now decided that she goes by the name Calliope. I'm looking for a man by the name of Whitaker. Do you know him?*

by the nape of (one's)/its/the neck By the back of the neck (of a person or animal). *My mom was so mad that she grabbed me by the nape of the neck and hauled me into my room to be grounded. I had to yank the cat out from under the floorboards by the nape of its neck. The boss took John by the nape of his neck and warned him never to do something so foolish again.*

by the numbers Exactly as the rules, directions, or plans dictate. *If we all focus and do this by the numbers, then we should have no trouble getting it finished. The military strike was executed perfectly and by the numbers.*

by the same token **1.** Similarly. In the same manner. *I'm not good at math and, by the same token, I struggle with scientific equations.* **2.** Because of the same causes or the same reasons as what was previously stated. *When crime increases, house prices plummet by the same token.*

by the scruff of (one's)/its/the neck By the back of the neck (of a person or animal). *My mom was so mad that she grabbed me by the scruff of the neck and hauled me into my room to be grounded. I had to yank the cat out from under the floorboards by the scruff of its neck. The boss took John by the scruff of his neck and warned him never to do something so foolish again.*

by the seat of (one's) pants Without a clear plan or direction. Often used in the phrase "fly by the seat of (one's) pants." *I know my parents think that I'm just flying by the seat of my pants ever since I dropped out of college, but I just signed with a record label and am launching my singing career!*

by the short hairs See [have \(someone\) by the short hairs](#).

by the skin of (one's) teeth Barely. Often used to describe something that almost didn't happen. *Oh man, my car wouldn't start this morning—I just made it here by the skin of my teeth!*

by the sweat of (one's) brow Through or because of one's own efforts or hard work. *By the sweat of his brow, my father turned a barren little plot of land into the flourishing farm you see today. This pair of entrepreneurs has created a billion-dollar company by the sweat of their brow.*

by the thousand In huge quantities, presumably numbering several thousand. *When the potato famine hit Ireland, the Irish began emigrating by the thousand.*

by the thousands In huge quantities, presumably numbering several thousand. *When the potato famine hit Ireland, the Irish began emigrating—especially to America—by the thousands.*

by the time At the time when something happens that is after another event or situation has already passed or occurred. *By the time she realized she had cancer, it had already spread. If you don't have this mess cleaned up by the time I get home, you're going to be in serious trouble!*

by the way Incidentally; on a side note. An interjection meant to casually introduce or emphasize additional information in the conversation. *By the way, I remembered where I left my keys, in case you were wondering. Beckett was an amazing playwright. There's a lecture on his work tomorrow, by the way.*

by the week Per week; at a weekly rate. *I'm renting this apartment by the week because I could get my next travel assignment at any time.*

by the year Per year; at a yearly rate. *Because I'm no longer traveling so much for work, I can finally rent an apartment by the year.*

by their lights See [by \(one's\) lights](#).

by their own hands See [by \(one's\) own hand](#).

by themselves See [by \(one\)self](#).

by trade By professional training, experience, and/or expertise. Often used as a contrast to other work one undertakes. *Joe is a carpenter by trade, but he*

also gets a lot of side work as an electrician. I'm an actor and a writer by trade, but I work in the restaurant to make ends meet.

by turns In an alternating cycle; in successive or rotating turns. *I think something was wrong, for her manner was by turns welcoming and cold, which made for a disconcerting evening. My wife and I divide household tasks by turns.*

by virtue of (something) Due to something; because of something; by reason of something. *By virtue of your years of hard work and experience, we think you would be well-suited to a managerial role. I know that you feel the need to intervene by virtue of your role as a father, but you need to allow your children a greater degree of independence.*

by water Via water as a means of transportation; by boat or ship. *There are no landing strips or helipads, so the island can only be reached by water. Our coasts are well defended, so the attack is not likely to come by water.*

by way of (something) 1. Via a place, route, or mode of transportation. *Patty is coming by way of train, and she's supposed to get here by 11. She doesn't have a direct flight—she's coming by way of Atlanta.* 2. As a method or means of doing something. *When Paul arrived 30 minutes late, he complained about the traffic by way of explanation.*

by weight Determined by or according to how much something weighs, as opposed to some other measurement (e.g., by size or volume). *To get a better value, I always steer clear of prepackaged produce and buy it by weight instead.*

by word of mouth Through the verbal sharing of information. A: "How did you hear about our bakery?" B: "Oh, by word of mouth. My dad told me about it." *We don't have the budget for a big marketing campaign, so we'll just have to hope that buzz about our shop gets spread by word of mouth.*

Bye Felicia slang A phrase typically used to dismiss an irritating person. It comes from the 1995 movie *Friday*, in which the character Felicia is generally regarded as an annoyance. *There's no way I'm lending you any more money, so bye Felicia.*

bygone days A period of time that has since passed. *My grandmother loves to look at old pictures as a reminder of her bygone days. That law is from bygone days! We need to move forward and modernize, not stay stuck in*

the past!

bystander apathy A social psychological phenomenon in which the more people there are viewing a crisis or crime, the less likely they are to offer aid to the victim(s). Also known as the bystander effect. *Over 30 people saw the mugging take place, but due to bystander apathy, none of them intervened.*

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C

c est la vie See [c'est la vie](#).

C-note slang A United States \$100 bill. *In an attempt to impress his date, Fred pulled a C-note out of his pocket to pay for dinner.*

c u next Tuesday See [see you next Tuesday](#).

cabin fever 1. Acute anxiety, restlessness, irritability and/or depression from remaining for too long in an unstimulating and isolated or remote environment, either by oneself or with others (especially when in cramped conditions). *We thought taking our family vacation in a tiny cottage out in the country would be a nice break from city life, but we all had pretty bad cabin fever after a few days.* 2. Any feeling of boredom or restlessness from being in one place and/or by oneself for too long. *I decided to stay home on Friday night, but after a few hours by myself, I started getting cabin fever.*

cackling geese Those who warn of something that is about to happen. *Thank goodness for the cackling geese outside who ran in and told us to lock down the building because there was a man with a gun roaming the streets. My wife is skeptical of them, but I always tune in to those cackling geese giving the weather report—I don't want to get caught in a blizzard!*

cadge (something) from (someone) slang To borrow something from someone. *I need to cadge your textbook from you before the big test.*

Caesar's wife must be above suspicion If one is involved with a famous or prominent figure, one must avoid attracting negative attention or scrutiny. Julius Caesar allegedly used the phrase to explain why he divorced his wife, Pompeia. *After my son's scandal derailed my presidential bid, I understood why Caesar's wife must be above suspicion.*

cage (someone or something) in To trap or enclose one in a particular space or area. *We're getting new floors put in downstairs, so we're all caged in upstairs right now. Be sure to close the gate and cage the dog in the back yard.*

cage (someone or something) up (in something) To trap or enclose one in a particular space or area. *Be sure to close the gate and cage*

the dog up in the back yard.

cajole (someone) into (something) To persuade or entice someone into doing something. *Good luck cajoling someone into helping you clean your house! With the promise of baked goods, I was able to cajole Kelly into house-sitting for me.*

cajole (someone) out of (something) 1. To persuade or entice someone not to do something. *Good luck cajoling a teenager out of sleeping till noon!* 2. To persuade or entice someone to abandon or get rid of something. *Every time I turn on the TV, some charity or organization is trying to cajole me out of my hard-earned money.*

the cake is a lie You will not receive the reward that you have been promised. The phrase comes from the video game *Portal*, in which the protagonist is repeatedly promised cake in exchange for her efforts but is eventually warned that "the cake is a lie." *Our teacher said she wouldn't assign homework if we behaved at the assembly, but I'm starting to think that the cake is a lie.*

(one's) cake is dough One's actions have failed or not led to the desired outcome—much like a cake that is still dough after baking. The phrase appears in Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*. *I know you worked really hard on this project, but it looks like your cake is dough, and you won't be winning the contest.*

cake (someone) with (something) To coat someone or something with a substance that dries and hardens, like mud or blood. *My daughter and her friend caked each other with mud as they played outside in the rain.*

cakes and ale Simple material pleasures; fun or lively enjoyment in general. The phrase first appeared in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*: "Dost thou think, because thou art virtuous, there shall be no more cakes and ale?" Primarily heard in UK. *Any reasonable person knows that life is not all cakes and ale. Kids these days think only of cakes and ales—and not of the hard work they need to put in to be successful.*

cakewalk A task that is easily, effortlessly, or certain to be accomplished. *I've been running marathons for years now, so this 5K run will be a cakewalk for me.*

calculate on (something) To consider or think about something.

He'll have an answer for you soon—he's been calculating on your offer for days.

calculate (something) into (something) To include a particular amount as one does calculations. *When you submit your travel expenses for reimbursement, be sure to calculate gas into the total. Wait, I didn't calculate the tip into each person's total, so we need to give the server more money.*

calculated risk A risky action that has been carefully considered beforehand, in which the chance or likelihood of a beneficial outcome outweighs the risk or cost of failure. *We decided to take the calculated risk of going to trial, rather than settling out of court.*

calendar year The period of January 1 to December 31, as constitutes a particular year. *For tax purposes, what were your medical expenses in the last calendar year?*

calf love A mild, generally temporary crush, infatuation, or romantic attraction, especially that which is not expected to last or come to fruition. *It's not uncommon for long-term medical patients to experience a bit of calf love for their nurses or doctors after a while. Ben always devotes himself to some new calf love that he can pour his adoration onto, but it never comes to anything serious.*

call (a group) together To ask people to gather, typically to discuss a specific topic or issue. *The boss has called us together to discuss the discrepancies in the latest budget report. Do you know why Josh called everyone together tonight?*

call a halt to (something) To order the end or stoppage of something. *Stop all printing—the boss has called a halt to this project!*

call a meeting To ask people to gather, typically to discuss a specific topic or issue. *The boss has called a meeting to discuss the discrepancies in the latest budget report. Does anyone know why Josh called a meeting tonight?*

call a spade a spade To address or describe the true nature of someone or something, even if it is unpleasant. The term originated from a translation of an ancient Greek phrase, but is considered offensive by some due to the later use of the word "spade" as a racial slur. *I know you like Jason, but he's a jerk! I'm sorry, but I have to call a spade a spade. You have to call a spade a*

spade and acknowledge the corruption built into this system!

call a/the meeting to order To declare that a meeting is officially underway. *You can still slip into the conference room—no one has called the meeting to order yet.*

call about (something) To call someone by phone to discuss a particular person or topic. A noun or pronoun can be used between "call" and "about." *Hi, I'm calling about the ad I saw in the paper. I have no idea why the street is closed, but I'll call Laura about it—she knows everything that goes on in this town.*

call again Come back again. Although it uses the word "call," the phrase refers to returning to a place, such as a store. *I'm sorry we don't have that item in stock right now—please call again.*

call (all) the shots To dictate how a situation or agenda proceeds, as from a position of authority. *My staff has to do what I say because I'm the boss, and I call all the shots here! Mom calls the shots for Thanksgiving dinner, so you better get her approval for any dish you want to bring.*

call around 1. To call multiple places or people to try to get information about something. *Oh, thank goodness you're OK! I've been calling around trying to find out where you were! I have no idea why the street is closed, but I'll call around and get some answers. 2.* To invite someone to one's home. In this usage, a noun or pronoun is used between "call" and "around." *I do want Bill to see our new place! I've called him around many times, but he's always busy.*

call at (some place) 1. To visit a particular place. *I called at that store, but the item I'm looking for is out of stock. 2.* To stop at a particular location, as of a ship. *We'll be calling at that port later today.*

call attention to (someone or something) To draw others' awareness to someone or something. *I know you were trying to sneak into the meeting, but you really called attention to yourself when you knocked over that chair. That garish new paint color really calls attention to all the imperfections in the walls.*

call away To ask one to leave one's current space or task and do something else. A noun or pronoun can be used between "call" and "away." *I was working on that report, but then I got called away to put ink in the*



printer. When you have five kids, you're constantly being called away to help one with something. Don't call him away while he's in the middle of cleaning out the garage, or it'll never get done!

call back **1.** verb To return someone's phone call. In this usage, a noun or pronoun can be used between "call" and "back." *If that's Paul on the phone, tell him I'll call him back later. Hi Dr. Ryan, I'm just calling back about the message you left me this morning.* **2.** verb To instruct someone to return to a particular place or situation. In this usage, a noun or pronoun is typically used between "call" and "back." *As I walked to my car, my mom called me back to retrieve a textbook I'd almost forgotten.* **3.** verb To recall a defective item. In this usage, a noun or pronoun can be used between "call" and "back." *If that part does in fact cause engines to overheat, then we have no choice but to call it back.* **4.** noun A return phone call. In this usage, the phrase is usually written as one word. *I had been trying to reach Mary for weeks and finally got a callback from her last night.* **5.** noun An instruction to return to a particular place or situation. In this usage, the phrase is usually written as one word. *As I walked to my car, I got a callback from my mom, who was holding a textbook I'd almost forgotten.* **6.** noun A recall of a defective item. In this usage, the phrase is usually written as one word. *If that part does in fact cause engines to overheat, then we're going to have to do a massive callback.* **7.** noun A follow-up audition or interview, as when pursuing an acting role or applying for a job. In this usage, the phrase is usually written as one word. *After months of fruitless auditions, I finally got a callback! I'm so excited that I don't even care that it's for an ointment commercial! I just got a callback from the recruiter—she wants me to come in for a second interview!* **8.** noun A reference to a past scene or plot development, as in a TV show. In this usage, the phrase is usually written as one word. *The Gilmore Girls revival was full of callbacks to the original series.* **9.** noun In comedy, a joke that references an element used in a joke told earlier in the routine. In this usage, the phrase is usually written as one word. *The callback that I've been using at the end of my set is really killing.*

call bluff See [call \(one's\) bluff](#).

call by (a name) To refer to one using a specific name. *My daughter Margaret has now decided that she wants to be called by the name Calliope. Back home, I'm called by Jethro, so feel free to call me that.*

call down **1.** To call by phone or yell to someone on a lower level of a

house or building. A noun or pronoun can be used between "call" and "down." *Call down to the front desk and ask them for some more towels. I called down to my dad that the bathroom sink was still leaking.* **2.** To ask one to come to a lower level of a building or house. A noun or pronoun can be used between "call" and "down." *Security will call me down to meet you when you get here. I called my dad down to look at the leak in the dining room ceiling.* **3.** To ask one to come to a particular place. A noun or pronoun can be used between "call" and "down." *I knew about the public outcry against my article, so I was not surprised to be called down to the editor's office.* **4.** To scold, rebuke, or reprimand someone, as for a wrongdoing. A noun or pronoun can be used between "call" and "down." *My teacher called me down in front of the whole class after he caught me sticking my tongue out at him.* **5.** To invoke or request divine intervention. A noun or pronoun can be used between "call" and "down." *While in the throes of mourning, I called down for comfort from the heavens. I wouldn't cross a woman who converses with the spirits—who knows what kinds of punishments she can call down on us!*

call for (someone or something) **1.** To call a place by phone specifically to talk to one who lives or works there (depending on the context). *Honey, a boy named John called for you while you were at tennis practice this afternoon. I'm calling for Mr. Crane—is he in the office today?* **2.** To yell to another person or with a particular request. *I called for my dad when I noticed the leak in the dining room ceiling. Do you hear someone calling for help?* **3.** To require something. *Well, the recipe calls for four eggs, and I only have two, so I guess I'm going to the store.* **4.** To ask one to come to a particular place. *I knew about the public outcry against my article, so I was not surprised when the editor called for me.* **5.** To pick one up for transport, as of a car service. *Your flight is at 6 AM, so the driver will call for you at 4.* **6.** To predict something. *Take an umbrella with you—the forecast is calling for rain this afternoon.* **7.** To be a fitting or appropriate time, occasion, or reason to do something. *Celebrating an engagement calls for champagne!*

call forth **1.** To instruct or signal someone to step forward or come to the front of a group. A noun or pronoun can be used between "call" and "forth" or after "forth." *Counselor, you may call forth your first witness. Do not step forward until they call you forth.* **2.** To induce a certain reaction, emotion, or

behavior (which is stated between "call" and "forth" or after "forth"). *Lots of people tear up at the art museum. Beautiful artwork is known to call very strong emotions forth. The catastrophe called forth great bravery from the victims and emergency responders alike.*

call forward See [call \(one\) forward](#).

call girl A female escort whose clients place orders for sexual services (often via telephone). *As soon as Sharon discovered that her husband had used a call girl when he was supposedly away on business, she filed for divorce.*

call her into question See [call \(someone or something\) into question](#).

call her names See [call \(one\) names](#).

call her off See [call off](#).

call her on See [call on](#).

call her on the carpet See [call \(one\) on the carpet](#).

call her out See [call out](#).

call her over See [call \(one\) over](#).

call her own See [call \(one's\) own](#).

call her shots See [call \(one's\) shots](#).

call her to account See [call to account](#).

call her to attention See [call \(one\) to attention](#).

call her to heel See [call \(someone\) to heel](#).

call her to mind See [call to mind](#).

call her up See [call up](#).

call him about See [call about \(something\)](#).

call hogs To snore. *The last time I shared a room with grandpa, my ears were ringing in the morning because he called hogs all night long!*

call in (one's) chips **1.** To die. ("Chips" are small discs used to represent money in some betting games, like poker.) *We were so lucky to avoid that massive accident—we could have called in our chips!* **2.** To sell one's belongings and/or financial assets in order to make money quickly.

Yeah, I sold that vintage guitar last month—I had to call in my chips to pay rent.

call in sick To inform one's employer that one will be absent due to illness (real or feigned). The phrase originally referred to calling by phone, but can refer to any form of communication (such as email). *That virus has totally decimated my staff—only two people are in the office today because the rest called in sick! If you really want to go to the beach tomorrow, just call in sick.*

call in(to) **1.** To ask one to come to a particular place. A noun or pronoun can be used between "call" and "in" or after "in." In this usage, the phrase can also be written as "call into." *I knew about the public outcry against my article, so I was not surprised when the editor called me in for a chat. If you don't call the dog into the house, we'll be out here all night.* **2.** To request one's aid or expertise. A noun or pronoun can be used between "call" and "in" or after "in." *I've called in Nancy to help you—as a senior member of the team, she's dealt with these kinds of issues before. When that case had me stumped, I called another detective in to review it with me.* **3.** To call a specific place by phone. A noun or pronoun can be used between "call" and "in" or after "in." *I called in to a radio station and won two tickets to that big concert! I am working from home today, but I have to call in for a meeting at 3. Nancy from our North Carolina office will call in to help you—she's dealt with these kinds of issues before.* **4.** To order something by phone. A noun or pronoun can be used between "call" and "in" or after "in." *Just tell me what you want for dinner and I'll call it in. Headquarters just called in an air strike—we need to evacuate this area now!* **5.** To pull something from circulation. A noun or pronoun can be used between "call" and "in" or after "in." In this usage, "back" is sometimes used before "in" (as in, "call (something) back in"). *Due to the growing backlash, the publisher has called in that issue of the magazine.* **6.** To report something by phone (or other means of voice communication, such as a radio) in an official capacity, such as in law enforcement. A noun or pronoun can be used between "call" and "in" or after "in." *I'll secure the perimeter while you call in the robbery. I know it's the end of our shift, but this is serious—we have to call it in.*

call it a day To stop working, either at one's job or on a particular task, for the rest of the day. *When we still couldn't find the source of the discrepancy, we decided to call it a day and revisit it tomorrow. This package*

is the last one. Once we get this shipped, we can call it a day.

call it a night To stop working, either at one's job or on a particular task, for the rest of the night. *I'm too tired to keep looking at these numbers, so let's call it a night. This package is the last one. Once we get this shipped, we can call it a night.*

call it even To acknowledge or consider a situation or exchange as being equal or equitable, as regarding debt, status, ability, a contest, etc. *I'll pay the Internet bill if you'll pay the electricity bill, and then we'll just call it even. We both won a significant number of matches against each other, so we just called it even in the end.*

call it quits **1.** To stop working. *I've still got a few jobs to do around the ranch before I can call it quits for the day.* **2.** To end a partnership of some kind, often a romantic relationship. *I'm so sad to hear that Mara and John called it quits—I thought those two would be together forever.* **3.** To abandon a particular pursuit. *Luke dreamed of playing pro basketball, but he had to call it quits after a serious knee injury.* **4.** To acknowledge that a debt has been paid. *Thank you for paying me back—now we can call it quits.*

call me around See [call around](#).

call me away See [call away](#).

call me back See [call back](#).

call me down See [call down](#).

call me forth See [call forth](#).

call me in See [call in\(to\)](#).

call my service Don't call me directly—call my answering service instead. A phrase of discouragement or disinterest. *If anyone calls me about an unsolicited resume they've submitted, tell them to call my service.*

call no man happy till he dies Due to the mutable nature of happiness, one's life cannot definitively be judged as happy until one has died. *Jay was perfectly happy until his wife got sick. That's why you can call no man happy till he dies.*

call of nature informal The urge to urinate or defecate. *Jim is off answering the call of nature. Wait a minute, I have to go answer the call of nature.*

call off 1. To cancel a project, event, or activity. A noun or pronoun can be used between "call" and "off" or after "off." *Stop all printing—the boss has called off this project! I was supposed to go out tonight, but Marisa is sick and called off our dinner. The coach called football practice off because of the rain.* **2.** To stop or restrain a person or animal that is behaving aggressively. A noun or pronoun can be used between "call" and "off" or after "off." *Can you please call off your mother so she stops interrogating me? I'll tell you anything you want to know, just call off your dogs!*

call off the/(one's) dogs 1. To stop disparaging or otherwise behaving aggressively toward someone. *I know you wish I were a doctor, dad, but call off the dogs for one night. I'll tell you anything you want to know, just call off your dogs!* **2.** To stop someone else from disparaging or otherwise behaving aggressively toward another person. *Your mother won't stop interrogating me—can you please call off the dogs?*

call on 1. To ask one to answer a question, as in a classroom or other academic setting. In this usage, a noun or pronoun is typically used after "on." *My son says that he raises his hand in class every day, and the teacher never calls on him. I didn't have an answer ready, but the teacher called on me anyway.* **2.** To pursue one, often romantically. In this usage, a noun or pronoun is typically used after "on." *I don't think he's interested in me, considering how he's been calling on the girl down the street.* **3.** To ask one to do something. In this usage, a noun or pronoun is typically used after "on." *We received an overwhelming response when we called on our members to donate to this very important cause.* **4.** To utilize something, often a quality or skill. In this usage, a noun or pronoun is typically used after "on." *The championship game was so intense that I really had to call on my mental toughness just to get through it.* **5.** To visit one. In this usage, a noun or pronoun is typically used after "on." *I'm sorry I'm late—I called on Maggie after work because her mother just died.* **6.** To challenge one to prove that one's claims or boasts are true. In this usage, a noun or pronoun is typically used between "call" and "on." *He insisted that he could run faster than me, but when I called him on it, he suddenly had to go home. The moderator finally called the candidate on her misleading statements.* **7.** To confront one about one's misdeeds or unpleasant behavior. In this usage, a noun or pronoun is typically used between "call" and "on." *If your intern keeps coming in late, you need to call her on it.*

call one about See [call about \(something\)](#).

call (one) forward To instruct or signal one to step forward or come to the front of a group. *Counselor, you may call your first witness forward. I knew that Becky had the poem memorized, so I called her forward to recite it.*

call (one) names **1.** To mock or disparage one with rude or offensive names. *My son is miserable because the kids at his new school call him names.* **2.** To speak to or about one derisively. *I barely even know Lauren, so why is she calling me names to other people?*

call (one) on the carpet To scold, rebuke, or reprimand someone. *When my team lost that big client, the boss called me on the carpet.*

call (one) over To ask one to come to a particular place. *I knew about the public outcry against my article, so I was not surprised when the editor called me over to chat.*

call (one) to attention To instruct military personnel to stand at attention (which, in most cases, means looking forward and standing erect with one's arms at one's sides). *The troops abruptly stopped marching when the drill sergeant called them to attention.*

call (one's) bluff **1.** To challenge someone to act on their threat or prove that their claim or boast is true, when one believes they are making a false claim or idle threat (i.e. bluffing). *He insisted that he could run faster than me, but when I called his bluff, he suddenly said he had to go home.* **2.** To disprove a bluff. Whereas the first usage simply indicates a challenge, this usage indicates that the challenge resulted in the disproof. *I don't know why he keeps making these outrageous claims. I've been calling his bluff for years and making him look like a fool.*

call (one's) own To regard or claim something as under one's own control or belonging genuinely or solely to oneself. *Many people are in dire poverty in this area, left with hardly anything to call their own. I've been dreaming of the day I have a car to call my own.*

call (one's) shots To announce one's intentions or goals before pursuing them. A: *"Did you know that Dave is off in LA, trying to become an actor?"* B: *"Sure, he called his shots before he left town."*

call out **1.** To announce something. In this usage, a noun or pronoun can be used between "call" and "out" or after "out." *Once everyone is seated, the*

host will call out the winners' names. If you've got Bingo, call it out! **2.** To shout in an attempt to draw attention to oneself. *I called out to my best friend when I saw her walking down the street, but she had headphones on and couldn't hear me. My husband came running when he heard me call out for help.* **3.** To confront one about one's misdeeds or unpleasant behavior. In this usage, a noun or pronoun is typically used between "call" and "out." *If your intern keeps coming in late, you need to call her out on it.* **4.** To challenge one to a fight. In this usage, a noun or pronoun can be used between "call" and "out" or after "out." *I wouldn't call that guy out—I know for a fact that he carries a knife.* **5.** To request one's aid or presence. In this usage, a noun or pronoun can be used between "call" and "out" or after "out." *When that case had me stumped, I called another detective out to review it with me. The president called out military troops when the situation became unstable.* **6.** To utilize something, often a quality or skill. In this usage, a noun or pronoun can be used between "call" and "out" or after "out." *The championship game was so intense that I really had to call out my mental toughness just to get through it.* **7.** To order something by phone. *Just tell me what you want for dinner, and I'll call out for it.*

call (someone or something) into question To cause someone or something to be viewed with doubt. *I considered Walt for the promotion, but his constant lateness soon called that decision into question. Such a significant error really calls all of the experiment's results into question.*

call (someone) to heel To force someone to obey one's wishes or commands; to make someone act in accordance with one's authority. *The CEO was quick to call the junior board member to heel after the latter spoke out of turn at the annual general meeting. Sir, the members of your squad are all out of control. You need to call them to heel right away!*

call (something) square To acknowledge that a debt has been paid. *Thank you for paying me back—now we can call it square.*

call the dogs off (of a person) To stop threatening or behaving aggressively toward someone. *Call the dogs off! I'll tell you anything you want to know, just stop threatening me!*

call the meeting to order See [call a/the meeting to order](#).

call (the) roll In a group setting, to call out each person's name from a list to see if they are present or absent. *I haven't called roll yet, but it looks*

like a lot of kids are absent from school today. Suzy, please call the roll, I need to step out for a moment.

call the shots See [call \(all\) the shots](#).

call the tune To dictate how a situation or agenda proceeds, as from a position of authority. The phrase is a shortened version of "Who pays the piper calls the tune," which means that the person who pays for something assumes control over it. *My staff has to do what I say because I'm the boss, and I call the tune here! Mom calls the tune for Thanksgiving dinner, so you better get her approval for any dish you want to bring.*

call to account **1.** To confront or question one about one's wrongdoings. A noun or pronoun can be used between "call" and "account." *That's it—the next time I see Rachel, I'm calling her to account! I simply can't tolerate her selfish behavior any longer. I'm sure the boss is going to call me to account for my outburst during the meeting.* **2.** To blame one for something. A noun or pronoun can be used between "call" and "account." *I was the lead salesperson, so I knew that I would be called to account when my team lost that big client.*

call to mind To cause one to think of or remember someone or something (which can be stated between "can" and "to" or after "mind"). *Can we go somewhere else for dinner? That place just calls my ex-girlfriend to mind. That song calls to mind many fond memories of my childhood.*

call to order To formally begin or open (something), as of a meeting, trial, convention, etc. *It is my pleasure to call to order our first meeting of the year!*

call to (someone) To shout to someone in an attempt to draw attention to oneself. *I called to my best friend when I saw her walking down the street, but she had headphones on and couldn't hear me. I had so many grocery bags to bring inside that I had to call to my husband to come help.*

call to the bar **1.** noun Admission as a lawyer (American English), or specifically as a barrister or solicitor (British English). *Ms. Fields earned her call to the bar only last year but has already represented many high-profile clients in court.* **2.** verb To receive admission as a lawyer (American English) or as a barrister or solicitor (British English). *I studied law in Dublin, but I was called to the bar in London and have my practice set up there now.*



call together See [call \(a group\) together](#).

call up **1.** verb To call someone or something by phone. A noun or pronoun can be used between "call" and "up." *Please call up your mother once in a while. I called up the school to find out the status of my application.* **2.** verb To call by phone or yell to someone on a higher level of a house or building. A noun or pronoun can be used between "call" and "up." *Call up to the CEO's assistant and tell him that the 3 o'clock interview is here. I called up to my dad to tell him the kitchen sink was still leaking.* **3.** verb To invite people to move from a lower level in a particular place to a higher one (such as a stage). A noun or pronoun can be used between "call" and "up." *We will call the graduates up one by one, so be sure to listen for your name.* **4.** verb To cause one to think of or remember someone or something. A noun or pronoun can be used between "call" and "up." *That song calls up many fond memories of my childhood. Can we go somewhere else for dinner? That place just calls my ex-girlfriend up.* **5.** verb To initiate a discussion on a particular topic or issue. A noun or pronoun can be used between "call" and "up." *You didn't miss much—Betsy just called up budgetary discrepancies as the next topic of discussion.* **6.** verb To utilize something, often a quality or skill. A noun or pronoun can be used between "call" and "up." *The championship game was so intense that I really had to call up my mental toughness just to get through it.* **7.** verb To bring someone into active military service. A noun or pronoun can be used between "call" and "up." *With this war intensifying, I'm worried that my son will be called up and sent overseas.* **8.** verb To retrieve information from a computer. A noun or pronoun can be used between "call" and "up." *Call up the latest budget report for me, please. I'll need a printed copy for my meeting tomorrow.* **9.** verb To give a minor league player a spot on a major league team's roster. A noun or pronoun can be used between "call" and "up." *The pitcher just got called up from the minors, so this will be his first big test.* **10.** noun A minor league athlete who has been summoned to play for a major league team (perhaps temporarily). This phrase is usually hyphenated when used as a noun. *With so many veterans injured, their roster has a lot of call-ups right now, so it's no surprise they're going to miss the playoffs.* **11.** noun The opportunity for a minor league athlete to play for a major league team. This phrase is usually hyphenated when used as a noun. *Because I wasn't a high profile draft pick, I had to start my career in the minors and wait to get a call-up.*

call upon (someone) 1. To choose, request, obligate, order, or demand someone to do something. *Yesterday the president called upon world leaders everywhere to promote open and fair trade between countries. He was called upon to give testimony in court.* 2. To visit someone. *I went to the East Coast last week to call upon my aunt.*

call you around See [call around](#).

call you away See [call away](#).

call you back See [call back](#).

call you down See [call down](#).

call you forth See [call forth](#).

call you forward See [call \(one\) forward](#).

call you in See [call in\(to\)](#).

call you into question See [call \(someone or something\) into question](#).

call you names See [call \(one\) names](#).

call you off See [call off](#).

call you on See [call on](#).

call you on the carpet See [call \(one\) on the carpet](#).

call you out See [call out](#).

call you over See [call \(one\) over](#).

call you to account See [call to account](#).

call you to attention See [call \(one\) to attention](#).

call you to heel See [call \(someone\) to heel](#).

call you to mind See [call to mind](#).

call you up See [call up](#).

call your bluff See [call \(one's\) bluff](#).

call your own See [call \(one's\) own](#).

call your shots See [call \(one's\) shots](#).

called to straw Ready to go into childbirth. *Once your sister is called to straw, we'll have a new member of the family!*

calling card 1. A small card containing one's contact information; a business card that may also be used for social purposes. *I'm old school, so I like to hand out a calling card when I'm saying goodbye to a new acquaintance.* 2. An item left behind by someone to signify that they had been present in a particular location. *It was evident that the string of murders were committed by the same man, as he left his calling card, a single red rose, at the scene of each crime.* 3. A special skill or talent that sets an individual apart from others. Primarily heard in US. *His ability to paint such lifelike portraits really is his calling card in the art world.*

the calm after a storm The period during which things improve after a difficult, chaotic, or stressful time. *Yesterday was very hectic, but today I feel like I can finally breathe again. It's the calm after a storm.*

calm down 1. To relax or become less intense. Although this phrase can be applied to things or situations, it is often said as an imperative to one who is openly anxious, angry, or upset. *I've been rocking the baby for hours, but I just can't get her to calm down and stop crying. Calm down—we'll be home before curfew. Work was chaotic during the merger, but things are finally calming down now.* 2. To soothe someone or diffuse a tense situation. In this usage, a noun or pronoun can be used between "calm" and "down." *I've been rocking the baby for hours, but I just can't seem to calm her down. The therapy dog really seems to calm down our patients.*

calm your tits rude slang Calm down. Relax. *Oh, calm your tits, Maggie—we'll be home before curfew.*

a camel is a horse designed by a committee Committees, due to their reliance on several different opinions and viewpoints, produce results that are fragmented, inefficient, or of poor quality, especially compared to the work of a single individual or a small team. A: *"Did you see this latest memo? Can you believe the asinine decisions the task force made?"* B: *"Well, a camel is a horse designed by a committee."*

camel through the eye of a needle Used as part of a comparison to indicate that something is impossible or extremely difficult to accomplish. Taken from the passage in the Bible (Luke 18:25), "For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." *You'd have an easier time getting a camel through the eye of a needle than getting them to agree on the issue.*

a camel's nose (under the tent) A small, seemingly innocuous act or decision that will lead to much larger, more serious, and less desirable consequences down the line. The term refers to an alleged Arab proverb that if a camel is allowed to get its nose inside of a tent, it will be impossible to prevent the rest of it from entering. *Some regard legalizing same-sex marriage as a camel's nose under the tent, eventually leading to the destruction of marriage altogether. Not hiring an exterminator at the first sign of termites has proved to be a camel's nose, as much of our woodwork is now destroyed.*

camp follower **1.** A civilian who follows a military unit from one location to the next, either because the person is closely related to a service member or to unofficially provide goods or services to members of the unit. *Daniel spent his childhood as a camp follower. His father was in the army, so he and his mother had to move a lot.* **2.** A person who supports a group or cause without officially belonging to its organization. *I always vote Republican, but I'm a camp follower—I'm registered as an Independent.*

camp it up **1.** To act in a campy (exaggerated, racy, or tacky) manner, often in a theatrical setting. *I know your character is supposed to add comic relief, but you don't have to camp it up that much.* **2.** To act in an overly effeminate manner, as of a gay man. *I highly doubt that every man who camps it up is gay.*

camp out **1.** To sleep outside recreationally; to camp, typically with a sleeping bag and/or tent. *My little brother really wants to camp out for his birthday, so we're going to set up a tent in our backyard for him. I love hiking and camping out, but my boyfriend is not very outdoorsy.* **2.** To live in a place other than one home's temporarily, often in conditions that are not ideal. *I'm camping out in my aunt's basement until I can move into my new apartment, so my roommates right now are a washer and dryer—and a few bugs.*

campaign against (someone or something) **1.** To strongly oppose someone or something and encourage others to do the same; to fight against someone or something. *Many people in our small town are campaigning against that big construction project because they feel that we don't need more stores so close to our homes.* **2.** To pursue an elected office against a specific opponent. *I'll never win the student council presidency if I have to campaign against Caroline—she's so popular!*

campaign for (someone or something) 1. To strongly support someone or something and encourage others to do the same; to fight in favor of someone or something. *Many people in our small town are campaigning for that big construction project because the closest store right now is 10 miles away.* 2. To support a candidate pursuing an elected office and encourage others to do the same. *I'm campaigning for Caroline in the race for student council president—here, have a button!*

can See [can \(someone\)](#).

can barely hear (oneself) think Unable to concentrate or think clearly because there is too much noise or commotion around oneself. *Kids, go outside to play! I can barely hear myself think with you shouting like that! With the noise of the construction outside her window, she could barely hear herself think.*

can but Can only. *I prepared for the exam, so now I can but do my best.*

can count on the fingers of one hand A phrase used to emphasize that something happens rarely. A: *"She said that she watches your kids all the time."* B: *"Oh please! I can count on the fingers of one hand the number of times she's babysat for me."* *If you loaned Andy money, good luck getting it back. I can count on the fingers of one hand the number of times he's repaid me.*

can dispense with (something) See [you can dispense with \(something\)](#).

can (do something) on (one's) ear slang Can do or complete something effortlessly. Primarily heard in Australia. *Here, let me fix that hole in your dress—with my new sewing machine, I can sew on my ear now.*

(one) can hardly believe (one's) eyes One is unable to believe or accept what is happening right in front of one. *She could hardly believe her eyes when all of her extended relatives surprised her by coming to our wedding. This place is so dirty, I can hardly believe my eyes!*

can hardly hear (oneself) think Unable to concentrate or think clearly because there is too much noise or commotion around oneself. *Kids, go outside to play! I can hardly hear myself think with you shouting like that! With the noise of the construction outside her window, she could hardly hear herself think.*

can hear the grass grow See [you could hear the grass grow\(ing\)](#).

Can I be excused? A request to leave something in particular, often the dinner table. *OK, I ate all of my vegetables—can I be excused now?*

(Can I) buy you a drink? **1.** Would you like me to purchase you an alcoholic beverage? When used literally in this way, this offer is usually extended (at an establishment that serves alcohol) to a friend or someone with whom one is pursuing a relationship of some kind, often a romantic one. *Hi, I couldn't help but noticing you from across the room. Can I buy you a drink? Hey, pal, I'd love to catch up. Buy you a drink?* **2.** Can I make you a drink? In this usage, the phrase is used humorously, since the setting is not a place where alcohol is for sale. *A: "Buy you a drink?" B: "Ah, I'll just have whatever kind of beer you've got in your fridge."*

Can I call you? **1.** A request to call someone at a later time. *I'm about to go into a meeting now, so can I call you after?* **2.** A request to call someone that one is romantically interested in (as for a date). *I really enjoyed spending time with you today—can I call you sometime?*

Can I come in? A request to enter a particular place. *A: "Hey, can I come in? I need to talk to you about something." B: "Sure, just close the door to my office."*

Can I get by, please? A request for more room so that one can pass through a crowded area. *Excuse me, can I get by, please? A: "Can I get by, please?" B: "Oh, sure—let me just move these boxes out of the way."*

Can I have a lift? A request for a ride, as in one's car. *If you're going to that part of town, can I have a lift? I'll give you money for gas.*

Can I have (one) call you? Can I take a message now and ask the person you wish to speak to (who is unavailable) to call you back later? *He's in a meeting right now, so can I have him call you?*

Can I help you? An offer for assistance, often from a salesperson. *A: "Can I help you?" B: "Yes, I'm looking for a cocktail dress."*

Can I join you? Can I accompany you (to a particular place or activity)? *You guys are going bowling tonight? Can I join you?*

Can I leave a message? A question asked when the person one wishes to speak to is currently unavailable. *Well, if he's in a meeting, can I*

just leave a message?

Can I see you again? A phrase, typically spoken after a date, that conveys the speaker's romantic interest in the listener. *I really enjoyed our date tonight—can I see you again sometime?*

Can I see you in my office? A request to speak privately in an office, typically said by a boss or superior, perhaps because one is going to be reprimanded. A: "Can I see you in my office?" B: "Oh man. Is this because I lost that account?"

Can I speak to (one)? A request to talk to someone in particular. *Can I please speak to your supervisor?* A: "Can I speak to Josh?" B: "He's not available right now—can I take a message?"

Can I take a message? An offer to transcribe someone's message to someone else who is currently unavailable. A: "Can I speak to Josh?" B: "He's not available right now—can I take a message?"

Can I take your order? A phrase typically said by a server or other food service worker inviting the patron to place their order for food. A: "Hi, can I take your order?" B: "Yes, I'll have a burger and fries."

Can I tell (one) who's calling? A question asked by one answering the phone in order to learn who is calling for the person requested. A: "Can I speak to Josh?" B: "Can I tell him who's calling?"

Can I use your powder room? A request to use the restroom in one's house. (Traditionally, a "powder room" is a smaller room containing only a toilet and sink, not a tub or shower.) *We had a long ride—can I use your powder room?*

can it (imperative) Stop talking or making noise; be quiet; shut up. *Would you can it already? I'm sick of hearing you complain. The professor told the class to can it before he began his lecture.*

can (just) whistle for (something) A phrase used to emphasize that something is unlikely to happen. *After the way she treated me yesterday, I refuse to do her laundry anymore—she can whistle for it from now on!*

can kiss (something) goodbye Can be assured of losing or having lost something, such as an opportunity or a physical object. This phrase usually suggests the speaker's frustration or disillusionment. *Well, I can kiss that job goodbye—the interview was a total disaster. I have five roommates,*

so if you leave unlabeled food in the fridge, you can pretty much kiss it goodbye.

can not say boo to a goose See [can't say boo to a goose](#).

can not see farther than her nose See [can't see farther than the end of \(one's\) nose](#).

can not win for losing See [\(one\) can't win for losing](#).

can of worms A situation that, once started, is likely to become problematic or have a negative outcome. *Getting involved in the minor border conflict has become a can of worms for the country, with no end to the military engagement in sight. You can try reformatting your computer, but once you open that can of worms, you'll probably be working on it for days.*

(one) can scarcely believe (one's) eyes One is unable to believe or accept what is happening right in front of one. *She could scarcely believe her eyes when all of her extended relatives surprised her by coming to our wedding. This place is so dirty, I can scarcely believe my eyes!*

can see (from) a mile off Able to see or predict (something) well in advance of it actually arriving or happening. *I can see from a mile off where this conversation is heading. The car is so obnoxiously large that you can see it coming a mile off.*

can sell an icebox to an Eskimo See [\(someone\) could sell an icebox to an Eskimo](#).

can sell ice to Eskimos See [\(someone\) could sell ice to Eskimos](#).

can sell sawdust to a lumber mill See [\(someone\) could sell sawdust to a lumber mill](#).

can (someone) To summarily dismiss or oust someone from employment; to fire someone. *Management promptly canned the new accountant after his miscalculation cost the company hundreds of thousands of dollars. They'll can me if they ever find out I came into work drunk yesterday.*

can take (something) to the bank Can believe a particular statement or piece of information because it is definitely true (at least according to the speaker). *I heard from a very reliable source that this company is about to close—you can take it to the bank.*

can talk the hind leg(s) off a donkey Is very (perhaps overly) talkative. Primarily heard in UK. *Don't start a conversation with Stu if you want to leave on time tonight—that guy can talk the hind leg off a donkey.*

can talk the legs off an iron pot Is very (perhaps overly) talkative. Primarily heard in Australia. *Don't start a conversation with Stu if you want to leave on time tonight—that guy can talk the legs off an iron pot.*

Can we continue this later? A request to resume a conversation with someone at a later time. *I have to run to a meeting, so can we continue this later? I really want to hear the rest of your thoughts on the merger.*

Can you excuse us, please? A phrase used to inform someone (or a group) that two or more people are leaving or need a moment of privacy. *Could you excuse us, please? We have a train to catch. I need to talk to Tom for a minute—could you excuse us, please?*

Can you hold? A question asked when one answering the phone needs to put the caller on hold. *Let me see if he's in his office—can you hold?*

can you imagine A phrase used to express the speaker's surprise, astonishment, or perhaps horror about something. *And then Dave just stood up in the middle of the board meeting and started yelling at the CEO. Can you imagine? I turned away for one second and the baby crawled right into the mud. Can you imagine?*

Can you keep a secret? A question asked before one discloses confidential information to confirm that the recipient will keep it confidential. *A: "Can you keep a secret?" B: "Of course. What's going on?" A: "I'm getting the promotion!"*

canary in a coal mine Something or someone who, due to sensitivity to his, her, or its surroundings, acts as an indicator and early warning of possible adverse conditions or danger. Refers to the former practice of taking caged canaries into coal mines. The birds would die if methane gas became present and thereby alert miners to the danger. *Wildlife in disaster movies assumes the role of the canary in a coal mine, fleeing the scene when catastrophe is imminent. Unaware that he had been given the test drug, John was used as a canary in a coal mine to see its effects on the human mind.*

cancel each other out Of two things, to negate or offset one another. *Because my husband and I support different political parties, our votes for*

president always end up canceling each other out. Neither team has an advantage in net—they both have stellar goalies that ultimately cancel each other out.

cancel (one's) Christmas slang To kill someone. *As soon as that guy becomes a liability, I'll get Ray to cancel his Christmas, no problem.*

cancel out 1. To negate or offset something. A noun or pronoun can be used between "cancel" and "out" or after "out." *My husband and I support different political parties, which means that his vote always cancels out mine.*

2. To remove or erase something. A noun or pronoun can be used between "cancel" and "out" or after "out." *We just ran out of the crab special, so be sure to cancel it out on the menu.*

3. To remove equal factors from a mathematical equation. A noun or pronoun can be used between "cancel" and "out" or after "out." *Once you cancel out those two numbers, what total are you left with?*

4. slang To kill someone. A noun or pronoun can be used between "cancel" and "out" or after "out." *Ray canceled out the informant, just as the boss told him to.*

cancel out (of) To cease being involved in something. In this usage, the phrase is often written as "cancel out of" with the activity or event stated after "of." *I had to cancel out of the play when I realized that its rehearsals conflicted with softball practice. We can't cancel out now—everyone is relying on us!*

a candidate for a pair of wings euphemism One who will die soon. This phrase can refer to one who is literally about to die or to one who behaves recklessly. *His prognosis isn't good. It sounds like he's a candidate for a pair of wings at this point. If you don't wear your helmet at the skate park, you're a candidate for a pair of wings.*

candle in the wind Something that is particularly vulnerable, weak, fragile, or precarious and likely to fail, perish, or be eliminated at any moment. *The revolutionaries' bid for freedom is but a candle in the wind at this point, likely to be crushed by the dictator's regime. We all like to think we'll live forever, but we are really just candles in the wind.*

candy-coat To attempt to make something seem better or more palatable than it actually is, especially something perceived as negative or unfavorable. *Mom tried to candy-coat the news by talking about how big the yard would be at the new house, but we were all sad about the move. Don't try to candy-*

coat this! An F is an F, no matter how hard you studied!

cannon fodder Troops that are deemed expendable and thus given the most dangerous assignments (in which they are likely to be killed by artillery fire). *I refuse to be sent to the front lines as cannon fodder!*

cannot bear the sight of See [not bear the sight of \(someone or something\)](#).

cannot but Must. A phrase used when something is very likely to happen. *I cannot but study for this exam—it counts for half of our grade!*

cannot carry a note in a bucket See [couldn't carry a note in a bucket](#).

cannot carry a tune in a bucket See [couldn't carry a tune in a bucket](#).

cannot help but A phrase used when one feels very strongly compelled to do something. *We cannot help but intervene here, before you throw your life away on drugs! My mom can't help but meddle in my love life, even though I'm 30 years old!*

cannot live with them See [can't live with them, can't live without them](#).

cannot see farther than her nose See [can't see farther than the end of \(one's\) nose](#).

cannot see the wood for the trees See [can't see the wood for the trees](#).

cannot stand the sight of See [not stand the sight of \(someone or something\)](#).

cannot win for losing See [\(one\) can't win for losing](#).

can't argue with that A phrase used when one cannot or does not want to dispute what another person has said or suggested. Often said in appreciation of the argument or suggestion that has just been presented. A: *"With all this rain, why don't we just stay in tonight?"* B: *"Can't argue with that—sure, let's see what's on TV."*

can't be arsed rude slang Is unwilling or disinclined to make the effort necessary to do or accomplish something. Primarily heard in UK. *I can't be arsed to clean all those dishes after dinner, so I'll just leave them in the sink*

until the morning. Apparently, my kids can't be arsed to put their clothes into the hamper, like they're supposed to.

can't be bothered Unwilling or disinclined to make the effort necessary to do or accomplish something. (Used in the present and past tenses almost interchangeably.) *I can't be bothered to clean all those dishes after dinner, so I'll just leave them in the sink until the morning. A: "Did you go to Sarah's party last night?" B: "Nah, couldn't be bothered."*

can't bear to think about (something) Unable or unwilling to think about or discuss a topic or situation because it is too stressful, overwhelming, or upsetting. *I've got two essays due on Monday and an exam on Tuesday—I can't bear to think about it! I can't bear to think about the number of people living in extreme poverty every single day.*

(one) can't beat that One cannot improve upon or surpass something, as in excellence, quality, value, etc. *Wow, a whole meal for just \$5? Can't beat that! Look at that majestic sunrise! Gosh, you can't beat that.*

(one) can't believe (one's) ears One is shocked by what one has heard. *I can't believe my ears! You're not playing with me, right? I really got the job?*

can't boil an egg Cannot cook well or at all. *We should eat something beforehand because my brother's making dinner, and he can't boil an egg.*

can't call (one's) soul (one's) own Spends most of one's time working for others. *Now that I've started working overtime four days a week, I really can't call my soul my own.*

can't carry a tune Can't sing well; totally lacks musical talent. *I think it's lovely that George wants to be in his church choir, but that boy can't carry a tune!*

can't complain Things are fine. A casual response to questions like "How are you?" or "How've you been?" A: "Hey, Pat, how are you?" B: "Ah, can't complain!"

can't do anything with (someone or something) Cannot manage or contain someone or something. *You just can't do anything with three energetic toddlers, and I have a headache from trying. I can't do anything with all these books and papers my daughter brings home from school—it's like they multiply overnight!*

can't (do something) for nuts slang Is totally unable to do something. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *Oh, you'll definitely beat Sarah for that role in the musical—she's can't sing for nuts.*

can't (do something) for toffee slang Is totally unable to do something. Primarily heard in UK. *Oh, you'll definitely beat Sarah for that role in the musical—she's can't sing for toffee.*

can't (do something) to save (one's) life slang Cannot do something well or at all. *Ugh, this art assignment is so annoying—I can't draw an apple to save my life. Rachel is so selfish! It's like she can't consider another person's feelings to save her life.*

can't even slang Cannot handle (something). A phrase used (usually comically) when one cannot articulate their strong feelings (often of frustration) about something or someone. *I can't even with this show! How many awesome characters are they going to kill off? A: "Did you hear that Mary and Joe broke up again?" B: "Ugh, I can't even with those two. I hope this break-up is permanent!" Did you see that kitten's sweet little face? I can't even!*

can't fight city hall See [\(you\) can't fight city hall](#).

can't find (one's) butt with both hands rude slang Cannot do the simplest task. *Please don't put Randy on the construction team—that guy can't find his butt with both hands!*

can't for the life of me I am completely unable to do something (which is usually stated after "me"). *I just met that woman yesterday, but I can't for the life of me remember her name.*

can't get enough (of something) To love or thoroughly enjoy something; to desire a large or constant amount of something. *This sushi is delicious—I can't get enough! I can't get enough of this new TV show.*

can't get over (something) Unable or unwilling to accept or believe something. Often used hyperbolically. *I just can't get over the fact that our team lost at the last minute like that. That movie was so fantastic, I can't get over it!*

can't hack it slang Cannot complete or tolerate a task or situation. *All that job taught me is that I can't hack it as a salesman. I go to Florida every winter because I just can't hack it in the cold, and I'd rather not be miserable*

for months.

can't hear (oneself) think Cannot concentrate on anything due to overwhelming noise. *Can you turn down that blaring music? I can't hear myself think! There's so much construction going on during the day that you can't even hear yourself think over the chorus of jackhammers.*

can't help (doing something) A phrase used when one feels very strongly compelled to do something. The verb used after "help" typically ends in "-ing." *We can't help intervening here, before you throw your life away on drugs! My mom can't help meddling in my love life, even though I'm 30 years old!*

can't help it Is unable to act differently. This phrase is often used to defend one's actions as involuntary or unavoidable. *I don't want to be late to work every day, but I can't help it—the public transit strike has totally thrown off the train schedule. I'm always going to worry about you, sweetie, I can't help it—it's just what a mom does.*

can't hit the (broad) side of a barn slang Has very poor aim. *Boy, you can't hit the broad side of a barn—the net is over here, you know! These guys haven't made a single basket in the last 10 minutes—they just can't hit the side of a barn right now.*

can't hold a candle See [doesn't hold a candle](#).

can't hold a candle to (someone or something) Cannot compare to someone or something; is not nearly as good or desirable as someone or something. *The sequel wasn't bad, but it can't hold a candle to the original. John's fast all right, but he can't hold a candle to Louise!*

can't hold (one's) drink Has a low tolerance for alcohol; becomes drunk after consuming only a small amount of alcohol. A: "Wow, how much did those two have to drink?" B: "Hardly anything—they just can't hold their drink."

can't keep (one's) hands off (someone) Cannot resist touching another person, typically one's romantic partner. *My brother and his new girlfriend are so embarrassing—they just can't keep their hands off each other, even in public!*

can't live with them, can't live without them A phrase used to express frustration with someone or something that the speaker ultimately

cannot give up. *My husband is a total slob, but I still love him. Men: can't live with them, can't live without them. Sports: can't live with 'em, can't live without 'em. This soccer game is going to make me crazy!*

can't make head nor tail of (someone or something)

Cannot understand someone or something at all; cannot make any sense of someone or something. *I've been working with the new software for hours, but I still can't make head nor tail of it. I can't make head nor tail of that new guy in accounting. Sometimes, he's really friendly, and then other times he acts like he's never met me before.*

can't make heads or tails (out) of (someone or something)

Cannot understand someone or something at all; cannot make any sense of someone or something. *I've been working with the new software for hours, but I still can't make heads or tails out of it. I can't make heads or tails of that new guy in accounting. Sometimes, he's really friendly, and then other times he acts like he's never met me before.*

can't nail (something) down Unable to complete, do correctly, or be certain of some task or thing. *I've been working on my speech for an hour, but I can't seem to nail it down. They couldn't nail down the terms of their agreement. I know I've heard this song before, but I can't quite nail it down.*

can't punch (one's) way out of a paper bag Extremely weak, ineffectual, or incompetent. *You want to fight me? You can't punch your way out of a paper bag! Don't assign that project to her, she couldn't punch her way out of a paper bag!*

can't rightly say See [\(I\) can't rightly say](#).

can't say as I do See [\(I\) can't say as I do\(, can't say as I don't\)](#).

can't say boo to a fly See [not say boo to a fly](#).

can't say boo to a goose Is particularly shy, nervous, or diffident. *My brother is a very sweet, warm-hearted man who can't say boo to a goose. How can you suspect that he committed this crime?*

can't say for sure See [\(I\) can't say for sure](#).

can't say that I do See [\(I\) can't say that I do](#).

can't say that I have See [\(I\) can't say that I have](#).

can't see a hole in a ladder 1. Is stupid or dimwitted. *Don't give*

Randy that important project—he can't see a hole in a ladder! 2. Is drunk. Don't buy him any more drinks—he already can't see a hole in a ladder.

can't see beyond the end of (one's) nose Is preoccupied with oneself and unable to notice or focus on anything else. *Of course she's oblivious to the growing homeless population in our city—she can't see beyond the end of her nose.*

can't see farther than the end of (one's) nose 1. To lack the ability to foresee problems, issues, or obligations beyond the present or immediate future. *Our boss is ambitious, but she can't see farther than her nose when it comes to scheduling projects with realistic deadlines. 2.* To be so preoccupied with oneself or one's own problems as to be unaware of or indifferent to larger issues or other people. *My ex-husband was always so wrapped up in work that he couldn't see farther than the end of his nose, hardly ever making any time for me or the kids.*

can't see (one's) hand in front of (one's) face Cannot see anything at all due to darkness. *Can you turn on the basement light? I can't see my hand in front of my face down here!*

can't see past the end of (one's) nose So preoccupied with oneself and one's situation as to be unaware or uncaring of other people or the bigger picture in life. *Jim is so concerned about getting ahead in business that he can't see past the end of his nose.*

can't see straight 1. Has impaired vision, often due to drunkenness. *He's so drunk that he can't see straight. Please make sure he gets home safely. 2. Cannot function, typically due to anger, frustration, fatigue, etc. *I'll drive mom to the cemetery—she's so upset she can't see straight. After working a 36-hour shift, I can't see straight and only want to climb into bed.**

can't see the forest for the trees Cannot see, understand, or focus on a situation in its entirety due to being preoccupied with minor details. *The way he's obsessing over one doorknob when we're renovating the entire house makes me think that he can't see the forest for the trees.*

can't see the wood for the trees Cannot see, understand, or focus on a situation in its entirety due to being preoccupied with minor details. *The way he's obsessing over one doorknob when we're renovating the entire house makes me think that he can't see the wood for the trees.*

can't seem to Apparently unable to or incapable of doing something. *I've been over these figures three times, but I just can't seem to get them to add up. He couldn't seem to figure out how to work the machine.*

can't stand (someone or something) Cannot tolerate someone or something due to an aversion or a strong sense of disgust or dislike. *Ugh, I can't stand obnoxious guys who always have to dominate the conversation. I could never be a doctor or nurse—I just can't stand the sight of blood. Now I'm just waiting to hear if I got into my first-choice school, and the uncertainty is killing me. I can't stand it!*

can't stand the pace Cannot do something well or at all when under stress or pressure. *Don't ask Robert to do that urgent report—he can't stand the pace.*

can't stand the sight of See [not stand the sight of \(someone or something\)](#).

can't stand the sight of (someone or something) Cannot tolerate encountering someone or something due to an aversion or a strong sense of disgust or dislike. *At this point, he's betrayed me so many times that I can't stand the sight of him. I could never be a doctor or nurse—I just can't stand the sight of blood.*

can't take it with you See [\(you\) can't take it with you \(when you go\)](#).

can't take (one's) eyes off (of) (someone or something) Cannot stop looking at someone or something because it is so beautiful, visually pleasing, interesting, etc. *Your little girl is so adorable—I just can't take my eyes off of her! The juxtaposition of colors in that painting is so strange that you can't take your eyes off it.*

can't tell (one's) arse from (one's) elbow rude slang Is very stupid or dimwitted. *I'm not surprised to hear that Denise got lost two blocks away from her house—she's can't tell her arse from her elbow.*

can't thank you enough See [\(I\) can't thank you enough](#).

can't think straight Cannot think rationally or calmly due to being overwhelmed or overcome with something (often an emotion or exhaustion). *Don't assign him anything else right now—he's so stressed about this case that he can't think straight. After working a 36-hour shift, I can't think straight and only want to climb into bed.*

can't to save her life See [can't \(do something\) to save \(one's\) life](#).

can't wait See [\(I\) can't wait](#).

can't win 'em all See [\(you\) can't win them all](#).

(one) can't win for losing One is unable to find or create any success; one has been constantly and/or thoroughly defeated, bested, belittled, etc., in recent times. *So Mary divorced John after their company went under, and then his mother died a week later? Man, that guy can't win for losing lately. That's the third manuscript to be rejected by the publishers; I guess I just can't win for losing.*

cap and gown The mortarboard and robe traditionally worn during academic ceremonies, especially graduation. *All graduates need to be here in cap and gown at 9 AM tomorrow.*

cap it (all) off To finish or complete an experience or situation in an especially positive or negative way. *Our date was fantastic! We went for dinner, saw a great film, and then we capped it off with some salsa dancing! What a bad day: I left my phone in the grocery store, my car broke down on the way home, and, to cap it all off, my groceries broke through the bag as I was walking to the front door.*

cap it all off A phrase that precedes the last item of whatever the speaker is listing. *I was late to school, I failed my test, and, cap it all off, I got into a car accident on the way home! To cap it all off, I think you should add some color to the last slide in your presentation.*

cap off To finish something, often in a particularly good or bad way. A noun can be used between "cap" and "off" or after "off." *Come on, we need to throw one last party to cap off our senior year! And then, to cap the terrible evening off, the waiter dropped my dinner in my lap!*

capitalize on (something) To take advantage of a particular opportunity or situation for one's benefit. *We need to capitalize on that team's losing streak and overtake them in the standings. You finally got an interview at that company, so you need to capitalize on it, because you might not get another one.*

capitulate to (someone or something) To yield or submit to someone or something. *Sometimes, you just need to capitulate to your family, in order to keep the peace. I will never capitulate to your outrageous*

demands!

Captain Obvious A person who makes a statement or statements of such obvious meaning or implication as to be entirely redundant, superfluous, or unnecessary. *Pauline: "The President has said that lower-class families are bearing the brunt of the recession worse than anyone else." Johnny: "Thank you, Captain Obvious!" A: "Your photos are out of focus because you didn't adjust the lens properly." B: "Wow, Captain Obvious strikes again!"*

captain of industry A wealthy and powerful person in the business world. *Her family will never accept an unemployed artist like me—they expect her to marry a captain of industry. Do you want to come to the gala with me and hob-nob with some captains of industry?*

captive audience 1. An audience (of a speech, performance, lecture, etc.) that is prevented from leaving and is therefore obligated to listen. *Our boss made attendance at the panel discussion mandatory, thus ensuring a captive audience.* 2. An audience that is enraptured by and gives the entirety of its attention to a speaker or performance. *The key to maintaining a captive audience is to make sure your speech appeals to everyone present.*

capture lightning in a bottle To achieve or succeed at doing something that is incredibly difficult, unlikely, and/or elusive. Primarily heard in US. *The playwright captured lightning in a bottle with his first play, taking the world by storm and thrusting him into the spotlight of fame. This rookie team, such underdogs in this championship, are trying to capture lightning in a bottle with an upset win over the number one seed.*

capture (one's) imagination To hold one's interest or spark one's creativity. *I know it sounds strange, but his talk on the importance of obtuse angles really captured my imagination. That movie captured his imagination so much that it inspired him to become a screenwriter.*

carb-load To consume large amounts of carbohydrate-rich food, such as pasta, rice, potatoes, etc., as a means of increasing stored energy in preparation for a major athletic event (e.g., a marathon). *While some have questioned whether it really helps one's performance, I still carb-load before every big race.*

carb-loading A dietary strategy involving consuming large amounts of carbohydrate-rich food, such as pasta, rice, potatoes, etc., as a means of increasing stored energy in preparation for a major athletic event (e.g., a

marathon). An abbreviated form of the term "carbohydrate loading." *While some have questioned whether it really helps one's performance, I still swear that carb-loading gives me an extra edge in big races.*

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carbon copy 1. A copy of a document that is made by placing a sheet of carbon paper under the original so that the print gets transferred from the original to the sheet of paper below it. Carbon copies are largely obsolete but are still used in some cases for receipts. *Could you please make a carbon copy of that invoice? I need it for my records.* **2.** To include additional recipients on an email message that is intended for, or directed to, another person. Often abbreviated as "cc." *Please carbon copy me on that email to Janice. I want her to know I am aware of the situation.* **3.** A person or thing that closely resembles someone or something else in looks or attributes. *Even though they were born several years apart, Darren is a carbon copy of his brother. They have the same gait, mannerisms, and hairstyle.*

card-carrying Certified for inclusion; having paid the necessary amount in full. *I never knew until he was on his deathbed that my father was a card-carrying Freemason. I'm afraid only card-carrying members of the union can be given any regular shifts on the docks.*

a card-carrying member (of something) A certified member of a particular group or organization; someone who has paid the dues necessary to be part of a group. *I never knew until he was on his deathbed that my father was a card-carrying member of the Freemasons. I'm afraid only card-carrying members of the union can be given any regular shifts on the docks.*

card in To sign in to one's place of business by means of a magnetic or

electronic identity card. *All employees are required to card in at the beginning of each shift to ensure they are paid for the appropriate hours each day. Due to the highly confidential nature of our research, everyone has to card in at the security desk to gain access to any part of the facility.*

card out To sign out of one's place of business by means of a magnetic or electronic identity card. *All employees are required to card out at the end of each shift to ensure they are paid for the appropriate hours each day. Due to the highly confidential nature of our research, everyone has to card out at the security desk before they may leave the facility.*

cardboard city An area heavily populated by homeless people (who sometimes use cardboard for warmth or makeshift shelter). *Our local government does little to help the cardboard city, and it just keeps growing in size.*

the cards are stacked against (someone or something) Someone or something is unlikely to be successful due to some existing circumstances, conditions, or obstacles that are likely to present difficulties. *Tiffany wants to pursue a career in modeling, but she's only five feet tall, so the cards are stacked against her. The cards are stacked against their campaign, thanks to a lack of funding.*

care a fig See [\(not\) care a fig](#).

care a hang See [not care a hang \(about something\)](#).

care a hoot See [\(not\) care a hoot](#).

care a toss See [\(not\) care a toss](#).

care about (someone or something) 1. To have a strong feeling of love or affection for someone or something; to cherish someone or something. Can be used in the negative to mean the opposite. *There is nothing I care about more than my children. Yeah, I loved that doll when I was three, but I don't care about it anymore, so feel free to sell it at the garage sale.* 2. To be interested in or concerned about someone or something. Often used in the negative to mean the opposite. *Rachel clearly doesn't care about us because she just does whatever she wants, no matter how selfish it is. He keeps getting parking tickets because he doesn't care about signs or restrictions posted on the street.*

care for another (something) Would you like another drink or food



item? *I see that you're almost done your drink—care for another? Would you care for another cupcake? I'm going to back to the dessert table.*

care for (someone or something) **1.** To act as a caretaker for someone or something. *We need to hire a nurse to care for grandpa when he gets out of the hospital. Judging by the overgrown weeds and broken shutters, no one has been caring for this house.* **2.** To have a strong feeling of love or affection for someone or something; to cherish someone or something. *There is nothing I care for more than my children.* **3.** To like someone or something. Often used in the negative to mean the opposite. *I know you don't care for asparagus, so I made string beans instead.*

care nothing about (someone or something) To have no concern or respect for someone or something. *Rachel just does whatever she wants and cares nothing about our feelings. He keeps getting parking tickets because he cares nothing about signs or restrictions posted on the street.*

care nothing for (someone or something) To dislike someone or something. *It seems that Amy cares nothing for me ever since that fight we had. I know you care nothing for asparagus, so I made string beans instead.*

care package A package or parcel containing food, clothing, or other items sent to someone who lives or is spending time away from home, such as a college student, a child in summer camps, or a person living abroad. *The treats my mom sent in her care packages really helped me get through my first year studying in Italy.*

care to dance See [\(would you\) care to dance.](#)

care to (do something) **1.** To be interested in doing a particular action or activity. Often used in the negative to mean the opposite. *No thanks, I don't care to jog today—my legs still hurt from yesterday's trip to the gym.* **2.** Would you like to (do a particular action or activity)? *I'm going out for a jog—care to join me?*

care to join See [\(would you\) care to join me/us.](#)

care tuppence See [not care \(a\) tuppence.](#)

care two pence See [not care twopence.](#)

care two pins See [not care two pins \(about something\).](#)

carp about (someone or something) To complain about someone

or something, especially in a way that others find annoying. *Oh boy, which dead president is grandpa carping about today? If you hate your job so much, quit carping about it and look for a new one!*

carp at (one) To complain to one about someone or something, especially in a way that one finds annoying. *If you hate your job so much, quit carping at me about it and look for a new one!*

carpe diem Enjoy and make the most of the present, especially opportunities as they arise. A Latin phrase used by the Roman poet Horace (65–8 BCE), it is popularly translated as "seize the day." *You can't simply sit back and wait for good things to come tomorrow, you have to make things happen as you want them to. Carpe diem!*

carried away 1. Overly engrossed in one's enthusiasm, excitement, etc., to the point of making an excessive display of it. *Sorry, I got a little carried away there—I just love talking about my favorite artists!* **2.** Having done something to an extreme or excessive degree, especially by unintentional incremental expansion of the original activity. *Wow, it seems our interior designer got a little carried away. I mean, how many pairs of decorative antlers does one house need?*

carries a tune See [carry a tune](#).

carries along with See [carry \(someone or something\) along with \(someone or something\)](#).

carries around See [carry around](#).

carries away See [carry away](#).

carries back See [carry \(one\) back](#).

carries down See [carry down](#).

carries fire in one hand and water in the other See [carry fire in one hand and water in the other](#).

carries forward See [carry forward](#).

carries it on See [carry on](#).

carries it onto See [carry \(something\) onto \(something\)](#).

carries off See [carry off](#).

carries on somehow See [carry on somehow](#).

carries out See [carry out](#).

carries over See [carry over](#).

carries the ball See [carry the ball](#).

carries the can See [carry the can](#).

carries the day See [carry the day](#).

carries the torch See [carry the torch](#).

carries through See [carry through](#).

carrot and stick A motivational tactic that uses a reward and punishment system to encourage improved performance or behavior. *Companies are slowly learning that the carrot and stick approach to management is ineffective—employees are much more motivated to do a better job when they are recognized for their hard work.*

carrot on a stick A reward that is promised to someone as an incentive to complete some task. It is a variant of "carrot and stick" or "carrot or stick," which refer to both reward and punishment being simultaneously offered/threatened as an incentive to complete a task. *The boss offered a 10% bonus as a carrot on a stick to whomever sold the most units by the end of the month. I always allow myself a chocolate bar as a carrot on a stick to motivate me to go to the gym each day.*

carrot or stick (hyphenated if used as a modifier before a noun) An incentivization method in which a reward and a punishment are simultaneously offered/threatened as a motivation to complete some task. It is a variant of "carrot and stick," which means the same. *We use the carrot or stick as motivation at this company: you make more money if you sell more units, or your pay gets docked if you don't meet your quota. Some people like it, but I think their carrot-or-stick approach creates a dynamic of fear in employees.*

carrot-top A person with red (orange) hair. *I bet my future child will be a carrot-top. Red hair runs in my family.*

carry See [carry \(one\) \(somewhere\)](#).

carry See [carry \(oneself\)](#).

carry a Chinaman on (one's) back To suffer from an addiction

to narcotics or the withdrawal symptoms caused by it. A derogatory phrase, it likely refers to opium's classical association with Southeast Asia. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *Carrying that Chinaman on her back has kept Janet out of work for years. I want to get clean and turn my life around, but carrying this Chinaman on my back is absolute torture.*

carry a rope in (one's) pocket To have very good luck when playing cards. The phrase alludes to a piece of a hangman's rope, which is supposed to be a good luck charm when playing cards. *Did Alan win yet another game of poker? Man, he must carry a rope in his pocket—how else can you explain that luck?*

carry a secret to (one's)/the grave To keep (not reveal) a secret for the duration of one's life. *I can't believe that grandma carried such a huge family secret to her grave! If Uncle Joe hadn't blurted it out, we'd never have known about it! Oh, Emily is a loyal friend—she would definitely carry a secret to the grave.*

carry a torch for (one) To be in love with one, especially secretly and/or unrequitedly. *I've carried a torch for her since high school, but I've never been able to tell her how I feel. Susan carried a torch for him for years after they broke up.*

carry a tune To sing well; to have musical talent. *Wow, that young girl can really carry a tune. I didn't expect her voice to be so powerful!*

carry (an amount of) weight To wield importance or influence. *Due to your status, your remarks carry a lot of weight, so I encourage you to speak out on this issue—people might finally start taking it seriously. Without research to support these claims, I'm afraid they don't carry much weight.*

carry around **1.** To physically carry someone or something to many places; to tote someone or something around. A noun or pronoun can be used between "carry" and "around." *After carrying a toddler around all day, my arms are pretty sore. Your purse weighs a ton because you carry around so much unnecessary junk!* **2.** To keep something in one's possession (on one's person). A noun or pronoun can be used between "carry" and "around." *I always carry a pen and paper around with me, in case I get an idea for a song when I'm away from home.* **3.** To retain a memory or feeling of closeness with one who has died. A noun or pronoun can be used between "carry" and "around." *Because I had such a loving relationship with my*

grandmother, I feel like I've been carrying her around with me ever since she died. **4.** To internally retain the feeling of the burden of something, often a particular emotion. *I hadn't spoken to my father in years, and now that he's dead, I've been carrying around a lot of guilt.*

carry away 1. To cause one to become overly engrossed in one's enthusiasm, excitement, etc., to the point of making an excessive display of it. A noun or pronoun can be used between "carry" and "away." *Sorry to ramble for so long—the subject of art just carries me away!* **2.** To steal something. A noun or pronoun can be used between "carry" and "away." *I think someone carried away our new porch furniture—it's nowhere in sight! Ethel forgot to put that expensive necklace in the safe, and one of the party guests carried it away.* **3.** To physically move someone or something away from a certain location. A noun or pronoun can be used between "carry" and "away." *Luckily, the lifeguard was able to rescue Dan after the current carried him away.*

carry coals To allow oneself to be mocked or humiliated. *You shut your mouth right now! I refuse to carry coals just because you're angry about work!*

carry down To move something from a higher level to a lower one. A noun or pronoun can be used between "carry" and "down." *It took many trips, but we finally carried all of those boxes down—they're now safely back in the basement. The next time you go down the basement, please carry down the laundry.*

carry fire in one hand and water in the other To be duplicitous. To deceive. *I think Kim carries fire in one hand and water in the other—she's nice to my face, but I've heard her talking about me behind my back!*

carry forward 1. To cause a plan or situation to progress. A noun or pronoun can be used between "carry" and "forward." *With your shared passion for this initiative, I'm confident that you two can carry it forward.* **2.** In accounting, to transfer an entry to the next page or column. A noun or pronoun can be used between "carry" and "forward." *Did you carry forward the total from the last page? If not, that might be the source of the error.*

carry off 1. To complete or do something successfully, especially when faced with obstacles. A noun or pronoun can be used between "carry" and

"off." *I never expected to carry off the party once the caterer suddenly quit, but everyone seems to have had a great time!* **2.** To steal something. A noun or pronoun can be used between "carry" and "off." *I think someone carried off our new porch furniture—it's nowhere in sight! Ethel forgot to put that expensive necklace in the safe, and one of the party guests carried it off.* **3.** To physically move someone or something away from a certain location. A noun or pronoun can be used between "carry" and "off." *Luckily, the lifeguard was able to rescue Dan after the current carried him off.* **4.** To win a prize or contest. A noun or pronoun can be used between "carry" and "off." *Everyone was shocked when that little-known band carried off the night's biggest award.* **5.** To cause one's death. A noun or pronoun can be used between "carry" and "off." *Unfortunately, the injuries from the accident were so severe that they carried him off.*

carry on **1.** verb To continue or proceed. In this usage, the phrase can be used as an imperative. *I'm sorry for all the interruptions—please, carry on with your story. OK, I understand your vision now—carry on!* **2.** verb To act wildly or rambunctiously, typically while making a lot of noise (perhaps by crying, yelling, or screeching). *Mom rushed into the playroom when she heard the kids carrying on in there. Unfortunately, there's an unhappy cat carrying on outside my open window right now. When you live above a bar, someone is always carrying on when you're trying to sleep.* **3.** verb To continue to do something over a period of time. *How much longer do you think you can carry on such a dangerous lifestyle?* **4.** To persevere. *We cannot let ourselves be defeated. We must carry on!* **5.** verb To continue to do something as it has been done, sometimes for sentimental reasons. In this usage, a noun or pronoun can be used between "carry" and "on." *My mom's family always got up at midnight on Christmas morning to open presents, and she has carried that tradition on with us. All of my siblings have carried on the family tradition of becoming a doctor, which I guess makes me, the lone artist, quite a rebel.* **6.** verb To complain about something often or at length. *Which dead president is grandpa carrying on about today?* **7.** verb To have an affair. *Did you see the big reveal at the end of last week's episode? The maid is carrying on with the lord of the manor!* **8.** verb To flirt with someone. *Quit carrying on with Ted—he's a married man!* **9.** noun, slang A commotion. In this usage, the phrase is often hyphenated. Primarily heard in UK. *I think an unhappy cat is to blame for the carry-on happening outside my window right now.* **10.** noun A bag, suitcase, or other luggage item that is

small enough for one to bring onto an airplane or similar mode of transportation (as opposed to luggage that is checked in and stored in the luggage compartment). In this usage, the phrase is often hyphenated. *It's only a weekend trip, so I'm just bringing a carry-on with me.* **11.** adjective Of or describing such a luggage item. *It's only a weekend trip, so I'm just bringing a carry-on bag with me.*

carry on somehow To continue or persevere by some means, despite hardships or challenges. *The company is in a tough financial situation right now, and, like all employees, I hope that it can carry on somehow. Try not to worry so much about your brother—he always manages to carry on somehow.*

carry on without (someone or something) To proceed without the aid or presence of someone or something. *I'm really not feeling well today—please, carry on without me. If you leave anything behind at the hotel, you'll just have to carry on without it.*

carry (one) back To cause one to think of or remember someone or something from one's past. *Wow, that lullaby just carries me back to my childhood.*

carry (one) (somewhere) To accompany or escort someone to a certain location or event. *It's already dark out, so be a gentleman and carry that gal home.*

carry (one's) own weight To do one's part; to fulfill one's responsibilities without having to rely on others. *I know I've been sick, but I'll carry my own weight on the project, don't worry.*

carry (one's) weight To do one's part. To fulfill one's responsibilities. *I know I've been sick, but I'll carry my weight on the project, don't worry.*

carry (oneself) 1. To walk or move in a certain physical manner. *If you carried yourself with better posture, you might not have such back pain. Self-conscious of her height, she always carries herself erect to seem taller to others.* **2.** To act, behave, or conduct oneself socially or in public (i.e., as pertains to grace, etiquette, speech, grooming, body language, etc.). *Always be aware of how you carry yourself when in polite company. The way he carries himself in public belies his strict upbringing.*

carry out 1. verb To physically move someone or something from a



particular place or area. A noun or pronoun can be used between "carry" and "out." *You carry the baby out to the car, and I'll get her stroller and diaper bag. We need some more room in here—can you guys carry out those extra chairs?* **2.** verb To do or accomplish something. A noun or pronoun can be used between "carry" and "out." *This project has been floundering for a while, but with your shared passion for it, I'm confident that you two can carry it out.* **3.** verb To complete a task or request ordered by someone else. A noun or pronoun can be used between "carry" and "out." *I don't understand why I'm being punished for simply carrying out an order from my superior.* **4.** verb To establish or implement something. A noun or pronoun can be used between "carry" and "out." *We've been working on this new initiative for months. When do you think we'll be able to carry it out?* **5.** noun An order for food that a customer retrieves from a restaurant and takes elsewhere. In this usage, the phrase is often hyphenated. *Hi, I'd like to place an order for carry-out.*

carry over **1.** verb To physically carry someone or something to a particular place or area. A noun or pronoun can be used between "carry" and "over." *You carry the baby over to the car, and I'll get her stroller and diaper bag. We need some more chairs in here—can you guys carry those ones over to the table?* **2.** In accounting, to transfer an entry to another page or column. A noun or pronoun can be used between "carry" and "over." *Did you carry over the total from the last page? If not, that might be the source of the error.* **3.** To continue to be applicable or to affect future situations, sometimes unpleasantly. A noun or pronoun can be used between "carry" and "over." *She needs to address her grief now so that it doesn't carry over into all areas of her life. I don't want to work in an office forever, but the skills I learn here will carry over to any future job, at least.* **4.** To postpone something until a later time. A noun or pronoun can be used between "carry" and "over." *Because the meeting ran so long, we're carrying over the last issue on the agenda.* **5.** To keep unsold goods at the end of one season for use in the future. A noun or pronoun can be used between "carry" and "over." *I know you want to carry over all of these summer clothes, but how will we market a sundress in the middle of winter?*

carry (someone) off their feet To completely overwhelm someone with enthusiasm, ardor, or passion. *The strength of the senator's oration carried the entire crowd off their feet.*



carry (someone or something) about To physically carry someone or something all around; to tote someone or something around. A noun or pronoun can be used between "carry" and "about." *After carrying a toddler about all day, my arms are pretty sore. Your purse weighs a ton because you carry about so much unnecessary junk!*

carry (someone or something) along with (someone or something) 1. To intrigue or enthrall one. *I know you think plays are boring, but I've heard that the lead actress in this one is fantastic and just carries the audience along with her.* 2. To keep something in one's possession. *I always carry a pen and paper along with me in case I get an idea for a song when I'm away from home.* 3. To physically move someone or something. *The lifeguard rescued Dan after he was carried along with the current.*

carry (someone or something) over from (somewhere) To move or transport someone or something, usually across a great distance. *When we moved to San Diego, we paid a company to carry our cars over from Boston.*

carry (someone or something) over to (someplace) To physically move someone or something to a particular place or area. *You carry the baby over to the car, and I'll get her stroller and diaper bag. We need some more chairs in here—can you guys carry those ones over to the table?*

carry (someone's) water To be subservient to and uncritical of someone; to do someone's bidding. *The dictator made sure to surround himself with those who would eagerly carry his water. I hate my job. I have to carry my boss's water or risk getting fired!*

carry (something) into effect To cause (something) to apply, begin operating, or take effect; to begin implementing or enforcing (something). *The new government has vowed to carry several policies into effect, aimed at helping struggling citizens get by. The new law will be carried into effect on the first of January.*

carry (something) onto (something) To bring something (often luggage) with one onto a vehicle. *Because it's only a weekend trip, I'm just carrying one bag onto the plane. I wouldn't carry that much stuff onto the bus*

during rush hour—you'll be lucky to find enough room just to stand!

carry (something) with (one) **1.** To keep a physical object in one's possession. When this usage is employed in informal situations, the phrase can end at "with." *I always carry a pen and paper with me, in case I get an idea for a song when I'm away from home. Since you have a backpack, can you carry my book with?* **2.** To retain something abstract, such as an idea or feeling. *I learned so much from my grandmother when she was alive and know that I will carry her sense of compassion with me for the rest of my life.*

carry the ball **1.** In American football, to literally hold the ball (and protect it in order to maintain possession) while attempting to advance it on the field, ultimately in pursuit of a touchdown. *This is our last chance to tie the game, so I want Ross carrying the ball on this play.* **2.** By extension, to have a leading role in the completion or execution of a task or project. *After I implemented that important initiative, the boss asked me to carry the ball on our next big project.*

carry the can To take the blame for something, often another's mistakes or misdeeds. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *My partner had been cooking the books for years, but because I was the CEO, I had to carry the can for our company's collapse. I'm the coach, and I called a bad play, so I deserve to carry the can for this loss.*

carry the day **1.** To win or have success. *It's no surprise that star-studded team carried the day—they were favored to win, after all. After spending weeks constructing my project, I was thrilled to carry the day at the science fair.* **2.** To gain acceptance, as of an idea or concept. *I thought his ideas were ridiculous, but they really carried the day with his audience.*

carry the mail (for someone) To work assiduously, especially in a central role of some difficult or demanding task. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *With their captain out with an injury, it's up to their young star player to carry the mail for the team in this game. The boss carried the mail himself to make sure this project was completed on time.*

carry the message to Garcia To show initiative in undertaking important or requisite tasks in the face of difficulties and/or without requiring specific instructions on how to do so. It refers to the essay "Message to Garcia," published in 1899 by Elbert Hubbard, in which a lieutenant named Andrew Rowan undertakes establishing communication with Cuban rebel

leader Calixto García to create an alliance in case of war with Spain. *One should always aspire to be the type of employee who will carry the message to Garcia, for it says more about you than merely doing what you're told.*

carry the torch To fight for someone or something and encourage or lead others to do the same. *While you hate the idea of this big construction project and are ready to carry the torch, you should know that most of the townspeople have been very vocal in their support of it.*

carry the torch for (someone) To be in love with someone, especially secretly and/or unrequitedly. *I've carried the torch for her since high school, but I've never been able to tell her how I feel. Susan carried the torch for him for years after they broke up.*

carry the weight of the world on (one's) shoulders To act or appear as if one is struggling with an immense or particularly worrisome burden or responsibility. *Have you seen Mike lately? It looks like he's carrying the weight of the world on his shoulders. You need to learn to ask for help when things become overwhelming instead of trying to carry the weight of the world on your shoulders all the time.*

carry through **1.** To do or accomplish something. In this usage, a noun or pronoun can be used between "carry" and "through." *With your shared passion for this project, I'm confident that you two can carry it through.* **2.** To sustain or aid someone, especially during a challenging time. In this usage, a noun or pronoun can be used between "carry" and "through." *The championship game was so intense that I really had to rely on my mental toughness to carry me through. My savings account really carried me through that difficult time of unemployment.* **3.** To continue to do something as it has been done, sometimes for sentimental reasons. In this usage, a noun or pronoun can be used between "carry" and "through." *All of my siblings have carried through the family tradition of becoming a doctor, which I guess makes me, the lone artist, quite a rebel.*

carry us about See [carry \(someone or something\) about](#).

carry us along with See [carry \(someone or something\) along with \(someone or something\)](#).

carry us around See [carry around](#).

carry us away See [carry away](#).

carry us back See [carry \(one\) back](#).

carry us off See [carry off](#).

carry us off our feet See [carry \(someone\) off their feet](#).

carry us out See [carry out](#).

carry us over See [carry over](#).

carry us over from See [carry \(someone or something\) over from \(somewhere\)](#).

carry us over to See [carry \(someone or something\) over to \(someplace\)](#).

carry us through See [carry through](#).

carry water See [carry \(someone's\) water](#).

carry water for (someone) **1.** To serve, assist, or perform menial or difficult tasks for some person, group, or organization. *Internships are a great way to gain practical work experience, but you'll be the one carrying water for the company while you're there. Immigrant workers are most often the ones who carry water for farm owners and construction firms.* **2.** To support a person, organization, or cause that one would not in reality endorse, as due to pressure, force, or pragmatic reasons. *Once elected to congress, I soon realized that you must carry water for many groups that run contrary to your own personal politics. Though I personally found him repugnant, I carried water for him for two years because I thought it would open up many career opportunities.*

carry weight See [carry \(one's\) weight](#).

carry weight See [carry \(an amount of\) weight](#).

carry with See [carry \(something\) with \(one\)](#).

carry your own weight See [carry \(one's\) own weight](#).

carry yourself See [carry \(oneself\)](#).

carrying charge **1.** A cost incurred for the physical storage or ownership of an asset that is unproductive or not lucrative. *The strike by pilots and flight attendants devastated the airline's profits, as they had to refund passengers' ticket prices as well as pay a higher carrying charge for their grounded airplanes. The carrying charge for the new apartment complex, which failed to attract potential homeowners, eventually*

bankrupted the development company. **2.** An additional charge, usually interest, applied to an account that is paid in installments. *The phone company advertised having the lowest rate, but after the carrying charge was applied, my monthly bill was actually higher than ever before!*

cart away To remove someone or something from a particular place or area, especially because it is a nuisance or is going to be discarded. A noun or pronoun can be used between "cart" and "away." *The police carted the burglar away after they caught him fleeing the scene of the crime. I'm going to have someone from Records come and cart away all these old files.*

cart off To remove someone or something from a particular place or area, especially roughly or dismissively, typically because it is a nuisance or is going to be discarded. A noun or pronoun can be used between "cart" and "off." *The police carted off the burglar after they caught him fleeing the scene of the crime. I don't need half the junk that's in my new office, so I'm going to ask one of the cleaning guys to cart it all off.*

carte blanche The freedom to do whatever one wants or deems necessary, especially with a particular task or assignment. This French phrase means "blank card" in English. *I can't believe the boss gave me carte blanche to organize the conference—he's usually such a micro-manager!*

carve out **1.** Literally, to remove the inner part of an object. A noun or pronoun can be used between "carve" and "out." *The first step in this recipe is to carve out your fruit and dispose of the seeds. They made canoes by carving out big logs.* **2.** To establish a niche or role for oneself. A noun or pronoun can be used between "carve" and "out." *It took a long time, and many small acting parts, before I was able to carve out a career as a character actor.* **3.** To take or obtain a portion of something. A noun or pronoun can be used between "carve" and "out." *I decided to invest in their unique product because I could see it carving out a chunk of the tech market in the near future.*

carve (something) from (something) To use a knife or other tool to carve a block or mass of some material, typically wood, into a desired shape. *I'm always so impressed by artisans that can carve animal figures from blocks of wood.*

carve (something) in stone To make something permanent and incapable of being changed, typically a plan or idea. *We might get brunch*

next weekend, but we haven't carved anything in stone yet.

carve (something) into (something) **1.** To etch something into a particular surface or material. *Don't carve your initials into your desk unless you want to get detention.* **2.** To use a knife or other tool to carve a block of some material, typically wood, into a desired shape. *I'm always so impressed by artisans that can carve blocks of wood into beautiful animal figures.*

carve up **1.** To cut or divide something into smaller pieces. A noun or pronoun can be used between "carve" and "up." *It's tradition for my dad to carve up the turkey. I think the project will feel less daunting if we carve it up into sections and each work on one.* **2.** To injure or damage someone or something by cutting. A noun or pronoun can be used between "carve" and "up." *When that guy punched me in the face, his ring really carved me up. I hope I don't need stitches! That guy really carved up the side of my car when he sideswiped me.*

carved in stone Permanently fixed or firmly established; incapable of being changed. Often used in the negative. *The deal isn't yet carved in stone, but we're confident it will go ahead as hoped.*

case closed **1.** Said after a given question, debate, or mystery has been solved or answered. *So you see, it was the dog who ate the blueberry pie, not me. Case closed!* **2.** The aforementioned decision, outcome, resolution, or situation is final, with no ambiguity or room for variation or amendment. *The only way we'll be able to keep the company open is to undertake a 30% reduction in staff, case closed. My wife had an affair and our marriage is over. Case closed.*

case in point An example that demonstrates a point being made as truthful or correct. *It's important to always encrypt your data so hackers can't steal it. The recent data breach is a case in point.*

a case of mistaken identity An instance in which one is thought or assumed to be someone else. *Officer, this is a case of mistaken identity—I can assure you that I did not rob anyone!*

a case of (something) **1.** A bout of illness. *My poor daughter has been sick all week with a case of the measles.* **2.** By extension, an occurrence of something. *Liz usually loves to sing for an audience, so I think she's just got a case of nerves.*

a case of the blind leading the blind A situation in which an incompetent person tries to guide or teach those who are equally incompetent. *That project stalled as soon as it became a case of the blind leading the blind—no one knew what they were doing! Don't ask me to tutor someone in algebra because it would be a case of the case of the blind leading the blind.*

case of the dropsy A fictitious "condition" characterized by continually dropping things from one's hands. It is a play on the term "dropsy," which was formerly used to denote the condition now known as edema (or oedema). *I've broken four or five plates since I started work. I guess I've got a bad case of the dropsy today.*

case of the jitters A temporary state of nervous anxiety or anticipation. *Marty: "Are you ready to deliver your speech?" Anthony: "Yeah. I've got a bad case of the jitters though!"*

case out slang To observe and examine someone or something, often to gain knowledge for a specific future purpose. A noun or pronoun can be used between "case" and "out." *I cased my opponent out in preparation for the big fight. Judging from the security footage, those men cased out the shop hours before robbing it.*

case the joint 1. slang To observe a place in order to familiarize oneself with its workings in preparation for some criminal activity (often robbery). *Judging from the security footage, those men cased the joint hours before robbing it.* 2. slang By extension, to thoroughly examine a place. In this usage, no devious motive is implied. *As soon as my kids walking into the hotel room, they started casing the joint, exclaiming about everything from the TV to the mini-fridge.*

cash cow A business or investment that generates a large or consistent profit. *When Bob purchased stock in that software company 10 years ago, he never expected it to become such a cash cow. Now that it has quadrupled in value, he'll be able to retire early.*

a cash flow problem A lack of money, typically due to spending more money than is being earned. *After years of unaddressed cash flow problems, the company went bankrupt. I'm having a bit of a cash flow problem right now, so can I pay you back next week?*

cash in **1.** To exchange something for something else of equal value. In this usage, a noun or pronoun can be used between "cash" and "in." *I was in desperate need of a vacation, so I cashed in all of my credit card points for a flight to Bermuda. How much money did you make when you cashed your chips in after the poker game?* **2.** To take advantage of or benefit from an opportune moment or situation. *Although the market crash left many people with overpriced mortgages, some savvy homeowners recognized the chance to purchase property at rock-bottom prices and cashed in.* **3.** To stop participating in a venture or activity. *It was no surprise when most of the company's top investors cashed in as soon news of the CEO's scandal went public.* **4.** To die. *We were so lucky to avoid that massive accident—we could have cashed in!*

cash in on opportunity To take advantage of or benefit from an opportune moment or situation. Typically used with "an" or "the" preceding "opportunity." *After the drudgery of working in an office for five years, Catherine decided to cash in on an opportunity to work as a travel writer for her friend's new tourism agency. Although the market crash left many people with overpriced mortgages, some savvy homeowners cashed in on the opportunity to purchase property at rock-bottom prices.*

cash in on (something) To take advantage of or benefit from an opportune moment or situation. *After the drudgery of working in an office for nine years, Catherine decided to cash in on an opportunity to work as a travel writer for her friend's new tourism agency. Although the market crash left many people with overpriced mortgages, some savvy homeowners cashed in on the chance to purchase property at rock-bottom prices.*

cash in (one's) chips **1.** To exchange one's chips (small discs used to represent money in some betting games, like poker) for money when one is done playing a game. *I think I'm going to quit while I'm ahead and cash in my chips.* **2.** By extension, to stop participating in any gathering or activity. *Well, it's been fun, fellas, but it's time for me to cash in my chips.* **3.** To leave a gathering and/or go to bed. *I have to be up early tomorrow, so I'm going to cash in my chips.* **4.** To die. *We were so lucky to avoid that massive accident—we could have cashed in our chips!*

cash is king A catchphrase for financial advice that cautions against investing when prices on the stock market are too high, and instead

recommends keeping one's money in cash. Primarily heard in US. *My stockbroker told me that cash is king right now, so I wouldn't invest if I were you.*

cash is trash A catchphrase for financial advice that recommends investing one's money instead of saving it (typically because the stock market is doing well). *Cash is trash right now—you should definitely invest while the market is booming.*

cash money Money in bills and coins, as opposed to credit. *I just had to make a big purchase in cash money, so can we go out to dinner next week instead?*

cash on the barrelhead Payment at the time of service or purchase (as opposed to payment via credit). *Well, I guess I'm not replacing my couch right now because the furniture store requires cash on the barrelhead. I'll have to come back after my next paycheck.*

cash on the nail Payment that is made immediately, on the spot, or without delay. Primarily heard in UK. *I could put the bill on my credit card, but if it's all right with you, I'd rather we divvy it up between us and pay now, cash on the nail. After a few bad experiences with lodgers, I've learned to demand cash on the nail for the rent every Sunday, no exceptions.*

cash (one's) chips in **1.** To exchange one's chips (small discs used to represent money in some betting games, like poker) for money when one is done playing a game. *I think I'm going to quit while I'm ahead and cash my chips in.* **2.** By extension, to stop participating in any gathering or activity. *Well, it's been fun, fellas, but it's time for me to cash my chips in.* **3.** To leave a gathering and/or go to bed. *I have to be up early tomorrow, so I'm going to cash my chips in.* **4.** To die. *We were so lucky to avoid that massive accident—we could have cashed our chips in!*

cash only Accepting payment only in bills and coins (not by credit or debit card), as of a store or other business. *I just found out that the restaurant is cash only, so I have to stop at the ATM before dinner.*

cash or credit The usual payment options for a service or purchase. *Your total is \$47.80. Cash or credit?*

cash out **1.** To sell an asset in exchange for money, often during times of hardship. *I had so many legal expenses that I had to cash out by selling my*

house and moving into a studio apartment. **2.** To count the money that a business has earned at the end of the business day. *Your shift was over an hour ago, so you guys go on home—I'll cash out.* **3.** To pursue a simpler or calmer lifestyle, often by changing one's job or retiring from work altogether. *Come on, you're 70 years old! It's time for you to cash out and spend more time at your vacation home.* **4.** To withdrawal funds from a bank or retirement account, perhaps depleting it. *Sheila had saved so much money over the years that she finally cashed out and moved to an island. You're too young to cash out your 401(k) without incurring penalties.* **5.** To exchange one's chips for money after gambling. *You should cash out now while you're ahead, before you start losing again.*

cash up To tally the amount of money earned at the end of a working day, as at a shop, restaurant, or business. *I hate when I have to cash up at the end of the night—it just makes the shift last that much longer.*

cask wine Wine that is packaged in a plastic bladder within a cardboard box. Primarily heard in Australia, New Zealand. *Some people prefer the traditional glass bottles, but I think cask wines are the best value for the money!*

cast a glance To look quickly (at something or someone). *I always cast a glance at my desk to make sure I have everything before I leave the office at night. She cast a glance in my direction before she boarded the train.*

cast a pall on (something) To cause a happy occasion to be sad or somber. *The headmaster's sudden death really cast a pall on graduation.*

cast a pall over (something) To cause a happy occasion to be sad or somber. *The headmaster's sudden death really cast a pall over graduation.*

cast a shadow over (some place) To fill a place with sadness, grief, dread, or any strong negative emotion. *The child's sudden death cast a dark shadow over the house. The dictator's ascension to power has cast a shadow over the country.*

cast a shadow over (something) To dampen, spoil, or ruin something that was hitherto good or positive. *The boy's broken finger cast a shadow over his birthday party. This scandal will undoubtedly cast a shadow over her otherwise impeccable career.*

cast a sheep's eye To give a sideways glance or a suspicious look.

When I tried to feed the baby something new, she cast a sheep's eye at it and then tried to smack it out of my hand. Miss Stevens cast a sheep's eye at me when I complimented her outfit, but I really did think that she looked nice!

cast a spell on (someone or something) **1.** Literally, to induce the effects of a magic spell on someone or something, as in a fantasy story or film. *My kids love this movie—it's about a group of animals that must work together to cast a spell on their forest in order to protect it.* **2.** By extension, to charm, enthrall, or otherwise captivate one. *That girl must have really cast a spell on you if you're calling her already. It seems that the new CDEO has cast a spell on the board, because they're endorsing all of his plans.*

cast about for (something) **1.** To search for or seek something by looking randomly or in many places. (In fishing, "casting" is the act of throwing one's fishing line or net into the water.) *Although Pam has taken classes in a variety of disciplines during her three years at college, she's still casting about for a major.* **2.** To create a plan or method for doing something. *The boss wants us to cast about for a way to improve that floundering program.*

cast adrift **1.** Literally, of a ship or sailors, to float on a body of water without control or anchorage. *The team was cast adrift in the Atlantic for 17 days before a rescue party found them.* **2.** To be let go, freed, or lost. Likened to a ship that drifts without an anchor or moorings to a dock. *When I arrived in the country, I found myself cast adrift in a city I didn't know, among people whose language I couldn't speak. With my inheritance money, I was cast adrift to pursue whatever life I fancied.*

cast an/(one's) eye over (something) To look at something quickly and perfunctorily. *I always cast an eye over my desk to make sure I have everything before I leave the office at night. You don't have to read this document in detail—just cast your eye over it when you get a chance.*

cast around for (someone or something) To search for or seek something by looking randomly or in many places. (In fishing, "casting" is the act of throwing one's fishing line or net into the water.) *Tell Human Resources to cast around for a new assistant for our department. Although Pam has taken classes in a variety of disciplines during her three years at college, she's still casting around for a major.*

cast as See [cast \(one\) as \(something\)](#).

cast aside 1. To physically move something that is blocking one's path. A noun or pronoun can be used between "cast" and "aside." *Sorry there's so much junk in here right now—just cast those books aside and have a seat.* **2.** To ignore, overlook, or reject someone or something. A noun or pronoun can be used between "cast" and "aside." *Of course I'm not trying to cast you aside, you're my best friend! I simply haven't had time to call you this week. To attempt that daring jump on your bike, you'll need to cast aside your fears.*

cast aspersions To talk negatively or unflatteringly about someone or something. *I'm sorry to cast aspersions on Julie, but her work ethic is really terrible. She hasn't handed one assignment in on time! Bill says that he doesn't want to cast aspersions on anyone, but he still talks badly about us all the time!*

cast aspersions on (someone or something) To talk negatively or unflatteringly about someone or something. *I'm sorry to cast aspersions on Julie, but her work ethic is really terrible. She hasn't handed one assignment in on time. Bill says that he doesn't want to cast aspersions on anyone, but he still talks badly about us all the time!*

cast away 1. To discard, dispose of, reject, or renounce something or someone. *After the divorce, I cast away all mementos from my marriage that were still in the house. The new dictator immediately cast away everyone in the government, replacing them with his personal supporters. I cast away my faith in religion after my wife died.* **2.** To waste, misuse, or be frivolous with, as of money or resources. *The CEO cast away the company's earnings on his own lavish lifestyle. The new director wanted to make an entirely different film, so all that time and work we put into the project have been cast away.* **3.** Of a ship or sailors, to shipwreck or maroon e.g. on a deserted island. *The small fishing vessel, largely destroyed by the storm, was cast away on a tiny piece of land in the middle of the Pacific. The pirates cast away the crew in the lifeboats and made off with their ship and its contents.*

cast back 1. To return something to its original location. A noun or pronoun can be used between "cast" and "back." *If you decide against any of those library books, please cast them back where you found them.* **2.** To refer or think back to something. A noun or pronoun can be used between "cast" and "back." *In the second chapter of your thesis, be sure to cast back to the topics and themes you presented in chapter one. I tried casting my mind back*

to high school algebra and couldn't remember a thing.

cast beyond the moon To consider unlikely or fantastical possibilities. Primarily heard in UK. *I want you to cast beyond the moon as you dream about your future! May your wildest dreams come true!*

cast doubt on (someone or something) To cause someone or something to be viewed with doubt, skepticism, or uncertainty. *I considered Walt for the promotion, but his constant lateness soon cast doubt on that decision. Such a significant error really cast doubt on all of the experiment's results.*

cast down 1. To throw something to the ground. In this usage, a noun or pronoun can be used between "cast" and "down." *When she heard us mocking her, she cast down her book and stormed out of the room.* **2.** To lower something (typically one's gaze). *Because my son is so shy, he usually casts down his eyes whenever he meets someone.*

cast in concrete Firmly or permanently established; not subject to change; unalterable. *The healthcare law looks promising, but we'll have to wait until it's cast in concrete before we know exactly what it will do.*

cast in (one's) teeth To reprimand harshly. Possibly refers to the ancient punishment of knocking one's teeth out with stones. *Oh man, did Mr. Smith cast it in my teeth today when he found out I still hadn't finished the project he gave me an extension on!*

cast in the same mold Having similar characteristics or behaviors. *I hate the snow, but my kids just love it—they are definitely cast in the same mold. Julia and her mother are cast in the same mold. They are both so kind and sweet.*

cast-iron stomach The ability to eat foods that others may find unusual, unpalatable, or too spicy, without experiencing any ill effects like nausea or upset stomach. *My husband has such a cast-iron stomach that he can eat a ghost pepper and feel perfectly fine afterward. You must have a cast-iron stomach if you're eating pickles with peanut butter!*

cast lots To decide something by picking an item, often a slip of paper, at random. *Let's cast lots to decide who will go first—it's the only fair way to do it.*

cast my eye over See [cast an/\(one's\) eye over \(something\)](#).

cast off **1.** verb To leave the dock, as of a ship and its crew. A noun or pronoun can be used between "cast" and "off." *We won't be staying here for long—we cast off again at sunrise.* **2.** verb To remove, dispose of, or shed something. A noun or pronoun can be used between "cast" and "off." *Once you become a parent, you might decide to delegate more of your tasks—or cast off the title of CEO entirely. Mom told me I have to cast some things off before I'm allowed to add any more clothes to my closet. To attempt that daring jump on your bike, you'll need to cast off your fears.* **3.** verb To approximate how much space a manuscript will fill once typeset. A noun or pronoun can be used between "cast" and "off." *You'll get a better idea of your novel's length in print once the publisher casts it off.* **4.** verb To remove the last row of stitches from the needle and complete the edge of a knitting project. A noun or pronoun can be used between "cast" and "off." *Now that the blanket is long enough, the next step is to cast off.* **5.** noun Someone or something that has been ignored, overlooked, or rejected. The phrase is often hyphenated in this usage. *Of course you're still my best friend, not some cast-off! I just haven't had time to call you this week, that's all. Once you sort through your closet, give me any cast-offs, and I'll sell them at the yard sale.* **6.** noun An approximation of how much space a manuscript will fill once typeset. In this usage, the phrase can be written as one word ("castoff"). *A castoff will give you a better idea of your novel's length in print.*

cast on **1.** To make the first row of stitches on the needle in a knitting project. *If you want to knit a blanket, the first step is to cast on.* **2.** To dress quickly or hurriedly. *Because I overslept, I just cast on some clothes and rushed off to work—without realizing that I had on two different shoes.*

cast (one) as (something) **1.** Literally, to assign one a specific role in a play, film, or other such performance. A noun or pronoun does not have to be used between "cast" and "as." *I can't believe they cast me as Romeo—I only tried out for the chorus! My daughter is thrilled that she got cast as the lead in the school play.* **2.** To see another person in a particular, often limited, way that reflects one's own biases. A noun or pronoun does not have to be used between "cast" and "as." *None of my sister's friends will date me—I guess they cast me as the dopey little brother a long time ago.*

cast one aside See [cast aside](#).

cast (one's) bread upon the waters Do good deeds without being

motivated by a potential reward. *Maia left her high-powered accounting job to cast her bread upon the waters and care for her mother.*

cast (one's) eyes down To look toward the ground, often because one feels embarrassed or ashamed. *After I saw my ex-girlfriend walk into the store, I immediately cast my eyes down and then ducked behind the magazine rack for good measure. Because my son is so shy, he usually casts his eyes down whenever he meets someone.*

cast (one's) lot in with (someone or something) To join another person or become part of a group. *Don't worry, mom—I really don't care about casting my lot in with the cool kids at school.*

cast (one's) lot with (someone or something) To join and steadfastly support another person or group. *As soon as news of the CEO's scandal becomes public, I doubt that big investor will want to cast her lot with us. Don't worry, mom—I really don't care about casting my lot with the cool kids at school.*

cast (one's) mind back To try to recall something. This phrase is usually followed by "to" and a specific time period, instance, or event. *OK, cast your mind back to freshman year—can you remember who our English teacher was?*

cast (one's) net wide To consider a variety of options. *I always encourage my students to cast their nets wide when contemplating potential careers.*

cast (one's) net wider To broaden one's search or criteria for something, thus giving oneself more options. *A: "I don't know why John has only applied to Ivy League schools when he only has average grades." B: "I know, I've told him to cast his net wider."*

cast (one's) pearls before swine To present something valuable to one who does not recognize its worth. The phrase originated in the Bible. *Most of the time, playing classical music for high schoolers is like casting your pearls before swine. But every so often a few kids appreciate it. I can't believe he gave his brand-new convertible to that bumpkin—talk about casting your pearls before swine.*

cast (one's) vote 1. To vote in an election. *You seem happy about the results of the election. I guess I know which candidate you cast your vote for!*

I need to go to the polling place and cast my vote! 2. To share one's opinion on something (which could involve informal "voting"). If I get a say in the matter, I cast my vote in favor of a new microwave for the break room! Raise your hand to cast your vote for lower monthly dues!

cast out To forcibly expel or dismiss someone or something. A noun or pronoun can be used between "cast" and "out." *After I got in yet another fight at school, the headmaster cast me out. Until you cast out these outdated hiring practices, your company will never attract top talent.*

cast (some) light on (something) To reveal information or details about something; to clarify or help people understand something. *We've hired a private investigator to help cast light on the clandestine dealings of the baron. These documents we've uncovered cast some light on how the late author's final book was meant to end.*

cast (some) light upon (something) To reveal information or details about something; to clarify or help people understand something. (A more formal version of "cast (some) light on something.") *We've hired a private investigator to help cast light upon the clandestine dealings of the baron. These documents we've uncovered cast some light upon how the late author's final book was meant to end.*

cast stones against the wind To do something that is futile or will not work out. *Trying to get an A in Chem class now, after blowing off your assignments all semester, is like casting stones against the wind. You're doomed! It's too late to repair my relationship with my mother. I might as well cast stones against the wind.*

cast the first stone To be the first to criticize someone or something. *OK, fine, I'll cast the first stone—that movie was awful! Alicia cast the first stone, but of course the boss heard me—and only me—complaining about him.*

cast up 1. To throw or toss someone or something ashore. A noun or pronoun can be used between "cast" and "up." *The choppy waters cast me up, coughing and spluttering on the beach. A child must have lost a toy boat in the ocean because the waves just cast up its wreckage. 2. To calculate something. The morning after another rather indulgent evening, I decided it was high time for me to cast up my accounts.*

cast up (one's) accounts 1. obsolete To calculate the figures of one's

financial accounts. *The morning after another rather indulgent evening, I decided it was high time for me to cast up my accounts.* 2. obsolete To regurgitate. A play on the terms cast (which is an obsolete term for calculating arithmetical operations, here meaning "to throw") and accounts (one's bank account, here referring to one's stomach). *The gentleman, deeply inebriated, cast up his accounts onto the head of some poor wretch sleeping in the street.*

castle in the air A hope or wish, especially for one's life, that is unlikely to come true. A daydream. *I really want to become a famous Hollywood actor, but I realize that it's just a castle in the air and that I shouldn't quit my day job.*

castles in Spain Dreams, hopes, or plans that are impossible, unrealistic, or have very little chance of succeeding. *He keeps talking about how he'll move to Los Angeles to be a famous actor, but it's just castles in Spain if you ask me. You need sound financial advice and a strong plan if you're going to start your own business—it can't be all castles in Spain.*

castles in the air Dreams, hopes, or plans that are impossible, unrealistic, or have very little chance of succeeding. *You need sound financial advice and a strong plan if you're going to start your own business—don't just build castles in the air. He keeps talking about how he'll move to Los Angeles to be a famous actor, but it's just castles in the air if you ask me.*

castles in the sky Dreams, hopes, or plans that are impossible, unrealistic, or have very little chance of succeeding. *He keeps talking about how he'll move to Los Angeles to be a famous actor, but it's just castles in the sky if you ask me. You need sound financial advice and a strong plan if you're going to start your own business—it can't be all castles in the sky.*

a castoff See [cast off](#).

casts about for See [cast about for \(something\)](#).

casts back See [cast back](#).

casts down See [cast down](#).

casts light on See [cast \(some\) light on \(something\)](#).

casts light upon See [cast \(some\) light upon \(something\)](#).

casts lots See [cast lots](#).



casts on See [cast on](#).

casts out See [cast out](#).

casts up See [cast up](#).

casu consulto A Latin phrase literally translated as "accidentally on purpose;" that is, done deliberately while appearing to be unintentional. *Investigators suspect that the warehouse burned down casu consulto, and are now looking into motives for arson.*

casual dress Clothing that is not considered or defined as being ceremonial, formal, semi-formal, or business dress, typically comfortable and with a wider range of choice regarding color and dimensions (as of length in shirt sleeves, pant legs, and skirts). *I had to wear a suit and tie every day in my last job, but I'm happy my new office lets everyone come in casual dress each day. The party is going to be very informal, so please attend in casual dress.*

cat-and-dog life Of spouses or romantic partners, a life together typified by arguments, fights, and disagreements. *They were so happy together when they first started dating, but after 10 years together, they've started leading a cat-and-dog life.*

cat and mouse 1. A phrase used to describe the suspenseful relationship between one being pursued and the pursuer. *We've been hiding out here for days, and I can't handle this cat and mouse game any longer—I'm calling the police!* **2.** A phrase that describes how one plays with or teases someone before turning violent or vicious, likened to the way in which a cat toys with a mouse before killing it. *If we have any hopes of getting the prisoner to crack, we need to play a cat and mouse game now, in the early stages of the interrogation.* **3.** A game in which children stand in a circle and raise their arms to let one player into the middle. Then, they lower their arms to keep out a second player, who is chasing the first. *Let's play cat and mouse! I'll go first—everybody else, circle up!*

cat-and-mouse game 1. A situation characterized by two parties engaged in a constant back-and-forth routine in which the advantage alternates between them. *It's been a real cat-and-mouse game between these two teams—we won't be sure of the victory until the very last moment!* **2.** A situation characterized by two parties engaged in a constant back-and-forth

routine in which one party attempts to gain tactical advantage over or draw out of hiding the other, often only to be thwarted or eluded. *Police have been playing a cat-and-mouse game with drug dealers in this area for years now.*

a cat can look at a king Everyone has rights, regardless of status, especially to do things that are of no consequence to others. *You can't keep us out of the student council office just because we're underclassmen! A cat can look at a king, after all!*

cat got your tongue A humorous question directed at one who is not speaking very much or at all. A: *"What's wrong, sonny? Cat got your tongue?"* B: *"Oh, he's just shy around new people, that's all."*

a cat has nine lives A cat is able to endure, continue, or survive despite a near encounter with death or disaster because cats have nine lives (according to a common myth). *Mr. Pickles has been missing for a few days, but I wouldn't worry about him. Everybody knows a cat has nine lives.*

cat ice A thin sheet of ice under which water has already receded. *Watch out for cat ice out there! It's pretty slippery, so take your time walking.*

a cat in gloves catches no mice One might have to incorporate blunt or aggressive action in order to obtain results that cannot be achieved with passivity or restraint. *I think you'll get that promotion if you pursue it more assertively. A cat in gloves catches no mice, after all.*

cat in the meal-tub obsolete A surprise attack or ambush; a hidden or unseen danger. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *Many people want to legalize marijuana but are in denial of the cats in the meal-tub that may come with doing so. The young political candidate waited like a cat in a meal-tub for his rival's sordid history to come to public attention.*

cat in the sack A ruse, swindle, or suspicious transaction. In English, the more common phrase is "(to buy a) pig in the poke" (a "poke" being an older word for a bag or sack), meaning to buy something without verifying its contents or value first; the "cat in the sack" (a phrase more common to other European languages) refers to an item of lesser quality or value that has been substituted in its place. This is also the basis for the phrase "the cat's out of the bag" (and iterations thereof), meaning the swindle or secret has been exposed. *I thought I was getting a great deal buying my car from that online seller, but as soon as I drove it home, I realized I'd bought a cat in the sack.*

a cat may look at a king Everyone has rights, regardless of status, especially to do things that are of no consequence to others. *You can't keep us out of the student council office just because we're underclassmen! A cat may look at a king, after all!*

a cat nap A very brief but restful period of sleep. *I'm going to try to squeeze in a cat nap before my next shift starts, or else I'll be feeling sluggish for the entire evening.*

the cat would eat fish, but would not wet her feet In order to get what you want, you must be willing to take risks and endure annoyances. *I know it will be a lot of work, but you're so qualified that you have to try for this promotion—the cat would eat fish, but would not wet her feet.*

catapult (someone or something) into (something) To suddenly thrust one into a particular situation or condition, often fame. *That award-winning role really catapulted the actor into stardom.*

catch **1.** verb To see, and perhaps apprehend, someone in the act of doing something (often something nefarious). *The robbers were arrested when the police caught them looting another house. I don't watch to catch you kids doing this ever again—the tool shed is far too dangerous to play in!* **2.** verb, slang To see or hear a specific program or event, typically as broadcast on the TV or radio. *Did you catch the game last night? What a crazy ending!* **3.** verb To hear and/or understand something that has been said. *I'm sorry, I didn't catch that last part. Can you repeat it?* **4.** verb To contract a contagious illness. *All of my students are sick right now, so I'm not surprised that I've caught a cold, too. With the way you've been sneezing all day, I really hope I don't catch what you have!* **5.** verb To encounter or meet with someone, typically for the purpose of communicating with them. This usage often suggests that the person is busy or rushed, and therefore may have limited availability. *Hey, I'm glad I caught you—how's your mom doing? Peg has to sign off on your expense report, so be sure to catch her before she leaves the office. I'll catch you later, man.* **6.** verb To receive a punishment or reprimand. The phrase "catch it" is usually used for this usage. *If I get home past curfew again, I'm really going to catch it from my parents!* **7.** verb To notice a problem, error, or inconsistency, often one that is inconspicuous. *Oh, Jen caught that spelling error—I never even noticed it.* **8.** verb To notice or

detect something. *Did you catch the joke at the beginning of the movie? It was pretty subtle. I opened the window and caught a whiff of dinner cooking next door.* **9.** verb In baseball or softball, to play the position of catcher. *Joe is sick, so we need someone else to catch tonight.* **10.** verb To reach a mode of transportation before it departs. *Of course we hit a major traffic jam when I have a plane to catch! Oh, she did catch the bus—the driver saw her running and waited for her.* **11.** verb To stop oneself from doing something. In this usage, "catch" is followed by a reflexive pronoun. *Bill tripped over the step but managed to catch himself on the railing before falling. I almost asked about her boyfriend when I caught myself, remembering that they had broken up.* **12.** noun A game in which two or more people throw a ball back and forth between them. *Now that the weather is nice, you boys should go outside and play catch.* **13.** noun A problem, drawback, or hidden detriment, often one that is initially concealed as a means of entrapment. *I know this sounds like a great job offer, but there's a pretty big catch—I'd have to move across the country. Why are you selling this for so little? What's the catch?* **14.** noun An audible break or hesitation in one's voice (typically when one is very emotional). *When I heard the catch in her voice, I knew my mom had bad news for me.* **15.** noun An amount of something that has been caught or captured, such as while fishing. A: "What was your catch today, boys?" B: "Not great, Earl—only five fish." **16.** noun The identification or recognition of a problem, error, or inconsistency, often one that is inconspicuous. *I never would have noticed that spelling error—good catch!* **17.** noun An ideal suitor or prospective mate. *Tom's a good-looking guy with a six-figure income—he's a real catch!*

catch a break **1.** To obtain or receive a convenient, beneficial, and/or lucky opportunity. *I finally caught a break when a big Hollywood producer asked me to audition for a part in the movie.* **2.** To receive special treatment or a favorable deal, especially regarding a reduced price on something. *Tenants in the city center will be catching a break on rental prices when the city council introduces a new rent-control scheme next year. You'll catch a break on your car insurance if you don't get in any accidents while you're driving.* **3.** To obtain new information leading toward a solution to a given problem. *The detectives finally caught a break when an anonymous caller tipped them off to the kidnapper's location.* **4.** To get relief from some difficulty or problem(s). *We're hoping to catch a break from the drought with a little bit of rainfall this weekend. First, my car breaks down and then I lose*

my keys to the apartment—I just can't catch a break today!

catch a buzz slang To become mildly intoxicated without becoming completely drunk. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *At my age I can't go out drinking all night long anymore, but I still like to catch a buzz on the weekend.*

catch a cold To become ill with the common cold. *My sister's been sick all week, and now I think I've caught a cold from her. I hate going to the doctor's office—I always seem to catch a cold after being around all those germs!*

catch a snooze To sleep or take a nap, especially of a short duration. *I prefer getting the bus to work in the morning rather than driving, because it gives me a chance to catch a snooze on the way.*

catch a tan To tan, as from the sun or in a tanning bed. *The water's too cold for my liking, so I'll just catch a tan on the beach instead.*

catch a Tartar To encounter or be forced to reckon with someone or something that proves more powerful, troublesome, or formidable than one expected. *They thought that I would simply give up if my complaint had to go to court, but they'll soon realize that they've caught a Tartar! It looks like we caught a Tartar when we tried to muscle their store out of the area.*

catch a weasel asleep To surprise someone who is normally alert, shrewd, or on-guard. Primarily heard in US. *You want to try to steal your transcript from the principal's office? You never catch a weasel asleep—and especially not that one!*

catch (a)hold of (someone or something) To grasp or grip something. *Catch hold of that end of the sheet and pull it straight. I tried to catch ahold of her before she fell off the step, but it happened too fast.*

catch air To jump into the air, especially in a vehicle or on sports equipment (e.g., skis, skateboards, inline skates, etc.). "Air" is often preceded by a modifier such as "big" or "major" to emphasize the size of the jump. *I love this ski slope, you can catch some major air off some of its jumps! Ted caught air in his sports car as he drove over the hill.*

catch as catch can Done by any means or in any possible way, often haphazardly. *The restaurant was so busy during dinner that getting service was catch as catch can. When you're a surgical intern, sleep is simply catch*

as catch can in between cases.

catch at a bad time See [catch \(one\) at a bad time](#).

catch at (a) straw(s) To make a desperate attempt to salvage a bad situation. *It's almost sad to watch how poorly that candidate is doing in the debate. He keeps bringing up his previous successes in every answer, but clearly he's catching at straws. A: "But what about all those times I took the trash out when you hadn't even asked me to?" B: "That has nothing to do with why you're in trouble now, so stop catching at a straw."*

catch at (something) 1. To find or see someone in the act of doing something (often something nefarious). In this usage, the guilty party is stated between "catch" and "at." *The detective was able to catch the robbers at their next scheme.* 2. To grasp at or clutch something. *She must be nervous—she keeps catching at her purse.*

catch big air To jump into the air, especially in a vehicle or on sports equipment (e.g., a snowboard, skis, skateboard, bike, etc.). *I love this ski slope, you can catch some big air off some of its jumps! Ted caught big air in his sports car as he drove over the hill.*

catch breath See [catch \(one's\) breath](#).

catch by surprise See [catch \(someone\) by surprise](#).

catch by the short hairs See [have \(someone\) by the short hairs](#).

catch cold To become ill with the common cold. *I hate going to the doctor's office—I always seem to catch cold after being around all those germs!*

catch cold See [catch \(one\) cold](#).

catch dead to rights See [catch \(one\) dead to rights](#).

catch death See [catch \(one's\) death \(of cold\)](#).

catch drift See [catch \(someone's\) drift](#).

catch dust To be in a state of disuse for a prolonged period of time. *Why do you want another video game console? You already have three catching dust under the television! My father has lots of old trinkets and memorabilia catching dust in the attic.*

catch eye See [catch \(one's\) eye](#).

catch fancy See [catch \(someone's\) fancy](#).

catch flat-footed See [catch \(someone\) flat-footed](#).

catch flies To have one's mouth agape, as while asleep or when staring bemusedly or in amazement. *I suppose I look rather ungraceful when I fall asleep on airplanes, with my head thrown back in the seat and catching flies. The students all sat staring in utter incomprehension, catching flies as the professor explained quantum mechanics.*

catch forty winks To sleep for a short time; to take a nap. *Dad's upstairs catching forty winks before dinner.*

catch from See [catch \(something\) from \(someone\)](#).

catch headlines See [catch \(the\) headlines](#).

catch heat To be the target of someone's anger. *If I miss curfew again, I'm really going to catch heat from my parents.*

catch hell To receive the brunt of another's anger, often through scolding. *If I get home past curfew again, I'm really going to catch hell from my parents!*

catch herself See [catch](#).

catch in See [catch \(someone or something\) in \(something\)](#).

catch in the crunch See [caught in the crunch](#).

catch it To receive a punishment or reprimand. *If I get home past curfew again, I'm really going to catch it from my parents!*

catch it in the neck To receive a very severe rebuke, scolding, or punishment for one's actions. Primarily heard in UK. *Boy, I really caught it in the neck for screwing up the Lawson account. I'm lucky I didn't lose my job! I'm really going to catch it in the neck if my parents notice this dent in the car!*

catch it up in See [catch up in \(something\)](#).

catch lightning in a bottle To achieve or succeed at doing something that is incredibly difficult, unlikely, and/or elusive. Primarily heard in US. *The playwright caught lightning in a bottle with his first play, taking the world by storm and thrusting him into the spotlight of fame. This rookie team, such underdogs in this championship, are trying to catch*

lightning in a bottle with an upset win over the number one seed.

catch off balance See [catch \(someone\) off balance](#).

catch on 1. To become popular or widespread. *Judging by my students, that obnoxious song is really starting to catch on.* **2.** To learn or understand something, sometimes after an initial struggle to do so. *Thanks for explaining that concept to me—I think I'm catching on now.*

catch (on) fire To begin to burn, usually after being touched by an existing fire. *Hey, keep an eye on that pan, I don't want our dinner to catch on fire. I blew out all the candles so, don't worry, the house won't catch fire! I was sitting too close to the fireplace and my sleeve caught on fire!*

catch on with (one) To become popular with or widely used by a specific person or group. *Unfortunately, that obnoxious song is starting to catch on with my students now too. That tech company is going to go bankrupt if its fancy new product doesn't catch on with millennials.*

catch one at See [catch at \(something\)](#).

catch (one) at a bad time To encounter or try to communicate or work with someone at an inopportune time, such as when they are busy or preoccupied. *I'll definitely help you with that report later—you just happened to catch me at a bad time right now. If Dean was grumpy, you probably just caught him at a bad time.*

catch (one) cold To surprise someone with something. In this usage, a noun or pronoun is always used between "catch" and "cold." *News that I'd gotten the promotion really caught me cold—I didn't think they were seriously considering me for it!*

catch one cold See [catch cold](#).

catch (one) dead to rights To have enough evidence to prove that one is guilty of a crime or other misdeed. *Thanks to footage from the security cameras, the police were able to catch the burglars dead to rights.*

catch (one) in the act To see, and perhaps apprehend, someone as they are doing something (often something nefarious). *The police caught the robbers in the act of ransacking another house. I suspected that my friend was stealing money from me, and then I caught her in the act.*

catch (one) later slang To see or talk to one at a later time. *I have to go*



now—catch you later. *That's fine, I'll catch him later, once we're both in the office.*

catch (one) napping To exploit or capitalize on one's inattention (or, sometimes, literal sleep). *We were able to sneak into the building because we caught the security guard napping. I scored a goal after I caught their defenseman napping.*

catch (one) off guard To engage, take advantage of, or seize upon one when one is not especially careful, vigilant, or prepared for danger or surprises. *He's got a lot of tricky moves, so make sure he doesn't catch you off guard! The soldiers moved in quickly, hoping to catch the enemy troops off guard. I think I caught him off guard when I told him I was resigning.*

catch (one) on the hop To encounter or try to communicate or work with someone at an inopportune time, such as when they are busy or preoccupied; to catch one off guard. *I'll definitely help you with that report later—you just happened to catch me on the hop right now. If Dean was grumpy, you probably just caught him on the hop.*

catch (one) red-handed To see, and perhaps apprehend, someone as they are doing something (often something nefarious). The phrase might have originally referred to blood on a murderer's hands. *The police caught the robbers red-handed as they ransacked another house. Timmy tried to get into the cookie jar again, but I caught him red-handed.*

catch (one) with (one's) pants down To encounter or catch one by surprise in a vulnerable and often embarrassing position or situation. *Thanks to that anonymous tip, we were able to catch the drug smugglers with their pants down—right when they were making the exchange. Jeff was caught with his pants down when he came to the meeting without having read the brief and the boss started firing questions at him.*

catch (one's) breath 1. To resume or try to resume breathing normally after a physically taxing activity that results in heavy breathing. *Can we stop for a minute? I need to catch my breath—I can't run as fast as you guys!* 2. To stop breathing momentarily as a result of fear or surprise. *I caught my breath when I saw the gruesome injuries Adam had sustained in the accident.*

catch (one's) death (of cold) To become ill with the common cold. This phrase is often used hyperbolically. *You'll catch your death of cold if you leave the house with wet hair—it's freezing outside! I hate going to the*

doctor's office—I always seem to catch my death after being around all those germs!

catch (one's) eye **1.** To attract one's attention, often by making eye contact. *The server still hasn't taken our order—we just can't catch her eye.* **2.** To attract one's interest, especially due to being visually appealing or attractive. *That dress in the window caught my eye immediately—can I try it on? Your store needs a bold sign that will catch the eye of anyone walking down the street. I see that the new girl in school has caught your eye.*

catch oneself See [catch](#).

catch onto (something) **1.** To snag on a particular surface, item, or material, usually with frustrating or unpleasant results. *Be careful so that the zipper doesn't catch onto my dress—it's silk!* **2.** To latch onto something, usually as is intended. *You probably need to get your necklace repaired so that this little piece catches onto the clasp securely.*

catch out To expose one's deception or other wrongdoing. A noun or pronoun can be used between "catch" and "out." *I wouldn't lie to the detective—her whole job is to catch you out! The CEO was finally caught out and his embezzlement scandal exposed.*

catch sight of (someone or something) To see someone or something very briefly or suddenly. *Wendy only caught sight of the burglar for a second, so she couldn't describe his appearance to the police. I didn't know what the bunny was running from, until I caught sight of the dog that was chasing it.*

catch some rays To spend time in sunlight, often by sunbathing. *I love laying on the beach and catching some rays. Now that it's sunny again after so many rainy days, we should get out and catch some rays.*

catch some shuteye To sleep. *Hey, it's late, we should probably try to catch some shuteye so we're not exhausted tomorrow. A: "Where's Sara?" B: "Catching some shuteye. I'm not supposed to wake her up for another half hour."*

catch some Z's To get some sleep. In illustrations such as comics, three (or more) Z's are often used to represent sleep or snoring. *We've got a pretty long layover before our next flight, so I'm going to try to catch some Z's at the gate. Jeff's upstairs catching some Z's. It's been a hard week for him.*

catch (someone) by surprise To startle, amaze, or come upon (someone) unawares. *That car coming around the corner caught me by surprise. She was caught completely by surprise with the amount of donations she received. Don't let hidden bank fees catch you by surprise.*

catch (someone) flat-footed To startle someone; to come upon someone unawares and/or when they are unprepared. Usually used in the past tense. *The security guard caught the thieves flat-footed. That essay question in the exam caught me completely flat-footed.*

catch (someone) off balance To startle someone; to come upon someone unawares and/or when they are unprepared. Often used in the past tense. *The security guard caught the thieves off balance. That essay question on the exam caught me completely off balance. Your opponent is going to try to catch you off balance during the debate, so just be sure to stick to your position.*

catch (someone or something) in (something) 1. To physically ensnare or capture someone in something, such as a trap. *After catching that raccoon in a trap, we set him free far from our house.* 2. To see, and perhaps apprehend, someone in the act of doing something (often something nefarious). *I can't believe I caught my sweet little girl in a lie!*

catch (someone) with (someone or something) 1. To find, and perhaps apprehend, one in possession of something suspicious. *If they catch us with the other team's mascot, they'll think we stole it! The jewel thief was caught with the necklace hidden inside his shoe.* 2. To apprehend one by using a particular device or method. *The police seem confident that they'll be able to catch the escaped convicts with helicopters and dogs.* 3. To find one with someone else, usually in the midst of an illicit activity. *Police caught the suspect with known mobsters. Don't let me catch you with Dean again. I told you he's trouble.*

catch (someone's) drift To understand the meaning, insinuation, or implication of what someone is saying. *All I'm saying is that I won't be very sad if she breaks up with her boyfriend, if you catch my drift.* A: "I want him 'taken care of'—he's become too much of a liability." B: "I think I catch your drift."

catch (someone's) fancy To be appealing or pleasant to someone; to be intriguing or of interest to someone. A: "Do you want to go to a movie

later on?" B: "I don't know, there's nothing that really catches my fancy in theaters right now." I'm not going to declare my major until I've had a couple years in college to see what ends up catching my fancy.

catch (something) from (someone) To contract a contagious illness. "Something" can be used between "catch" and "from" when referring to a non-specific illness. *All of my students are sick right now, so I won't be surprised if I catch something from them. With the way you've been sneezing all day, I really hope I don't catch a cold from you!*

catch the drift To understand the general meaning of some situation or piece of information. *Since I don't have time at work to read news articles in full, I usually just read their blurbs online to catch the drift of what's going on in the world. I was so tired that I couldn't focus on the boss's speech during the meeting, but I think I caught the drift of what he was saying.*

catch the eye To attract attention. To be noticed. *I can't believe I caught the eye of a real agent! This is finally my big break! I know that Tom is trying to catch the eye of some scouts tonight, but he could pass the ball once in a while!*

catch the eye of (someone) To attract the attention or interest of someone. *We were waiting to be served for nearly 15 minutes before I was able to catch the eye of one of the waiters. We need a new advertising campaign that really catches the eye of younger demographics.*

catch (the) headlines To be featured on the headlines of news articles, as due to being particularly important, popular, fashionable, etc. *It may not be so tremendous as to catch the headlines, but this small change in immigration law could have a huge impact on foreign workers. The pop star caught headlines yesterday after his latest run-in with police.*

catch the next wave To become involved with or follow the next trend. *I developed my fashion sense as a teen because I got sick of always waiting to catch the next wave.*

catch the sun To get sunburned. *I caught the sun at the beach last weekend, and now my back hurts so much that I have to sleep on my side! I made sure to pack you some extra sunscreen so that you don't catch the sun on your trip.*

catch the wave To enjoy the advantage or benefit of a particularly

successful, popular, fortunate, interesting, etc., moment or period of time. *Jonathan was totally uncool at school until he caught the wave of his sister's celebrity after she was cast in that movie. The popular Internet artist caught the wave of support from her fan base to launch an incredibly successful crowd funding campaign for her new project.*

a catch to (something) A problem, drawback, or hidden detriment to an idea or situation. *I know this sounds like a great offer, but there's a pretty big catch to it—I'd have to move across the country.*

catch up in (something) To enthrall or mire in something. A noun or pronoun can be used between "catch" and "up." *I never thought I'd get caught up in a soap opera, but this one is just so good! My siblings are constantly fighting and always manage to catch me up in their drama.*

catch up on (something) **1.** To learn about something that one missed when it originally happened. In this usage, a noun or pronoun can be used between "catch" and "up." *If you haven't been watching the news for the last few days, you have a lot to catch up on. I need to catch up on all the gossip! I'm sure I missed a lot over spring break.* **2.** To do a task that one has neglected. *If you haven't done any biology homework in weeks, you better spend this weekend catching up on it—it's due on Tuesday! I'm trying to catch up on work after being out sick, but my inbox alone might take all day!*

catch up to (something or someone) To make up the difference between oneself and someone or something, so as to be at an equal level, status, or point of progress. *If we speed up, we might be able to catch up to the car ahead of us! You're going to have to study really hard to catch up to the rest of the class.*

catch up with (someone) **1.** Of friends or relatives, to update one another on life events that occurred since the last time seeing each other. *It was so lovely catching up with you; it's been years since we were last together! You and I must really catch up with each other sometime soon.* **2.** To find (and, of police, to arrest) someone after a period of time trying to track that person down. *The bank robber disappeared for almost a week, but the police caught up with him at the border of Mexico.* **3.** To make up the difference between oneself and someone or something, so as to be at an equal level, status, or point of progress. *If we speed up, we might be able to catch up with the car ahead of us!* **4.** To meet again at a later point in time. *We'll*

catch up with you after the movie. **5.** To cause unpleasant consequences or have dire implications, especially after a certain period of time. *You might like to party all night long now, but all that drinking is going to catch up with you someday. His criminal record as a teen caught up with him in job interviews as an adult.*

catch with See [catch \(someone\) with \(someone or something\)](#).

catch with pants down See [catch \(one\) with \(one's\) pants down](#).

catch you at See [catch at \(something\)](#).

catch you at a bad time See [catch \(one\) at a bad time](#).

catch you cold See [catch cold](#).

catch you cold See [catch \(one\) cold](#).

catch you dead to rights See [catch \(one\) dead to rights](#).

catch you in the act See [catch \(one\) in the act](#).

catch you later See [catch \(one\) later](#).

catch you later See you later; we will meet again later (at an unspecified time). *OK, I've got to go—catch you later! That was a really great time. I'll catch you later, man.*

catch you napping See [catch \(one\) napping](#).

catch you off guard See [catch \(one\) off guard](#).

catch you on the hop See [catch \(one\) on the hop](#).

catch you out See [catch out](#).

catch you red-handed See [catch \(one\) red-handed](#).

catch you up on See [catch up on \(something\)](#).

catch your breath See [catch \(one's\) breath](#).

catch your death See [catch \(one's\) death \(of cold\)](#).

catch your drift See [catch \(someone's\) drift](#).

catch your eye See [catch \(one's\) eye](#).

catch your fancy See [catch \(someone's\) fancy](#).

catch yourself See [catch](#).

catching 40 winks See [catch forty winks](#).
catching a break See [catch a break](#).
catching a caught See [catch a cold](#).
catching a weasel asleep See [catch a weasel asleep](#).
catching at a straw See [catch at \(a\) straw\(s\)](#).
catching fire See [catch \(on\) fire](#).
catching headlines See [catch \(the\) headlines](#).
catching heat See [catch heat](#).
catching hell See [catch hell](#).
catching her in See [catch \(someone or something\) in \(something\)](#).
catching it See [catch it](#).
catching it in the neck See [catch it in the neck](#).
catching lightning in a bottle See [catch lightning in a bottle](#).
catching on See [catch on](#).
catching onto See [catch onto \(something\)](#).
catching some rays See [catch some rays](#).
catching some shuteye See [catch some shuteye](#).
catching some Zs See [catch some Z's](#).
catching the eye See [catch the eye](#).
catching the next wave See [catch the next wave](#).
catching the sun See [catch the sun](#).
catching the wave See [catch the wave](#).
catching up in See [catch up in \(something\)](#).

cater to (someone or something) 1. To assist or provide something to a person or business. *As a personal assistant, I cater to busy professionals who need help managing their lives.* 2. To give special treatment or consideration to someone, perhaps to an excessive degree. *They're our biggest account, so we usually end up catering to them to make sure they're completely satisfied with the service. My sister has been catering*

to my every whim ever since I caught her sneaking in past curfew.

catfish To deceive someone by presenting a false identity, typically through online correspondence. The term comes from the documentary and subsequent TV show *Catfish*, which explore this phenomenon. *Dude, you're definitely getting catfished. Those pictures that girl keeps sending you of "herself" are really of a model!*

Catholic twins Siblings who are less than a year apart in age. A satirical phrase playing on the stereotype that Catholics have many children very close together in age. *My younger sister and I ended up in the same year in school, so everyone always called us the Catholic twins.*

catnap See [a cat nap](#).

cat's claw An herb with medicinal properties commonly found in South America and Asia. A: *"I'm really not feeling well today."* B: *"Let me make you a remedy with cat's claw and some other herbs."*

cat's cradle Something intricately or overly complex and/or elaborate. Likened to the children's game of the same name in which string is wound around and between one's fingers to create intricate patterns. *The new healthcare legislation is a baffling cat's cradle of regulations, requirements, and loopholes.*

cat's meow Something or someone highly enjoyable, desirable, or impressive, especially in a fancy or elaborate way. *Tom's new Cadillac is really the cat's meow! Boy, that singer last night was the cat's meow, wasn't she?*

cat's pajamas Something or someone highly enjoyable, desirable, or impressive, especially in a fancy or elaborate way. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *Tom's new Cadillac is really the cat's pajamas! Boy, that singer last night was the cat's pajamas, wasn't she?*

cat's-paw A person who is used by another to achieve some end, especially in a duplicitous or cynical manner. Taken from a fable about a monkey who uses a cat's paw to retrieve chestnuts from a fire. *I thought that Jake really loved me, but in the end, I was just a cat's-paw so he could stir up jealousy in his ex-boyfriend.*

cat's whiskers Something or someone that is highly enjoyable, desirable, or impressive, especially in a fancy or elaborate way. *Tom's new Cadillac is*

really the cat's whiskers! Boy, that singer last night was the cat's whiskers, wasn't she?

cattle call A large audition (for film, television, theater, etc.) that is open to the public, meaning many people typically attend and they are often seen very briefly. *I spent days preparing for the audition, but it turns out it was just a cattle call and they ushered me out before I was even halfway done with the monologue.*

cattle market **1.** A typically public place where one goes to find potential sexual partners. Almost always used in a negative way. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *Our college's student bar is such a cattle market on the weekends. It seems like everyone I know has hooked up with at least one person there. Everyone knows that the clubs on Leeson Street are just cattle markets for single people.* **2.** A place or situation in which people are gathered, displayed, and appraised for their looks or abilities, akin to cattle being valued in a market. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *These summer training camps are really just cattle markets for college football recruiters to find the most promising up-and-coming players. The restaurant is an oddity, a cattle market that only hires women for their large busts.*

Caturday An alternative name for "Saturday" used by cat lovers on social media. Commonly, but not always, used as a hashtag. Its origin is usually traced back to the weekly posting of LOLcat memes on the website 4chan on Saturdays. *Just spending a lazy Caturday with these adorable purr monsters. My tabby has decided to sleep all day. Not a bad idea. #caturday*

caucus race **1.** Any event or activity that requires a great amount of time, energy, and commitment, but which is or is considered to be ultimately futile or arbitrary. A reference to Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, in which everyone in the Caucus race runs around in a circle and then suddenly wins a prize—thus serving no real purpose at all. *We were all told that the essay had to cover everything we had learned during the course. But in the end, it was just a caucus race because it didn't even affect our final grade.* **2.** An event, system, or activity that benefits all parties involved. Also a reference to *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. *Fair trade competition between our countries will establish itself as a caucus race, as the increased commerce will help bolster both countries' economies.* **3.** A political competition between members of the same party, as for the candidacy to run in an election or a position within the party's infrastructure.

Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *The caucus race before the election highlighted the candidates' fundamental differences.*

caught See [catch](#).

caught bending Taken by surprise. Caught in a vulnerable position. *Oh man, I hope Jack isn't hurt too badly. He was really caught bending on that play, and the linebacker just crushed him!*

caught between the devil and the deep blue sea Faced with two undesirable choices or situations. *I cheated on the test, and now, I'm caught between the devil and the deep blue sea—I either have to confess to my teacher or live with the guilt. Ugh! A: "I asked two girls to the dance, and they found out about it! Now, I've got two angry women to deal with." B: "Sounds like you're caught between the devil and the deep blue sea, buddy."*

caught in the act Seen, and perhaps apprehended, while doing something (often something nefarious). *Our security cameras caught the burglar in the act.*

caught in the crossfire 1. Literally in the middle of an exchange of gunfire. *Police officers are often caught in the crossfire when apprehending criminals.* 2. Affected by or made to be involved in a conflict or issue that one is not a part of. *I was caught in the crossfire of their argument over the budget, but I refused to take sides and told them to work it out on their own.*

caught in the crunch To have been the victim of difficult circumstances or pressures, especially financial ones and often those that are outside of one's control. *Many small businesses caught in the crunch of the recession were forced to close or are barely staying open. When next year's budget is announced by the government, lower earners and public services are likely to be the ones caught in the crunch.*

caught in the middle In a position between two or more sides in an argument or contentious issue, often leaving one without a clear course of action to satisfy either side. *When my friends broke up, I was often caught in the middle, as each one complained to me about the other.*

caught on the hop Caught unawares or in a state of unpreparedness. *Please forgive my distracted attention—I'm afraid I was caught on the hop by your sudden arrival. Terry hadn't prepared anything to say at the reception, so he found himself caught on the hop when they asked him to say a few*

words.

caught short **1.** slang Unprepared for a certain situation, often one involving money. *I was caught short at the restaurant, so I had to borrow money from my mom.* **2.** slang Pregnant when one is not married. *I think that Heather has missed so much school because she's caught short.* **3.** slang Having an urgent need to use the toilet. *I always go to the bathroom before a long drive, to avoid being caught short.*

caught unawares To be surprised by someone or something. A: "Oh man, I was totally caught unawares when your mother showed up here this morning." B: "I figured as much when she told me that you answered the door in your robe and curlers!"

caught up in (something) Enthralled by or mired in something. *I never thought I'd get caught up in a soap opera, but this one is just so good! My siblings are constantly fighting, and no matter how I try to avoid it, I always get caught up in their drama.*

caught with (one's) hand in the cookie jar To have been caught in the act or attempt of some wrongdoing, especially one involving bribery or the illicit exploitation of one's position of power or authority. *The senator was long accused of insider trading, and he was finally caught with his hand in the cookie jar when his conversation with a Wall Street executive was leaked to the media.*

caught with (one's) pants down Taken by surprise. Caught in a vulnerable (often embarrassing) position or situation. *When the boss started firing questions at me, I was caught with my pants down and looked like a fool. I just hadn't considered all of those potential outcomes yet and didn't know what to say! We seriously underestimated our opponents on Saturday and totally got caught with our pants down.*

cause a stir To incite trouble or excitement. *My best friend's pink hair caused quite a stir at our very strict school. This band has caused a stir with teenagers all across the nation—screaming fans greet them everywhere they go!*

cause célèbre **1.** A controversy that causes public debate. *The town's polluted drinking water became a national cause célèbre when it was discovered that the local leaders had allowed it to happen.* **2.** A legal case that is famous or celebrated. *The trial became a cause célèbre for those who*

felt the defendant was victimized by the legal system.

cause for alarm A reason to be worried, frightened, or concerned about something. *The X-ray showed a slight discoloration in my lungs, but my doctor assured me it was no cause for alarm. There was cause for alarm when we noticed our boss shredding all the files in her office.*

cause (some) eyebrows to raise To elicit shock, surprise, or offense, typically through unconventional actions or words. The phrase typically suggests negative attention or judgment. *Her irreverent chatter during the ceremony caused some eyebrows to raise. My best friend's pink hair definitely caused eyebrows to raise at our very strict school.*

cause some raised eyebrows To elicit shock, surprise, or offense, typically through unconventional actions or words. The phrase typically suggests negative attention or judgment. *Her irreverent chatter during the ceremony caused some raised eyebrows. My best friend's pink hair definitely caused some raised eyebrows at our very strict school.*

cause (some) tongues to wag To be a source of gossip, slander, or idle speculation. *Just when the dust of his previous scandal had begun to settle, the governor did something new to cause tongues to wag across the country. Being a celebrity means that anything one does, no matter how banal, is enough to cause some tongues to wag.*

caution (one) about (someone or something) To warn one about someone or something. *My mom always cautions me about the dangers of texting while driving. You need to caution him about Allie before he falls prey to her usual tricks.*

cautious optimism A feeling of general confidence regarding a situation and/or its outcome coupled with a readiness for possible difficulties or failure. *I've prepared for this exam for weeks, so I have a cautious optimism that it will turn out well. It's best to exercise cautious optimism when starting any new business.*

cautiously optimistic Generally confident regarding a situation and/or its outcome while still maintaining a readiness for possible difficulties or failure. *I've prepared for this exam for weeks, so I'm feeling cautiously optimistic that it will turn out well. It's best to be cautiously optimistic when starting any new business.*

cave in **1.** verb To collapse into a hollow area below, as of a physical structure or formation. *We were able to get the kids out of the house before the roof caved in.* **2.** verb To collapse, faint, or die, as from over-exertion. *I hardly remember the end of the marathon because I caved in as soon as I crossed the finish line.* **3.** verb To submit, concede, or yield (to someone or something); to surrender or acknowledge defeat. *Under the threat of a strike, the management caved in and agreed to reinstate annual pay increases for all employees.* **4.** noun A collapse into a hollow area below, as of a physical structure or formation. When used as a noun, the phrase is usually hyphenated. *The fear of every miner is a cave-in.*

caveat lector Latin for "Let the reader beware." *Caveat lector! Read the contract so you don't sign anything you'll regret later!*

caviar to the general Something of an exceptionally high quality or intelligence not befitting or appreciated by those who consume, see, or partake in it. "General" here refers to the general population, not a military general. *I wrote several novels earlier in my career that were very well received by academics, but they were caviar to the general and never achieved popular success.*

cavil at (one) To complain to one about someone or something, especially in a way that one finds annoying. *If you hate your job so much, quit caviling at me about it and look for a new one!*

CB An abbreviation for "comment back," a common comment on popular social media posts that informs others that the commenter will like the first picture on someone's page if they like the first picture on the commenter's page. *Ever since I started writing "CB" on famous people's posts, my Instagram pictures have been getting way more comments!*

cease and desist To stop doing something. This phrase is typically associated with legal matters. *We received a letter ordering us to cease and desist due to copyright infringement, so we had to halt production.*

cease to be To die, expire, or no longer exist. (Used without a qualifying verb, noun, or adjective; otherwise, the cessation merely refers to said verb, noun, or adjective—e.g., "cease to be entertained.") *After the recession, many of the small businesses populating the mall simply ceased to be. Without her love, I feel that I would cease to be!*



cede (something) to (someone) To yield or give a tract of land to someone. *We were shocked to learn that grandma had ceded all of her land to us in her will.*

celebrate (one) for (something) To honor and acclaim one for a remarkable action or achievement. *We still celebrate Sir Alexander Fleming today for his discovery of penicillin.*

cement (something) on (something) To use glue or another strong adhesive substance to fasten two things together. *We need to cement this piece back on the vase before mom gets home and discovers it's broken!*

cement (something) together To use glue or another strong adhesive substance to fasten two or more things together. *We need to cement the handle together before mom gets home and discovers that the vase is broken!*

center around (someone or something) To focus on someone or something. *But it's Beth's surprise party, not yours, so all the decorations and games should center around her and her alone. This novel centers around the protagonist's journey to self-discovery.*

center field **1.** In baseball, the area of the field beyond second base and in the middle of the outfield. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *He hit the ball into center field—and right into the glove of the outfielder.* **2.** In baseball, the position of a player who occupies and defends the center of the field. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *My goal is to be fast enough to play center field next year.* **3.** A position between extremes or in line with what is generally accepted or understood. Often used with "left of" or "right of" (usually referring to political ideology) to indicate a more biased position. *The president has been accused by both political parties of wanting to stay in center field on the issue of tax reform. Once I heard John's liberal ideas, I knew his beliefs were left of center field.*

the center of attention The main focus of people's interest or attention. This phrase sometimes has a negative connotation when it refers to one who pursues or seems to crave attention. *My little sister always has to be the center of attention, so of course her drama overshadowed my birthday party. And in this corner of the room, a gorgeous, three-tiered cake will be the center of attention.*



center of attraction A person, place, or thing that attracts the most attention among others. *There were many movie stars at the premiere, but the leading lady was the center of attraction. Temple Bar is definitely the center of attraction in Dublin.*

center on (someone or something) 1. To focus on someone or something. A noun or pronoun can be used between "center" and "on." *But it's Beth's surprise party, not yours, so all the decorations and games should center on her and her alone. This novel centers on the protagonist's journey to self-discovery.* 2. To position something in the center of a space, usually a wall. A noun or pronoun can be used between "center" and "on." *That picture just isn't centered on the wall—tilt it a little more to the left.*

central dogma The core belief of a particular area of study. It is often used in molecular biology to describe the relationship between DNA, RNA, and proteins. *The central dogma of molecular biology is that DNA makes RNA, which makes protein.*

certain as death and taxes See [\(as\) certain as death and taxes](#).

certain party An intentionally vague term used to refer to someone without revealing their identity. *When I asked Carly how she knew about my new relationship, she just said that a certain party told her, but I'm going to need some specifics eventually! I planned to stop by your house tonight, but a certain party threw a tantrum when I tried to pry him away from his toys.*

certain sure Positive. Very sure. *I was certain sure I saw a dog out here, so where did he get to?*

c'est la vie Oh well. This French phrase, meaning "that's life," indicates resignation and acceptance of something that one dislikes but cannot change. *I know you're annoyed to have gotten another parking ticket, but c'est la vie. I had hoped to get home early enough to cook dinner, but that didn't happen, so we ordered pizza instead—c'est la vie.*

chafe at (something) To feel or express annoyance in response to something. *Bruce chafed at the idea that the new hire he was training made more money than him. You could tell he was chafing at the reporter's questions, but he still declined to comment.*

chafe at the bit To be impatient and/or eager for something to happen or over some delay. Used to liken someone to an overexcited horse straining

against its bit (the metal piece of the harness that fits between its jaws). *The crowd chafed at the bit to see the unveiling of the new building. I've chafed at the bit for an opportunity like this my entire life!*

chafing at the bit See [be chafing at the bit](#).

a chain is no stronger than its weakest link If one part of something is weak, it jeopardizes the integrity, quality, or effectiveness of the whole. *I need to make sure that everyone on our debate team is well-prepared, since a chain is no stronger than its weakest link. A chain is no stronger than its weakest link, and our security will not be effective if any of the checkpoints are not functioning.*

a chain is only as strong as its weakest link If one part of something is weak, it jeopardizes the integrity, quality, or effectiveness of the whole. *I need to make sure that everyone on our debate team is well-prepared, since a chain is only as strong as its weakest link.*

chain of command The hierarchy of people with authority in a particular setting or situation. *I know I can't complain to the CEO directly, but there must be someone in the chain of command that I can talk to!*

chain reaction A series of events wherein the outcome of each instance specifically influences or causes the next. The phrase comes from the occurrence of such reactions in chemistry and physics. *Deciding to take a course studying James Joyce in college set up a chain reaction that ultimately led me to move to Ireland. When one bookshelf fell, it caused a chain reaction that knocked over all the rest.*

chain smoker A person who smokes cigarettes continuously, such that they begin a new cigarette as (or almost as) soon as the last one is extinguished. *My grandmother died of emphysema after being a chain smoker for most of her adult life.*

chain (someone or something) to (something) To fasten or anchor something in place with chains. While this phrase is used literally in reference to objects, it can also be humorously or hyperbolically applied to people. *Chain your bike to the rack so that no one steals it while you're shopping. I'm going to chain you to your desk if you don't sit down and work on your book report!*

chain (something) down To fasten or anchor something in place with

chains. *Chain your bike down so that no one steals it while you're shopping.*

chain up **1.** To bind or otherwise restrict the movement of a person or animal with chains. A noun or pronoun can be used between "chain" and "up." *That poor dog is always chained up in the back yard. The guard chained the prisoner up before having him board the transport.* **2.** To securely close a room or building. A noun or pronoun can be used between "chain" and "up." *Be sure to chain up the office if you're the last one to leave today.*

chalk it up To link something that has happened to a particular reason or circumstance. *Don't get too down on yourselves after this loss, boys. Let's just chalk it up to inexperience and move on. Sure, getting a B in Algebra is disappointing, but I'm just going to chalk it up to the fact that I'm usually terrible at math!*

chalk off **1.** In sports, to disallow a goal due to a technical rule of the game. Primarily heard in UK. *Their last-minute goal would have won the match, but it was chalked off due to an offsides ruling by the referee.* **2.** To record, mark, or make note of something, especially as having been completed. *I always find it bittersweet to chalk off another birthday each year.* **3.** To delineate the border of something with chalk. *You always see the police chalk off bodies of murder victims in movies. I wonder if they do that in real life.*

chalk out **1.** To illustrate something, often a plan or concept, by literally drawing it in chalk. A noun or pronoun can be used between "chalk" and "out." *The architect quickly chalked out her vision for the addition to our house, to gauge our initial reactions to it.* **2.** To explain something to someone. A noun or pronoun can be used between "chalk" and "out." *I still don't understand your idea. Can you start over and chalk it all out for me?*

chalk (something or someone) off To presume, dismiss, or disregard someone or something as being a certain way. *I really liked his earlier music, but I've chalked him off as a total sellout in recent years. Most people chalked the film off as yet another brainless horror movie.*

chalk (something) up to experience To regard a bad situation, action, or outcome as a learning experience rather than dwelling on its negative impact. *I know you're upset about failing your exam, but just chalk it up to experience and try harder next time!*

chalk (something) up to (something) To attribute something to something else (which is stated after "to"). *They're a very young team, so we'll chalk this loss up to inexperience and nerves.*

chalk up 1. Literally, to write something in chalk, as on a chalkboard. A noun or pronoun can be used between "chalk" and "up." *Once I finish chalking up tonight's homework assignment, we can discuss last night's reading.* **2.** To earn something. A noun or pronoun can be used between "chalk" and "up." *After you chalk up enough frequent flier miles, you will be able to get plane tickets for free.* **3.** To add something to a tally. A noun or pronoun can be used between "chalk" and "up." *Hank just scored a basket, so chalk one up for him. Chalk up a few more states for the incumbent.* **4.** To attribute something to something else (which is stated after "to"). A noun or pronoun can be used between "chalk" and "up." *They're a very young team, so we'll chalk this loss up to inexperience and nerves.* **5.** To blame one for something. A noun or pronoun can be used between "chalk" and "up." *I had nothing to do with the prank, but I'm sure they'll chalk it up against me anyway.*

challenge (one) on (something) To question one, perhaps aggressively, on a particular issue, statement, or viewpoint. *I had to challenge him on that remark about sales because the budget report did not support it at all. That is a positively absurd statement, and I'm glad someone challenged her on it. Challenging someone on their political beliefs the first time you meet them is usually not the best idea.*

challenge (someone) to (something) To dare or provoke one to participate in something, such as a competition. *I ushered Bob out the door as soon as that obnoxious guy challenged him to a fight. Jenna is really good at basketball, so don't challenge her to a game unless you're OK with losing!*

challenge the status quo To behave or do something in a way contrary to that which is generally accepted or expected. *I love this filmmaker, his movies really challenge the status quo! It can be risky, but challenging the status quo can be a great way to get ahead in business.*

champ at the bit To be very eager or impatient to do something. The phrase alludes to an excited horse chewing on its "bit" (a metal mouthpiece). *The kids are champing at the bit to go to the park—can you take them? Now that my daughter is 16, she's champing at the bit to take the driver's test.*

champagne taste on a beer budget Expensive or extravagant tastes or preferences that are beyond one's economic means. *I only earn minimum wage, but I can't stop buying designer clothes and eating at the best restaurants—I guess I've got champagne taste on a beer budget!*

chance it To do something risky; to risk it. The person taking the action is usually aware of the inherent risk. *If I were you, I wouldn't chance it—that milk expired days ago! The forecast called for snow, but we decided to chance it and drive up to the cabin anyway.*

chance of a lifetime An extremely important and/or fortuitous opportunity, especially one that is not likely to ever present itself again. Often (but not always) used hyperbolically. *They offered me the chance of a lifetime to travel the world and write about my experiences abroad. Make sure you take advantage of our sale, it's a chance of a lifetime!*

chance on (someone or something) To find someone or something accidentally or without looking. *Please don't be upset, we didn't mean to exclude you! When Chad and I went out, we just chanced on the rest of the group, that's all! Were you snooping in my room? How else would you just chance on my love letter?*

chance (one's) arm slang To do something risky in pursuit of a desired outcome. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *I think he's chancing his arm by dumping his life savings into yet another bizarre money-making scheme.*

chance upon To randomly encounter. *We didn't mean to exclude you! When Chad and I went out, we just chanced upon the rest of the group, that's all.*

chance upon To find someone or something accidentally or without looking. *Please don't be upset, we didn't mean to exclude you! When Chad and I went out, we just chanced upon the rest of the group, that's all! Were you snooping in my room? How else would you just chance upon my love letter?*

chance upon (someone or something) To happen upon someone or something accidentally or coincidentally. *I chanced upon him in the library after work, and we got into a great conversation about Hemingway's works. I chanced upon a \$20 bill on my way to school this morning!*

chance would be a fine thing informal A phrase used in reference

to something that seems unlikely to happen. Primarily heard in UK. *Michael asking me to the dance? Oh sure, chance would be a fine thing!*

chances are It seems likely. (The likely event or occurrence is stated after "are.") *Chances are that my parents are throwing me a surprise party. Why else would they change the subject every time I mention my birthday? Bring an umbrella with you because chances are it's going to rain today.*

change back To revert to an earlier state or situation. A noun or pronoun can be used between "change" and "back." *I'm sorry, but I just hate this paint color. I think we need to change it back to the neutral shade it was before.*

change for the better 1. noun A change (as in, e.g., circumstance, disposition, a situation, etc.) that ultimately leads to or results in a more positive situation or outcome. *He has started drinking a lot less, which is definitely a change for the better. Moving overseas was a huge undertaking, but I feel like it was a change for the better in the end.* 2. verb To change in a way that ultimately leads to or results in a more positive situation or outcome. *Ever since her divorce, Mary has really changed for the better. The new prime minister is changing the country's foreign policy for the better.*

change hands To be acquired or bought by another person or group. *The company has changed hands several times but is still on the verge of bankruptcy. The famous painting has changed hands only once since it was first sold.*

change horses in midstream 1. To choose a new leader during a period of upheaval or uncertainty. *The prime minister has been at the helm throughout the crisis. I just don't think we should change horses in midstream.* 2. To make major changes to a situation or course of action that is already underway. *We're about to close on the house, and my husband suddenly wants to change horses in midstream and look at another property!*

a change in (one's) stripes A radical, fundamental shift in one's opinion, ideology, or allegiance, especially in relation to politics. Derived from the phrase "a tiger cannot change its stripes," meaning that people are incapable of changing their essential nature. *The former president has shown a change in stripes regarding social welfare since leaving office.*

change into (something) 1. To transform into something else, often a new form or state. *How long will take for the caterpillar to change into a butterfly? The more time I spent on my novel, the more I realized that my*

scathing critique of modern society had changed into a love story. 2. To transform or alter someone or something into a new form or state. In this usage, a noun or pronoun is used between "change" and "into." My son ran screaming when the magician offered to change him into a frog. 3. To dress oneself in different clothes. As soon as I get home from work, I want to change into comfy clothes immediately.

a change is as good as a rest A change in one's work can be as beneficial and revitalizing as taking a break. Primarily heard in US. *I'm hoping that starting on this new career path will help me to find joy in my work again—after all, a change is as good as a rest.*

a change of heart A change in one's opinion or feelings on a matter. *She was going to take that job offer in California, but after thinking about how much she would miss her friends and family in Delaware, she had a change of heart.*

a change of pace A variation in routine or activity. *After working in sales for so long, John needed a change of pace, so he requested a transfer to the service department. I'm tired of takeout. How about we cook dinner for a change of pace?*

a change of scenery A change in one's usual surroundings, perhaps precipitating a change in one's life. It is most often used when one is moving to a new place. *I decided to move across the country for college because I really wanted a change of scenery after growing up in this small town. Heather's looking for a new job because, after 10 years at that company, she needs a change of scenery.*

a change of tack A change or reverse in one's position, opinion, or course of action. Likened to the act of tacking in a sailboat, in which the boat is brought into the wind so as to change direction. *Following low approval ratings, the president had a change of tack regarding his immigration policy. Our sales are doing very poorly; we need a change of tack if we're going to survive the year.*

change off **1.** To alternate with another person while working on a task. *When doing manual labor, it always helps to change off with another person and take a rest. 2.* To alternate between two tasks. *Because I was the only one available to work on the mailing, I had to change off between folding letters and stuffing envelopes.*

change (one's) mind **1.** To change one's original opinion, choice, or plan. *Politicians get criticized for flip-flopping, but I think we should value the ability to change one's mind on an issue. I guess he changed his mind and decided to go to the beach instead.* **2.** To persuade or cause one to change one's original opinion, choice, or plan. *I never liked mushrooms before, but you really changed my mind with this dish. He's set on buying that car. Don't bother trying to change his mind.*

change (one's) stripes To radically or fundamentally shift one's opinion, ideology, or allegiance, especially in relation to politics. Derived from the phrase "a tiger cannot change its stripes," meaning that people are incapable of changing their essential nature. *The former president has changed her stripes regarding social welfare since leaving office.*

change (one's) tune To change one's attitude, opinion, manner, or stance on something, typically in a way that is more positive or agreeable. *The mention of a hefty tip really changed the host's tune, so I think he'll be able to find us a table after all. After I threatened him with no allowance, my son changed his tune and started doing his chores.*

change (one's) ways To start behaving in a different, usually preferable, way. *After I got in yet another fight at school, the headmaster told me that I had to change my ways or else I'd be expelled. No matter how old you are, there is still time to change your ways.*

change out of (something) To remove an item of clothing in order to put on a different one. *The minute I get home, all I want to do is to change out of my work clothes. Change out of your wet bathing suit and put on something suitable for dinner.*

change over To change something drastically or completely; to convert something to a different form or method. A noun or pronoun can be used between "change" and "over." *We have to have hors d'oeuvres out here because they're changing the room over for the reception. How much do you think it will cost to change over our heating system?*

change places To switch to the spot, role, or position that another person currently is in. *I want to talk to the people at the other end of the table. Would you mind changing places? Many people say that they would gladly change places with a celebrity, but I doubt they would enjoy the constant attention.*

change places with (one) To switch to the spot, role, or position that another person currently is in. *I changed places with my aunt so that I could talk to the people at the other end of the table. Many people say that they would gladly change places with a celebrity, but I doubt they would enjoy the constant attention.*

change sides To switch one's loyalties. *My aunt is determined to bring me over to her political party, ignoring the fact that I am not remotely interested in changing sides! You can't get me to change sides! I'm a fan of the Yankees through and through!*

change (someone's) mind To convince someone to think differently about something. *You can try all you want, but you're not changing my mind about going to that party! I need to change my teacher's mind about me. I swear I'm not a slacker, but that's what she thinks!*

change (something) with (someone) To swap or exchange something with someone. *I changed places with my aunt so that I could talk to the people at the other end of the table. I recently changed roles with Tina at the office, and it's actually working out really well.*

change tack To employ a different method or approach in addressing a particular situation. *They have not been receptive to our offers thus far, so we need to change tack. If diplomacy doesn't resolve this conflict, we will need to change tack and try a more aggressive approach.*

change the channel **1.** Literally, to switch from one television station (or "channel") to another. *Never change the channel during the game! We might miss something! I'm not really paying attention to that show, so feel free to change the channel.* **2.** slang To introduce a different topic of discussion, usually intentionally. *I changed the channel after that last remark made Jeff and Bill visibly tense.*

change the subject To introduce a different topic of discussion, usually intentionally. *I changed the subject after that last remark made Jeff and Bill visibly tense. Don't try to change the subject—I know one of you kids dented my car!*

change to **1.** To convert something to a different form or method. A noun or pronoun can be used between "change" and "to." *How much do you think it will cost to change our heating system to gas?* **2.** To switch to something. *I've*

saved a lot of money since changing to generic.

change with the times To modify or update one's behavior or beliefs to reflect what is current. *Of course grandpa doesn't have a cell phone—he never wants to change with the times. That senator needs to change with the times and stop saying things that are wildly inappropriate in today's world.*

channel (something) in(to) (something) **1.** To force something, usually a liquid, to travel into something through a channel. *We had to channel water in from the river after our pipes burst.* **2.** To allocate or give resources, such as money or time, to a particular venture or goal. *How much money do you think the company would be willing to channel into this initiative?* **3.** To direct or release something, often energy or an emotion, into something else. *With all the red paint, I'm not surprised to hear that the artist channeled a lot of anger into this piece. You need to channel your frustration into something positive. Come on a run with me.*

channel (something) off **1.** To remove or redirect something, usually a liquid, through a channel. *You move things to higher ground while I try to channel some of this water off.* **2.** To squander resources, such as money or time. *Look, the company won't give us any more money for this initiative if those guys keep channeling it off.*

channel surf To frequently change channels when watching television, especially for an extended period of time. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *After a long week of work, I like to just sit on the sofa and channel surf for a few hours.*

channel surfing The frequent changing of channels when watching television, especially for an extended period of time. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *I hate channel surfing. I can't understand why people don't just pick a program and watch it!*

chapter and verse See [give chapter and verse](#).

chapter and verse In thorough and exact detail. Likened to the ability to quote a passage of scripture by citing the exact chapter and verse where it appears. *If you need to be updated on the case, ask Stan—he can cite it chapter and verse. I know the manual chapter and verse. Which part are you looking for?*

character assassination A deliberate attempt to destroy the

reputation of a public figure by releasing, revealing, or creating defamatory or damaging information about them. *The so-called expose on the senator is character assassination, pure and simple. Releasing those decades-old photos this late in the campaign amounts to character assassination—and it will probably work.*

charge **1.** verb To replenish a battery by connecting it to an electrical source. *I have to charge my phone because the battery just died. When my car wouldn't start this morning, I had to call a service to help me charge the battery.* **2.** noun Control or authority over someone or something. To convey this meaning, the phrase "in charge" is typically used. *With this promotion, you will be in charge of the entire department. You need to take charge of this situation before it gets out of control.* **3.** noun Strong feelings of excitement. *I get such a charge from singing on stage that I doubt I'll be able to sleep tonight!* **4.** noun A drug-induced high. *Be careful taking that stuff—I got too much of a charge from it last time.* **5.** noun A dose or portion of a drug. *I just need a little charge—isn't there anything you can give me, man?*

charge at (someone or something) To aggressively rush toward someone or something, as to attack. *The crowd gasped as the bull charged at the matador. When that obnoxious guy charged at me, I ducked, and he ended up punching the wall.*

charge down **1.** Of an electronic device, to lose or run out of power. *My phone charged down during the flight, so I couldn't call my brother to let him know when I arrived.* **2.** In sports (especially rugby), to stop the forward progression of the ball with one's body. *Their hopes for a late-game upset were foiled when they had their last-minute penalty kick charged down by the home team's star player.* **3.** noun (hyphenated) In sports (especially rugby), the stoppage of forward progression of the ball with one's body. Also seen as "chargedown." *A charge-down of their last-minute penalty kick foiled any hope they had for a late-game upset.*

charge down on (someone or something) To move quickly, and perhaps aggressively, toward someone or something. *The crowd gasped as the bull charged down on the matador. With the way that driver is charging down on the lead car, I think he's going to win this race!*

charge in(to) To rush quickly and perhaps haphazardly into a room, building, or other space. *As soon as the kids finished the outdoor activities,*

they came charging into the house for birthday cake and presents. Everyone, please walk calmly inside once the doors open—don't just charge in.

charge it to the dust and let the rain settle it A humorous response when one is not likely to pay for something. A: *"By my calculations, you still owe me three dollars from our last trip to the movies."* B: *"Oh, just charge it to the dust and let the rain settle it!"*

charge off **1.** To move hastily from a particular place or thing. *We charged off when we heard the sirens approaching. After a few minutes of painting, the kids charged off to the next activity station at the birthday party.*

2. To pay for something from a specific account or category of funds. In this usage, a noun or pronoun is often used between "charge" and "off." *When you're traveling, just charge everything off your company account.* A: *"Will I get reimbursed if I charge this plane ticket off my personal bank account?"* B: *"You can just charge it off petty cash."* **3.** To attribute something to something else (which is stated after "to"). *They're a very young team, so we'll charge off this loss to inexperience and nerves.*

charge (one) with (something) **1.** To officially accuse one of a crime. *They finally caught Capone by charging him with tax evasion.* **2.** To assign one a particular task. *Don't worry, I charged my top aide with that assignment, so we should have an update soon.*

charge out To move hastily from a particular place; to rush out. *We charged out when we heard the sirens approaching.*

charge (something) against (something) To pay for something from a specific account or category of funds. *When you're traveling, just charge everything against your company account.* A: *"Will I get reimbursed if I charge this plane ticket against my personal bank account?"* B: *"Just charge it against petty cash instead."*

charge (something) for (something) To establish a set price for something (such as an item purchased or a service rendered). *How much are airlines charging for tickets these days? I can't believe a psychiatrist can charge \$250 just for a consultation!*

charge (something) off as (something) To categorize an expense in a particular way, often so that it can be deducted from one's taxes. *Don't worry about how much that new desk chair costs, because we can just charge it off as a work expense.*

charge (something) on (something) 1. To pay for something with a credit card. *When you're traveling, just charge everything on your company credit card.* 2. To increase the amount of money that someone or something owes, as when one is delinquent in paying the original bill. *That bill is certainly past due, so charge a late fee on it.*

charge (something) (up) to (something) To pay for something from a specific account or category of funds. *When you're traveling, just charge everything up to your company account.* A: "Will I get reimbursed if I charge this plane ticket to my personal card?" B: "Just charge it to petty cash instead."

charge up To excite or rouse. A noun or pronoun can be used between "charge" and "up." *The loud music charged the fans up during the time-out in the game. Once you see how charged up she gets when she talks about art, I think you'll agree that it is truly her passion.*

charged up 1. Literally, having a full battery. *Let's take a picture with your phone—mine isn't charged up yet.* 2. Excited and exuberant. *The loud music kept the fans charged up during the time-out in the game.* 3. Intoxicated, especially with drugs. *That guy is acting so erratically that he must be charged up—did you guys see him take anything?*

charity begins at home One should help family and close friends before helping others. *When are you going to get your dear sister a job at your company? Remember, charity begins at home! She seems to have forgotten that charity begins at home—she has no problem volunteering at the church but rarely visits her own mother.*

charity mugger Someone who approaches people to collect donations or set up standing orders for a charity. *The charity muggers in this town are so tenacious, and they make you feel like a horrible person if you don't contribute something!*

charley horse A painful muscle spasm that most commonly occurs in the legs. *Spending all day on my feet caused a charley horse in my leg that was so painful, I had to sit down for a while and rest.*

charm (someone) with (something) To enthrall and interest someone with something. *During my visit this weekend, the school tried to charm me with activities and future internship opportunities, but I'm still just*

not interested in going there. She's no fool, so you'll have a hard time charming her with money alone.

charm the pants off (one) To please and entice one, often in an attempt to yield a desired result. *The school really tried to charm the pants off me during my visit this weekend, but I'm still not interested in going there.*

charmed existence A life characterized or seemingly protected by marked good fortune or luck, without (or rarely) encountering trouble, danger, or misfortune. Often preceded by the verbs "lead," "live," or "have." *Celebrities seem to have a rather charmed existence, with everything handed to them on a silver platter. Other than minor colds, I've never been ill in my life. I guess I've just led a charmed existence.*

charmed life A life characterized or seemingly protected by marked good fortune or luck, without (or rarely) encountering trouble, danger, or misfortune. Often preceded by the verbs "lead," "live," or "have." *Celebrities seem to have a rather charmed life, with everything handed to them on a silver platter. Other than minor colds, I've never been ill in my life. I guess I've just led a charmed life.*

chart out To establish a plan, method, or course for something. *After Rose's surgery, the doctor will chart out a treatment plan for her ongoing physical therapy. Mom and dad are still charting out a course for our road trip.*

chase after 1. To pursue someone or something intently and tenaciously. *I've always wanted to be a doctor; I've been chasing after that dream my whole life. The security guards chased after the thief for nearly a mile. 2. To pursue or court someone romantically or sexually. *Mary has been chasing after Joe ever since she developed a crush on him in high school. My brother always spends his weekends chasing after girls in bars around town.**

chase around after (someone or something) To seek someone or something in a variety of places. *I chased around after Bill all day but never found him—apparently, he was out sick. I went to five different hardware stores, chasing around after that part for the heater, but I still wasn't able to find it.*

chase away To drive something or someone away from a place or from oneself, either literally or figuratively. *After John left the front door open, a stray dog came in and I had to chase it away! People always try to chase*

away sad thoughts, but I think it's important to face them head-on.

chase down **1.** To search for and find someone or something. A noun or pronoun can be used between "chase" and "down." *After an hour, the police were finally able to chase the criminal down. I went to five different hardware stores to chase down that part for the heater.* **2.** To drink two things in quick succession. A noun or pronoun can be used between "chase" and "down." *Here, you'll need this to chase that shot down. It helps if you let them chase down the medicine with apple juice.*

chase off To drive something or someone away from a place or from oneself. *After John left the front door open, a stray dog came in and I had to chase it off!*

chase (one's) tail To take action that is ineffectual and does not lead to progress. Refers to how a dog can exhaust itself by chasing its own tail. *Come on, Bill, go to sleep. You're just chasing your tail at this point, but you might have a breakthrough with the research if you take a break from it. I'm trying not to chase my tail on this project, but so many components of it are just not working out.*

chase rainbows To constantly pursue things that are unrealistic or unlikely to happen. *You can't chase rainbows your whole life—you need to pick a stable career and start being an adult.*

chase (someone or something) around To chase someone or something in what becomes a circuitous pursuit. *I can't chase the dog around all morning, I have to get to work! After chasing the criminal around for an hour, the police were finally able to catch him.*

chase (someone or something) (away) from some place To send or force someone or something away from some place. *The threat of bedbugs chased everyone away from the hotel. Unfortunately, our dog can't rest until he has chased all birds from our yard.*

chase (someone or something) in(to) (some place) To steer or guide someone or something into a particular place. *The dog chased the sheep back into their pen.*

chase tail slang To pursue or seek out sexual activity with someone. (Usually used by men to refer to women.) *My brother always spends his weekends chasing tail in bars around town.*

chase the dragon slang To smoke a controlled substance, often heroin. *I can't chase the dragon anymore—I'm trying to get away from that stuff.*

chase up **1.** To look for someone or something in a variety of places. *I went to five different hardware stores and was finally able to chase up that part for the heater.* **2.** To pursue someone or something (often an animal) and cause it to run up something (such as a tree). A noun or pronoun can be used between "chase" and "up." *I had to call for help when my dog chased the neighbor's cat up a tree.*

chasing rainbows Constantly pursuing things that are unrealistic or unlikely to happen. *You can't always be chasing rainbows your whole life—you need to pick a stable career and start being an adult.*

chat about (someone or something) To talk about something, often casually or informally. *Oh, you're not interrupting, we're just chatting about our kids—come on in! Do you have a minute to chat about this issue in the code?*

chat (someone) up **1.** To engage someone in lighthearted banter or casual conversation. *I love chatting up tourists visiting our city, it gives you such diverse and interesting perspectives!* **2.** To engage in flirtatious conversation with someone, usually in pursuit of romantic or sexual purposes. *I was chatting up this cute guy at the bar last night and managed to get his phone number! I hate when people chat me up in bars. I just want to have a nice time out with my friends!*

chatbot A computer program that is able to interact with users and simulate human conversation. *Is there any way for me to talk to an actual human, instead of a chatbot?*

chatter about (someone or something) To talk idly, incessantly, or excitedly about someone or something. *Why are all of these people suddenly chattering about me? Well, he's still chattering about how wonderful this program is, but I stopped listening a while ago.*

chatter away **1.** (of a person) To talk idly or incessantly. *Now that she can talk, my little girl will just chatter away all day long. Well, he's still chattering away, but I stopped listening a while ago.* **2.** (of an animal) To make a series of noises. *The chipmunk started chattering away as I got closer to it.*

chatter from (something) Of teeth, to touch together noisily, usually because one's whole body is shivering in the cold. *My teeth were chattering from what seemed like Arctic winds.*

che sara sara See [que sera sera](#).

cheap and cheerful slang Inexpensive and enjoyable or pleasant. Primarily heard in UK. *That shop sells a lot of cheap and cheerful goodies, so I'm sure you'll be able to find a birthday gift for her there.*

cheap and nasty Inexpensive and poorly constructed. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *Don't buy anything from that shop unless you're OK with it breaking—everything they sell is cheap and nasty.*

cheap-arse Tuesday The day of the week in Australia when many goods and services are offered at lower prices or as part of discounted deals. Primarily heard in Australia. *When I was studying in university, cheap-arse Tuesday was my favorite day of the week!*

cheap at half the price 1. Remarkably or exceedingly inexpensive. The phrase's origin in this usage has been debated; it is possibly a corruption of "cheap at twice the price," meaning the same. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *I got a brand new three-piece suit for £50—cheap at half the price!* 2. Quite expensive; poor value for the money. In this usage, it is likely a humorous play on the phrase "cheap at twice the price," meaning remarkably inexpensive. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. A: "Wow, I'd love to own that car." B: "Sure, so would I. Cheap at half the price, though!"

cheap at twice the price Remarkably or exceedingly inexpensive (as in, even if you doubled the price, it would still be a good value). Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *I got a brand new three-piece suit for 50 bucks—cheap at twice the price!*

cheap Charlie A derogatory term for a miserly or parsimonious person. Used largely in countries of Southeast Asia, it likely originated in Vietnam during the Vietnam War to refer to American GIs (who called soldiers of the Viet Cong "Charlie") unwilling to spend extravagantly at bars, restaurants, or for prostitutes. *Buy us a round of drinks, don't be a cheap Charlie!*

cheap shot 1. A physical blow struck against someone who is unready or unprepared. If often applies to sports in which physical contact is involved. *Duane just sucker-punched Jimbo. What a cheap shot! The boxer took a*

cheap shot against his opponent before the round started, and the referee halted the match. 2. A mean or unfair criticism. I didn't appreciate that cheap shot you took at me at the party. You made me look foolish in front of our friends.

cheaper by the dozen **1.** Costing less money if purchased in large quantities (not necessarily a dozen). *Avocados are quite expensive at most supermarkets, but one down the street has a good deal for a bag of 12—cheaper by the dozen, I suppose! 2.* Requiring less effort or accomplished more efficiently if handled by a larger group of people. *This will be cheaper by the dozen if we all help, so let's pitch in and get this cleaned up!*

cheat at (something) To act deceptively or unfairly while completing a task or participating in a competition. *My little brother cheats at every board game, so it's not much fun to play with him.*

cheat on (someone or something) **1.** To act deceptively or unfairly while completing a task or participating in a competition. *I can't believe that Katie cheated on the test—I always thought she was an honest person. 2.* To be unfaithful to one's romantic partner. *Well, I heard that Jane cheated on Rob, and that's really why they're getting divorced.*

cheat (one) out of (something) To steal or deny one one's due property by swindling. *That dishonest real estate broker cheated us out of millions.*

cheat sheet **1.** A piece of paper or other document containing information about or the solutions to questions of a test or exam, which may be used for cheating, studying, or by someone grading said exam. *Jim was caught using a cheat sheet during his test and failed the course as a result. My friend gave me a great cheat sheet to use while studying for my final exam. 2.* Any document on which complex or difficult information is summarized so as to allow for easy reference and/or understanding. *I made a cheat sheet of everyday Japanese phrases so I would know how to say at least a few things while in Tokyo next week!*

cheat the worms To avoid death, especially after having a serious illness. Refers to the worms often found near a decaying body. *A: "I heard that Ellen cheated the worms! Is that true? Last I saw her, she was so sick." B: "Oh, yeah! She's doing great now!" I hope I can cheat the worms and make a full recovery—but I feel so sick right now.*

cheaters never prosper People who use dishonest means will not find true success. Primarily heard in US. *I'm not too worried about Eric getting ahead of me in the class rankings. I know he cheated on his last test, and cheaters never prosper! I would never have an affair because I know that cheaters never prosper!*

cheats never prosper People who use dishonest means will not find true success. *I'm not too worried about Eric getting ahead of me in the class rankings. I know he cheated on his last test, and cheats never prosper!*

check back To ask about someone or something again later; follow up. *I don't have an update on that shipment right now, but check back later.*

check back with (one) To ask one about someone or something again later; follow up with one. *I don't have an update on that shipment right now, but check back with me later.*

check in 1. To officially confirm one's arrival at a certain place where one is expected, such as a hotel. *I'll go check in at the front desk and get our room key. Tara is checking in for the exam at the registration table.* **2.** To officially record someone's or something's arrival at a certain place. In this usage, a noun can be used between "check" and "in." *Sir, I can check you in over here. We need to check in all these students before they're given the test materials. The librarian already checked those books in.* **3.** To communicate with someone at a certain interval in time so as to provide or ask about an update in status or otherwise simply talk. *Hi mom, I'm just checking in to see if you're feeling any better. Has anyone checked in with the publisher? When will the next issue be finished? Hey, check in with your mother once in a while when you're away at college, will you?* **4.** To die. *That rickety old car will definitely check in before you make it to the mechanic.*

check in on (someone or something) To actively monitor the security or safety of a person or thing. *Before I meet you at the mall, I need to check in on my grandmother to make sure she's feeling OK.*

check into 1. To officially confirm one's arrival at a certain place where one is expected, such as a hotel. *I'll check into the hotel and get our room key. Where do we check into the conference?* **2.** To voluntarily seek medical care at the hospital (as opposed to being rushed there by ambulance). In this usage, a reflexive pronoun is used between "check" and "into." *I'm glad I checked myself into the hospital because the pain turned out to be*

appendicitis! **3.** To officially record someone's or something's arrival at a certain place. In this usage, a noun or pronoun can be used between "check" and "into." *Sir, I can check you into the hotel over here. Can you check these books into the system?* **4.** To investigate something. *Please check into these discrepancies in the budget, and let me know what you find out.*

the check is in the mail Payment (whether or not in the form of a check) is en route or will be sent shortly. Often used as an excuse to avoid the pressure of creditors or someone expecting payment. Primarily heard in US. *A: "Mr. Smith, your mortgage payment is now two months overdue." B: "The check's in the mail, I promise you!" A: "Can you lend me \$40 until I get paid next week?" B: "Sure thing, the check's in the mail."*

check off To mark someone or something as present, verified, or completed, as on a list. A noun or pronoun can be used between "check" and "off." *Checking things off my to-do list is so satisfying. Please check off each step as you do it. Don't worry, I checked you off when I took attendance.*

check on (someone or something) To check the status, condition, or wellbeing of someone or something through an inspection or visit. *We need to check on grandma and see how she is coping with all this snow. I just checked on the baby, and he's still sleeping. Can you check on the dryer and tell me if it's still running?*

check (one's) bags through (to) (some place) To request that one's luggage be sent to one's final destination, as when traveling through multiple cities or via different modes of transportation. *I don't have any luggage with me because I checked my bags through to Rome. Just check your bags through, and then you don't have to worry about keeping track of them at every stop.*

check out **1.** verb To confirm that one has vacated one's hotel room (and pay the bill). *We have to check out in an hour, so you guys seriously need to start packing!* **2.** verb To investigate, inspect, or look at something of interest. In this usage, a noun or pronoun is commonly used between "check" and "out." *We checked out that house on the corner, but the price was too high considering all the work it needs. Wow, check this out—someone in the next town over won the lottery last week! Check out George over there. That dude knows how to dress!* **3.** verb To be verified as true, accurate, or meeting a certain standard. *Surprisingly, her story checks out—she really was at the*

library until midnight last night. **4.** verb To become unfocused or distracted; to cease participating in a meaningful way. *Well, he's still blabbing away, but I couldn't tell you what he's talking about now—I checked out a while ago. I know Jim is retiring at the end of June, but he's already checked out if you ask me.* **5.** verb To complete a purchase by providing payment at the final point of sale, as in a retail store. *I'm checking out right now, so I'll be out to the car in a minute. I'm about to check out—is there anything else you needed from the store?* **6.** verb To tally one's purchases and take payment for them. In this usage, a noun or pronoun is commonly used between "check" and "out." *The cashier is checking me out right now, so I'll be out to the car in a minute. Please check out these customers while I see if we have any more of those items in the back.* **7.** verb To complete the necessary steps so that one can borrow something from a system, such as a library. In this usage, a noun or pronoun is commonly used between "check" and "out." *What books did you check out from the library this week? Can I check these books out, or are they reference only?* **8.** verb, slang To look with interest at someone who one finds attractive. In this usage, a noun or pronoun is commonly used between "check" and "out." *That cute guy over there is totally checking you out!* **9.** verb, slang To die. *Doctor, I'm not ready to check out yet, so I'm willing to try your most aggressive approach.* **10.** noun The time at which one must vacate one's hotel room. When used as a noun, the phrase is often written as one word. *Checkout is at 11 AM, so you guys need to start packing now!* **11.** noun The area of a store at which purchases are made. When used as a noun, the phrase is often written as one word. *I'm at the checkout right now, so I hope there isn't anything else you need from the store.*

check out the plumbing euphemism To urinate or defecate; to go the bathroom. *I'll be right back—I just have to check out the plumbing.*

check over To examine or assess someone or something. A noun or pronoun can be used between "check" and "over." *Don't move until the paramedics check you over. While the students were busy taking the test, I checked over their homework.*

check that slang Disregard that. *Wait, check that—I just found Phil's current phone number.*

check through **1.** To inspect or examine one or more things. *Check through the fridge and tell me if we have any of the ingredients for this recipe. I checked through the entire file but I didn't see that document in*

there. **2.** To grant one entrance to a particular place, area, or event after verifying one's credentials (such as an admission ticket or official paperwork). In this usage, a noun or pronoun is used between "check" and "through." *We have tickets to the show right here, so why can't you just check us through?* **3.** To request that one's luggage be sent to one's final destination, as when traveling through multiple cities or via different modes of transportation. In this usage, a noun or pronoun is used between "check" and "through." *I don't have any luggage with me because I checked my bags through to Rome.* **4.** To allow to travel through multiple cities without requiring one to show one's ticket at each stop. In this usage, a noun or pronoun is used between "check" and "through." *You don't need to be in this line, ma'am, since you've already been checked through.*

check up **1.** verb To check the status, condition, or wellbeing of someone or something through an inspection or visit. *We need to check up on grandma and see how she is coping with all this snow. I just checked up on the baby, and he's still sleeping. Can you check up on the dryer and tell me if it's still running?* **2.** noun A visit to a doctor for an examination, often as part of routine monitoring (rather than for an acute condition or reason). In this usage, the phrase is often hyphenated. *Oh, it's just my yearly check-up, nothing to worry about.*

check up on (someone or something) **1.** To check the status, condition, or wellbeing of someone or something through an inspection or visit. *We need to check up on grandma and see how she is coping with all this snow. I just checked up on the baby, and he's still sleeping. Can you check up on the dryer and tell me if it's still running?* **2.** To monitor what one is doing, especially when such attention is unwelcome or irritating to the one being monitored. *Well, this work would go a lot faster if you quit checking up on me every five minutes!*

check with (someone or something) **1.** To consult or confer with someone about something. *I'm the lead person on this campaign, so please check with me before making any big decisions. Check with Harold if you have any questions about this case.* **2.** To match or agree with something. *Run this test again and see if the results check with the ones from yesterday.*

check, please **1.** A literal request for the check at a restaurant so that one can pay and leave. *We have to leave soon if we're going to make this train—check, please!* **2.** By extension, a humorous phrase said when one is acting as

if they want to leave a particular place or situation. Often used immediately after something outrageous has been said. A: "And that's how you can tell the Earth is flat." B: "Yikes. Check, please."

checkered career A history of employment characterized by many different kinds of jobs or by many alternating periods of success and failure. *I had a checkered career after high school, taking any kind of work that I could find. I don't know if I would trust your finances to him, he's had a rather checkered career from what I've heard.*

checks and balances Rules within a power structure that keep one person or section from becoming excessively powerful. *The founders created three separate branches of government to act as a system of checks and balances.*

cheek by jowl Positioned very close together. (The cheek and the jowl—the lower part of the jaw—are in close proximity to each other on the face.) *You couldn't fit a piece of paper in the storage room now—all those boxes are stacked in there cheek by jowl.*

cheeky monkey A silly, impudent, or mischievous person. Usually said as a mild, playful rebuke. *You ate all the cookies, you cheeky monkey!*

cheer for (someone or something) To vocally support or encourage someone or something. *Who are you cheering for in this match? The whole town came out to cheer for the high school football team in the championship game.*

cheer on To support or encourage someone or something, often vocally. A noun or pronoun can be used between "cheer" and "on." *I'm your mother—I'm going to cheer you on in anything you do! The whole town came out to cheer on the high school football team in the championship game.*

cheer (one) to the echo informal To vocally support or encourage someone or something. Primarily heard in UK. *The fans really cheered us to the echo in the championship game.*

cheer up **1.** An imperative to improve one's mood, especially when sad or discouraged. *Come on, the project was not a total failure—cheer up! Cheer up, honey—tomorrow's another day.* **2.** verb To induce one to become happier, especially when one is sad or discouraged. In this usage, a noun or pronoun can be used between "cheer" and "up." *I don't know how to cheer*

Paul up—he's been completely miserable since he found out he didn't get that job. Grandpa could always cheer up Sarah when she was sad about something.

cheese and kisses Wife. ("Cheese and kisses" rhymes with "missus.") Primarily heard in Australia. A: *"Where are you two going on your trip?"* B: *"Oh, the cheese and kisses and I will be off on an island getaway!"*

cheese it slang imperative Run; hide; get out of here; stop what one's doing. *Cheese it, someone called the cops!*

cheese off To anger or irritate someone. A noun or pronoun can be used between "cheese" and "off." *I don't think I said anything to cheese him off, so I'm not sure why he's so mad.*

cheesed off Angry or irritated. *I barely spoke to him all night, so I don't know why he's cheesed off.*

chef d'oeuvre A masterpiece. *When the sculpture was finally complete, the artist declared it his greatest chef d'oeuvre.*

chemical imbalance A euphemistic (and possibly derogatory) insinuation of a mental illness or disorder. *I think I might have a chemical imbalance or something, I've just not been myself lately. What's wrong with you, do you have some kind of chemical imbalance or something?*

chemically imbalanced A euphemistic (and possibly derogatory) insinuation of being mentally ill. *I think I might be a bit chemically imbalanced, I've just not been myself lately. What's wrong with you, are you chemically imbalanced or something?*

cheque is in the mail Payment (whether or not in the form of a cheque) is en route or will be sent shortly. Often used as an excuse to avoid the pressure of creditors or someone expecting payment for goods or services. Primarily heard in UK, Canada. A: *"Mr. Smith, your mortgage payment is now two months overdue."* B: *"The cheque's in the mail, I promise you!"* A: *"Can you lend me \$40 until I get paid next week?"* B: *"Sure thing, the cheque's in the mail."*

cherry on top The flourish that caps something off (much like a cherry tops off an ice cream sundae). Sometimes used in the phrase "pretty please with a cherry on top." *Today, I failed a test and lost out on the lead in the school play, but do you know what was the cherry on top? I got a ticket on*

my way home! Can you help me with this project? Please, pretty please with a cherry on top?

cherry-pick 1. To choose something very carefully to ensure that the best option is chosen, perhaps through means that provide one an unfair advantage or from a selection that others do not have ready access to. *I can't believe he left the company and then cherry-picked the best employee in my department! Yes, you will get to cherry-pick all the equipment that goes into your studio.*

2. slang In sports such as basketball and soccer (football), to position oneself away from the current play on one's opponent's defensive end for an opportunity to receive the ball and score an easy basket or goal. *We might not have gotten scored on if you had actually been playing defense instead of cherry-picking!*

chesterfield rugby slang A euphemism for sexual or other amorous activity, as may be done on a couch or sofa (a "chesterfield" being a Canadian term for such). Primarily heard in Canada. *Many parents are worried that teens are starting to play chesterfield rugby at far too early an age these days.*

chew away To erode something, often completely. A noun or pronoun can be used between "chew" and "away." *Termites have chewed away this whole section of the roof!*

chew (away) at (something) To chew on something repeatedly or for a length of time. *The baby has been completely miserable lately, except for when he's chewing away at a teething ring.*

chew it finer To put into simpler terms. The phrase likely originated with American cowboys. *Can you chew it finer? I don't understand that convoluted explanation you just gave. I always make sure to chew it finer when I have to explain mathematical concepts to people not in the field.*

chew off To separate something from something else by biting or gnawing. A noun or pronoun can be used between "chew" and "off." *Our new puppy is lucky he's so adorable, because he's already chewed the leg off our nightstand.*

chew on (something) 1. Literally, to bite or gnaw on something. *The baby has been completely miserable lately, except for when he's chewing on a teething ring. 2.* To contemplate something. *I've been chewing on this job offer for days, but I still haven't made a decision.*

chew on the scenery To be exaggeratedly or flamboyantly melodramatic or overly emotional while acting a role, as for television, theater, or film. *I hated working with him on that play—every night he'd go out and chew on the scenery so much that he was the only one the audience noticed! I love watching hammy actors chew on the scenery in bad movies.*

chew (one) out slang To scold or address one harshly or angrily. *The boss is totally going to chew us out if he hears that we lost that big client.*

chew (one's) ass (out) rude slang To scold or address one harshly or angrily. *The boss is totally going to chew our asses out if he hears that we lost that big client.*

chew (one's) own tobacco To focus on one's own life, rather than someone else's; to mind one's own business. *Why are you worried about what other people are doing? Just chew your own tobacco.*

chew over **1.** To discuss something at length. A noun or pronoun can be used between "chew" and "over." *I've chewed the job offer over with many people, but I still haven't decided what to do.* **2.** To contemplate something. A noun or pronoun can be used between "chew" and "over." *I've been chewing over this job offer for days, but I still haven't decided what to do.* **3.** To scold or address one harshly or angrily. A noun or pronoun can be used between "chew" and "over." *The boss is totally going to chew us over if he hears that we lost that big client.*

chew the fat To discuss, chat, converse, etc., especially at length and in a leisurely, friendly manner. *My sister and I haven't seen each other in nearly five years, so we stayed up half the night and chewing the fat. Come into my office and chew the fat with me a little bit, David. I want to know how things are going with you.*

chew the rag To discuss, chat, converse, etc., especially at length and in a leisurely, friendly manner. *My sister and I haven't seen each other in nearly five years, so we stayed up half the night drinking wine and chewing the rag. Come into my office and chew the rag with me a little bit, David. I want to know how things are going with you.*

chew the scenery To be exaggeratedly or flamboyantly melodramatic or overly emotional while acting a role, as for television, theater, or film. *I hated working with him on that play—every night he'd go out and chew the*

scenery so much that he was the only one the audience noticed! I love watching hammy actors chew the scenery in bad movies.

chew the/(one's) cud To contemplate something. ("Cud" is partially digested food that is regurgitated to be chewed again, a common behavior of cows.) *I've been chewing my cud for days, but I still haven't decided whether I'm taking the job or not. Sometimes you just need to stop chewing the cud and make a decision.*

chew up 1. To masticate food. A noun or pronoun can be used between "chew" and "up." *This meat is a little tough—I'm having a hard time chewing it up.* **2.** To cause injury or destruction, as by a sharp or powerful object or machine. A noun or pronoun can be used between "chew" and "up." *Be careful handling that food processor—the blades are sharp enough to chew up your hands. Once you turn on the blender, it'll chew up those strawberries in seconds.*

chew up the scenery To be exaggeratedly or flamboyantly melodramatic or overly emotional while acting a role, as for television, theater, or film. *I hated working with him on that play—every night he'd go out and chew up the scenery so much that he was the only one the audience noticed! I love watching hammy actors chew up the scenery in bad movies.*

chicken and egg situation A situation in which it is unknown what happened, or what needs to happen, first. *You need experience to get a job, but you need a job to get experience. It's a chicken and egg situation.*

chicken feed A very paltry or miniscule amount of money; the absolute minimum amount. *Suzy's brother has a connection in the stadium, so we got these tickets for chicken feed! I had a few jobs during college working for chicken feed, but it was the only work I could get that fit in with my studies.*

chicken fillet A silicone or gel pad fitted underneath a woman's bra so as to enhance one's breasts or give the appearance of having them. Usually pluralized. *After my double mastectomy earlier this year, wearing these high-end chicken fillets helped me feel like my old self again. Wearing chicken fillets when I go out for the night just makes me feel more confident.*

chicken out slang To refuse to do something due to fear (real or perceived). *Jumping off the high-dive is fun! Don't chicken out! I didn't chicken out, I just changed my mind, OK?*

chicken out on (one) To impact someone else with one's refusal to do something due to fear (real or perceived). *We've come this far. Don't chicken out on me now—I need you to help me climb the rest of the way!*

chicken with its head cut off See [like a chicken with its head cut off](#).

chickens come home to roost One's previous actions will eventually have consequences or cause problems. *I knew not handing in my homework would be a problem eventually. Chickens always come home to roost. I'd be careful before making any rash decisions—you know that chickens come home to roost.*

chicks before dicks slang A reminder, said by a female to her female friend(s), asserting that their friendship should be more important than relationships or interactions with males. *Come on, don't ditch us for that guy you just met! Chicks before dicks!*

chide (one) for (something) To reprimand or tease one about something. *The other guys on the team chided him for missing that easy basket. Mom chided me for coming to the party without a gift.*

chief cook and bottle washer One who is involved in many aspects of a particular situation. *Because so many people have left our department recently, I'm the chief cook and bottle washer, doing every little task that comes up.*

the child is father of the man The personality traits that one displays as an adult form in childhood. *He's always been a quiet, analytical person—the child is father of the man, after all.*

childhood friend A friend that one has had since childhood or had in childhood. *Ellen is one of my childhood friends—I've known her since I was seven! Ray was one of my childhood friends, but I haven't seen him in years. Gosh, I wonder how he's doing these days.*

children and fools tell the truth Children and fools do not know that lying can sometimes be useful, helpful, or preferable to the truth. A: *"I was mortified when my son told that woman her hairstyle was ugly."* B: *"Well, children and fools tell the truth."*

children should be seen and not heard Children should not speak among adults unless they are addressed; children should be quiet and

well-behaved. *My grandmother was always shushing us because she was of the opinion that children should be seen and not heard.*

child's play **1.** A very easy task. *Oh please, I've been playing guitar for 20 years—that song is child's play.* **2.** Something that is insignificant. *Those drafts are child's play compared to my latest one—I think I really have a strong argument now.*

chill girl Internet slang A woman who rejects, dismisses, or is ambivalent toward sexism, misogyny, or male chauvinism. *Some of my more feminist friends accuse me of being a chill girl just because I don't fly into a rage every time a man makes some diminishing comment about women. During college, I considered myself to be something of a chill girl, but when I entered into business, I saw just how pervasive sexism really is.*

chill (one) to the bone **1.** To make or be very cold. In this usage, a pronoun does not have to be used between "chill" and "to." *After shoveling snow for hours, I am just chilled to the bone. The wind from the mountain chilled us to the bone.* **2.** To become very scared. In this usage, a pronoun is usually used between "chill" and "to." *The sight of blood just chills me to the bone.*

chill (one) to the marrow To make or be very cold. A pronoun does not have to be used between "chill" and "to." ("Marrow" is the soft tissue found inside bones.) Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *After shoveling snow for hours, I am just chilled to the marrow. The wind from the mountain chilled us to the marrow.*

chill (one's) action To discourage one or disrupt one's progress. *Don't try to chill my action just because you're jealous of the attention my work is getting!*

chill out **1.** slang To become calmer; to calm down. This phrase is often used as an imperative. *Just chill out—panicking about being late won't make me drive any faster. Wow, she has really chilled out in retirement—remember how animated she used to be in the courtroom?* **2.** slang To relax. *We're just chilling out and watching some TV, if you want to join us.*

a chill pill slang A hypothetical thing that would induce one to become calm. The phrase is typically used in the expression "take a chill pill," but does not refer to an actual pill or medication. *Take a chill pill, will you? Panicking about being late won't make me drive any faster.*

chilled to the bone Of a person, very cold. *After shoveling snow for hours, I am just chilled to the bone.*

chilly climate Used to describe an area in which women's involvement or progress is not encouraged. It is typically applied to fields like politics and academia. *I'm the only woman in the sociology department right now, and boy, is it a chilly climate. I can see that I will have a hard time advancing here.*

chime in **1.** To join in a discussion about something; to offer one's thoughts. *When I heard them discussing my department, I just had to chime in with my own suggestions.* **2.** To join in and harmonize, as of a singer joining others. *OK, so when do we chime in on this song?* **3.** To compliment something well. *Your idea really chimes in with our vision for the project.*

chin music slang Talk or chatter. *Can you guys please be quiet? Your chin music is distracting me from my work.*

chin up **1.** A phrase that encourages one to improve one's mood, especially when sad or discouraged. *Come on, the project was not a total failure—chin up! Chin up, honey—tomorrow's another day.* **2.** noun The act of pulling oneself upward while holding onto a bar, as at a gym. The phrase is often hyphenated in this usage. *My arms are already shaking—how many more chin-ups am I supposed to do?*

China syndrome A scenario in which a nuclear reactor meltdown in North America would theoretically melt a hole straight through the Earth to China (which is impossible). In more realistic usage, it describes such a meltdown reaching groundwater and forcing subsequent radioactive gases into the atmosphere. The latter scenario was used as the basis of a 1979 film of the same name starring Jack Lemmon and Jane Fonda. *While many advocate nuclear power as clean and safe, the risk of catastrophes such as China syndrome make me very nervous about its use.*

Chinaman at her neck See [have a Chinaman at \(one's\) neck](#).

Chinaman on her back See [have a Chinaman on \(one's\) back](#).

Chinaman on her back See [carry a Chinaman on \(one's\) back](#).

Chinaman's chance Little or no chance at all; a completely hopeless prospect. This derogatory phrase originated in the 1800s and referred to Chinese immigrants who worked for extremely low wages, faced racism and

higher taxation, and were prohibited from testifying in court for violence committed against them. Primarily heard in US, South Africa.

Chinese compliment A false or facetious display of obeisance, or an insult disguised as a compliment. A derogatory phrase, it should not be confused with the linguistic or sociological components of compliments as used in Chinese language and culture.

Chinese overtime Overtime pay which is calculated at less than an employee's normal hourly rate (usually one-half), rather than one-and-a-half times it, as is usually paid in traditional overtime arrangements. It is a potentially derogatory term, so discretion is advised. *Overall, I love having the flexibility to work the hours that I see fit; the only downside is that I only get Chinese overtime when I have to put in more time for a project than usual.*

Chinese puzzle 1. A puzzle game consisting of intricate and complex pieces that fit together in a specific manner, especially of multiple boxes that fit inside one another. *My uncle gave me this Chinese puzzle for Christmas, and I still haven't been able to solve it!* **2.** Any problem, question, or situation that is especially complex or difficult to understand. *Dealing with growing income inequality is truly a Chinese puzzle for lawmakers today. I can't understand a thing about how this engine works, it's like a dang Chinese puzzle!*

Chinese wall (sometimes Chinese Wall) A figurative barrier meant to impede or silence the flow of information between two or more parties so as to stop or limit conflicts of interest from arising, as in investment banking or law firms. An allusion to the Great Wall of China. *Because of the sheer size of the company, many departments represent competing clients and interests, so several Chinese walls are in place to make sure no one can be accused of benefitting from insider knowledge.*

Chinese whispers 1. A game played between a group of people in which a story or message is told by one person in secret to another, who then retells it to the next, and so on, with the resulting end message usually differing widely (and often amusingly) from the original. It can be considered a pejorative term, so discretion is advised. Primarily heard in UK. *Chinese whispers is a great game—it's always hilarious to see what the last person has interpreted by the end!* **2.** Any information or gossip that has been spread

and retold by multiple parties, thus obfuscating, distorting, or exaggerating the original information. A somewhat pejorative term, it takes its name from the party game described above. Primarily heard in UK. *The firm's CEO denounced the rumors of impending layoffs as being nothing more than Chinese whispers. It's a common occurrence that sensationalist news headlines devolve into Chinese whispers, thus leading a large number of people to accept misinformation as fact.*

chink in (one's) armor A minor but very detrimental flaw or weakness. *Yeah, he's brilliant, but his violent temper has destroyed many business relationships—it's really the chink in his armor.*

chink up (something) To fill in or patch narrow openings, such as cracks or fissures (chinks), of something. *We live in an area that experiences a lot of earthquakes each year, so we've gotten pretty good at chinking up the walls of our house.*

chinless wonder A self-important upper class British man who is considered by others to be stupid or inexperienced. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *Jill's incompetent manager is just a chinless wonder who got his job because he happens to be friends with the CEO.*

chip away 1. To break off fragments of something. *We won't be able to move this huge rock until we chip away at it and make it smaller.* **2.** To come off of something in small pieces. *The paint is so old that it has completely chipped away from this side of the house.* **3.** To complete small, incremental portions of a task. *Try not to get too overwhelmed about cleaning the house and just chip away at it one room at a time.*

chip (away) at (something) 1. Literally, to break off fragments of something. *We won't be able to move this huge rock until we chip at it and make it smaller.* **2.** By extension, to complete small, incremental portions of a task. *I knew I wouldn't be able to write 50 pages in one night, so I've been chipping away at this paper for a few weeks.*

chip in 1. To contribute to something being undertaken by a group, such as a task or collection. *If everyone chips in to help, we can clean this garage in no time. How much am I supposed to chip in for our joint gift?* **2.** To offer money as a bet in a game, such as poker. *Hurry up and chip in something for this hand.* **3.** To join in a discussion about something; to offer one's thoughts. *When I heard them discussing my department, I just had to chip in with my*

own suggestions.

a chip off the old block Someone whose character or personality resembles that of their parent. *Mike's automotive repair skills really rival those of his father. He's a real chip off the old block!*

a chip on (one's) shoulder An attitude that leads one to become combative or easily angered. *Fred has such a chip on his shoulder—you never know what's going to set him off next. She won't admit it, but Kate has a chip on her shoulder when it comes to discussing her career.*

chip shot 1. In golf, a short shot that arcs high into the air so as to land easily on or near the green. *That was a brilliant chip shot, putting him within putting distance of the hole.* **2.** In American football, a short and fairly easy field goal kick. *This is just a chip shot for their kicker, who has already kicked two field goals from much greater distances.* **3.** In football (soccer), a short, low-power kick that causes the ball to arc into the air. *His chip shot from near midfield took the goaltender by surprise.* **4.** Anything that is done or accomplished easily and/or with minimal effort. *It's going to be a chip shot getting that promotion next year.*

chip up (something) To crack, break, or knock small fragments off of something. *People leave their chains on their tires well after winter, which really chips up the pavement.*

chips and dip A snack consisting of chips and a sauce or condiment to dip them into. *Put out some chips and dip for everyone before the show starts.*

chirk up To improve one's mood or become cheerful; cheer up. *There's nothing like a bright, sunny day to chirk a person up!*

chisel in slang To gain part of or involvement in something by unfair methods. *Any time my parents give me money, my brother manages to chisel in on it by whining to them.*

chisel (one) out of (something) To swindle something from someone. *That con man chiseled us out of thousands, I'm ashamed to say.*

chock full of (something) Having a lot of something; very full of something. *If you don't like raisins, you won't like this cake—it's chock full of them. Good luck fitting anything else in that storage locker—it is just chock full of boxes.*

chocolate box Something that seems unreal because it is so appealing or attractive. The phrase is always used before a noun. *This charming little town is totally full of chocolate box houses.*

choke back To try to keep from expelling something, such as words or tears. A noun or pronoun can be used between "choke" and "back." *I choked back a question about her boyfriend as soon as I remembered that they had broken up. I didn't feel sick until after the ceremony had started, so I had to choke back vomit the entire time.*

choke down To swallow something with difficulty, often because it tastes bad or is cumbersome. A noun or pronoun can be used between "choke" and "down." *I didn't know that Lexie was a terrible cook until I had to choke down some of the disgusting stew she'd made. I couldn't choke down any of those pills—they're just too big!*

choke off **1.** To stop or prevent something from flowing normally. A noun or pronoun can be used between "choke" and "off." *I was watering the flowers when Doug stepped on the hose and choked off the water supply.* **2.** To cause someone or something to have difficulty breathing. A noun or pronoun can be used between "choke" and "off." *Undo the baby's top button before it chokes off her air supply!* **3.** To stop someone abruptly while they are talking. A noun or pronoun can be used between "choke" and "off." *I had to choke him off because his boring story was putting me to sleep.*

choke on (something) To choke due to a particular object lodged in one's throat or windpipe. *It was a scary moment when dad started choking on that fish bone. I hate when I choke on my own spit.*

choke up **1.** To feel a strong emotion and struggle to speak because of it. *I thought I would be able to give the eulogy, but I became so choked up that I couldn't do it.* **2.** To cause one to feel a strong emotion and struggle to speak because of it. In this usage, a noun or pronoun can be used between "choke" and "up." *The author's speech on mortality really choked me up.* **3.** To make one feel the urge to cry. *I had been fine all day, but as soon as I walked into the funeral home, I got all choked up.* **4.** To block or obstruct. In this usage, a noun or pronoun can be used between "choke" and "up." *I was watering the flowers when Doug stepped on the hose and choked it up.* **5.** To cough and expel a substance that is stuck in one's throat. In this usage, a noun or pronoun can be used between "choke" and "up." *Luckily, I was able to choke*

that piece of bread up before needing the Heimlich maneuver. **6.** To fail to perform to one's full potential as a result of nervousness under pressure. "Up" is often dropped from the phrase to convey this meaning. *Of course he only had five points in the championship—he always chokes up in big games.* **7.** To grip a piece of equipment or tool (typically a baseball bat) so that one's hands are closer to the contact point. *Choke up on the bat to get a better grip.*

choked by emotion So overwhelmed with an emotion, either positive or negative, as to be unable to speak clearly or at all. *She was choked by emotion when she stepped up to speak at her mother's funeral.*

choked with emotion So overwhelmed with an emotion, either positive or negative, as to be unable to speak clearly or at all. *I was positively choked with emotion by all the lovely speeches at my retirement party.*

chomp at the bit To be impatient or eager for something to happen or over some delay. Used to liken someone to an overexcited horse straining against its bit (the metal piece of the harness that fits between its jaws). *The crowd chomped at the bit to see the unveiling of the new building. I've chomped at the bit for an opportunity like this my entire life!*

chomping at the bit See [be chomping at the bit](#).

choose among (people or things) To select from a group of options. *The supervisor will choose among these candidates for someone to fill the position.*

choose between (two people or things) To select one person or thing from two options. *We will choose between the two best candidates for the job. I'm exhausted because I had to choose between sleep or finishing this paper last night.*

choose from (people or things) To select from a group of options. *The supervisor will choose from these candidates for someone to fill the position.*

choose (one) as (something) To select someone for a particular role or job. *Whom has he chosen as his successor?*

choose (one's) battles (wisely) To actively choose not to participate in minor, unimportant, or overly difficult arguments, contests, or confrontations, saving one's strength instead for those that will be of greater importance or in which one has a greater chance of success. *As a parent, you*

learn to choose your battles with your kids so you don't run yourself ragged nagging them. The best politicians choose their battles wisely: if one becomes too embroiled in petty debates, one never gets anything done.

choose sides **1.** To ally or agree with one person or group in an argument. *I refuse to choose sides between my two daughters! I didn't intend to choose sides, but Nancy made the stronger case.* **2.** To divide a group of people into teams, as when playing a sport or game. *The game hasn't started yet because it's taking those guys forever to choose sides!*

choose (someone or something) for (someone or something) **1.** To select someone for a particular job or role. *Whom has the supervisor chosen for the vacant position? I can't believe the coach chose me for pitcher!* **2.** To select something for someone, as of a gift. *I chose that plant for him because I thought he liked to garden—I didn't realize that he's allergic to daisies!*

choose the lesser of two evils To pick the less offensive of two undesirable options. *I wasn't excited about going to a seminar all weekend, but I also didn't want to lose my license, so I chose the lesser of two evils and spent the weekend learning about new regulations in our field. Do you really want to get a demerit for not having your blazer? Just choose the lesser of two evils and tell the teacher you forgot it—maybe she'll take pity on you!*

choose up To divide a group of people into teams, as when playing a sport or game. *The game hasn't started yet because it's taking those guys forever to choose up!*

choose up sides To divide a group of people into teams, as when playing a sport or game. *The game hasn't started yet because it's taking those guys forever to choose up sides!*

chop and change To continually change one's course of action, to the confusion or irritation of others. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *When we chop and change this much, it frustrates our customers. We need to set a schedule and stick to it.*

chop back To prune something, such as trees, bushes, or plants. A noun or pronoun can be used between "chop" and "back." *I need to chop back this tree because it's so overgrown that I can barely open my car door anymore.*

chop chop informal Hurry up! Move faster! *This is a major client, so I*

need the report done right now, chop chop! Chop chop, people, we need to make 20 more before we're done.

chop down 1. To fell; to cut down. Usually refers to cutting down a tree. A noun or pronoun can be used between "chop" and "down." *We had to chop down that old tree to keep it from falling onto our house. It would be a shame to have to chop that old oak down just to make room for a parking lot.* **2.** To destroy or reject something. A noun or pronoun can be used between "chop" and "down." *Now that the CEO has chopped down our idea, we need to come up with something better.*

chop logic To argue in a tedious or pedantic way. *I can't stand the way he chops logic! You can't have a conversation without him turning it into some tiresome fight!*

chop off 1. To cut something off of something else. A noun or pronoun can be used between "chop" and "off." *We had to chop off that branch because it was in danger of falling on our house. I decided to chop my hair off because I needed a change in my life.* **2.** To stop someone abruptly while they are talking. A noun or pronoun can be used between "chop" and "off." *I had to chop him off because his boring story was putting me to sleep.*

chopped liver See [What am I, chopped liver?](#)

chortle about (someone or something) To laugh about someone or something. *I was still chortling about that scene in the movie the next day.*

chow down To eat, often quickly or enthusiastically. A noun can be used between "chow" and "down." *The puppy started chowing down the minute I set down his food bowl. Get in here so we can chow down—I'm starving!*

Christmas comes but once a year A phrase that defends enthusiastic celebrations of Christmas, on the basis that Christmas only happens once a year. *I know the amount of gifts is a little excessive, but Christmas comes but once a year, right?*

Christmas disease Hemophilia (or haemophilia) B, a blood-clotting disorder in which a mutation of the Factor IX gene leads to a deficiency of Factor IX (or Christmas factor), a serine protease of the coagulation system. Both the factor and the disease are named for Stephen Christmas (not the holiday), the first patient discovered to have the condition in 1952. *We haven't let our daughter participate in any more physical sports since she*

was diagnosed with Christmas disease last year.

Christmas graduate A college or university student who discontinues their education after the end of the first term (i.e., around Christmastime). Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *While I firmly believe in the importance of continued education, there are always a few Christmas graduates each year for whom college is just not well suited.*

Christmas tree bill In the US Congress, a minor bill that attracts many additional (and often unrelated) amendments attached to it, thus likened to ornaments hung upon a Christmas tree. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *If one really wants to see how corporate interests pervade the political process, one must simply examine the numerous amendments of the so-called Christmas tree bills that crop up each year.*

chrome dome A person who is completely bald, or that person's head. *I actually started losing my hair in my late twenties, and I've been a chrome dome ever since! Some women don't care for bald men, but I love my husband's chrome dome.*

chrome horn A car's front bumper when used to nudge or hit the car in front of it, either in retaliation or (in stock car racing) to inform the second car's driver that the first intends to pass. *Always be considerate when changing lanes in front of other cars, as aggressive drivers may feel inclined to use their chrome horns to signal their displeasure. Some really aggressive driving by Roberts; he's been putting that chrome horn to use today!*

chuck a U-ie To make a U-turn. Primarily heard in Australia. *Dang it, I forgot my keys! Chuck a U-ie up ahead so I can go back and get them.*

chuck away 1. To dispose of something. A noun or pronoun can be used between "chuck" and "away." *I need to chuck away these old clothes that haven't fit me in years. Please chuck away all those papers on the floor. 2.* To push someone or something out of the way. A noun or pronoun can be used between "chuck" and "away." *The policeman chucked me away as he ran after the robber. I had to chuck away all of those booklets because they needed to use the table.*

chuck it down To rain heavily and constantly. Primarily heard in UK. *We had great weather last week, but it's been chucking it down all weekend long.*

chuck it in To give up or abandon something. *This business venture has lost me money the past three years—I think it's time to chuck it in.*

chuck (one) under the chin To touch or stroke one affectionately under the chin. *I chucked my daughter under the chin and pulled her close for a hug.*

chuck out 1. To force someone to leave a place, perhaps violently. A noun or pronoun can be used between "chuck" and "out." *They chucked us out of the movie for talking.* **2.** To dispose of something. A noun or pronoun can be used between "chuck" and "out." *I need to chuck these old clothes out because they haven't fit me in years. Please chuck out all of those papers on the floor.*

chuck overboard To dispose or get rid of something or someone. Likened to throwing something over the side of a ship. *In a major corporate shake-up, most of the company's upper-level management was chucked overboard at the end of the fiscal year. I know it's a really bad habit, but we just chuck our rubbish overboard when travelling on a long car journey.*

chuck (something) down To eat something quickly. *The puppy really chucked that food down—he must have been starving.*

chuck (something) in (to something) To place, pack, or throw into a receptacle of some kind, especially hastily and/or haphazardly. *My alarm didn't go off on time on the morning of my flight, so I had to just chuck all my clothes into a suitcase and run out the door. The great thing about cooking stews is you don't need a lot of precision—just chop up a bunch of meat and vegetables, and then chuck them all in!*

chuck (something) into (something) To put or pack something into something else, perhaps hastily or carelessly. *I was in such a rush that I just chucked some clothes into my bag right before I left for the airport.*

chuck (something) out To throw away or dispose of something. *It always annoyed me having to chuck out so much of people's food when I worked in the restaurant. I think it's about time we chuck the old clothes out.*

chuck (something) over (something) To throw or heave something over something else. *The game ended abruptly when Ben chucked our football over the wall.*

chuck up To vomit. A noun or pronoun can be used between "chuck" and

"up." *When I had the flu, I think I chucked up everything I'd ever eaten in my entire life.*

chuckle about (someone or something) To laugh about someone or something. *I was still chuckling about that scene in the movie the next day. Are you guys chuckling about how I just tripped up the steps?*

chuckle with (a particular quality) To laugh in a particular manner. *I couldn't help but chuckle with delight when I saw the little girl feed her ice cream cone to her dog.*

chug along 1. To move forward slowly, as of a train (which stereotypically makes a chugging noise). *The train is chugging along again, so we should be at the station soon.* 2. To proceed steadily. *Don't worry, the project is still chugging along, in spite of all the setbacks.*

chum up To be friendly with someone. *Why is Patrick chumming up to me all of a sudden? He's usually so distant.*

chum up to (one) To be friendly with someone *Why is Patrick chumming up to me all of a sudden? He's usually so distant.*

chum up with (one) To be friendly with someone *Why is Patrick chumming up with me all of a sudden? He's usually so distant.*

chump change A tiny, trifling, and/or inconsequential amount of money. *To most people, \$2,000 is a lot to spend on anything, but to the country's mega rich, it is merely chump change. I'm only getting paid chump change for all this hard work I'm doing.*

a chunk of change A lot of money. *I can't wait to file my taxes because I know I'm getting a chunk of change back this year. Wow, nice car! That must have cost a chunk of change!*

church ain't out till they quit singing Something is not over yet. *Yes, we've had some setbacks this season, but that's no excuse to give up. Church ain't out till they quit singing!*

church key A tool used to remove caps from glass bottles and puncture lids on cans. The phrase can also be used simply as slang for a bottle opener. *Be sure to bring a church key with you so we can open up the bottles! Here, use this church key to open that can of soup.*

churn out To produce something in large quantities, often quickly and/or



carelessly. A noun or pronoun can be used between "churn" and "out." *That novelist seems to churn out a new bestseller every few months. I want to open a fine dining restaurant, not just some place that churns out burgers and fries.*

churn up To cause the movement of something in a liquid (such as sediment of some kind) by stirring. A noun or pronoun can be used between "churn" and "up." *I stirred the milk and churned up bits of chocolate powder that had settled to the bottom of the glass. Because we're so close to the shore, your oars will likely churn some pebbles up.*

churro slang A catchall term used to refer to any specific item or event. Though the thing referred to is not specified by the speaker, it is understood by the listener due to context. *Yo, hand me that churro. I gotta go to that churro later.*

cipher A person who is unimportant, insignificant, or without influence. It refers to the mathematical symbol for zero (0). *I feel like a bit of a cipher in such a large company.*

circle around **1.** To move in a circular path, perhaps to come back to one's original location. A specific person or thing does not have to be stated after "around" to convey this meaning. *Does anyone know why helicopters are circling around outside our building? I can't wait for you here because I'm blocking traffic—I'll have to circle around.* **2.** To move something in a circular path. In this usage, a noun or pronoun is often used between "circle" and "around." *Take this tray of hors d'oeuvres and circle it around to all the people sitting in the living room.* **3.** To form a circle around someone or something. *The shower guests circled around the bride-to-be as she opened presents. The kids circled around the newly hatched chicks in awe.* **4.** To focus on someone or something. *But it's Beth's surprise party, not yours, so all the decorations and games should circle around her and her alone.* **5.** To occur again in the usual pattern or schedule. *I am so ready for summer to circle around again because I hate the cold!* **6.** To envelope someone or something in something, often a material. In this usage, a noun is often used between "circle" and "around." *Now circle that piece of fabric around the mannequin like this.*

circle the drain To be in a state of severe deterioration such that one is approaching inevitable ruin, failure, or death. Usually used in the continuous

form. *The company's closure was inevitable, as it has been circling the drain for the last six months. Her political career began to circle the drain after news of her affair came to public light. He was already circling the drain when the decision was made to take him off life support.*

circle the wagons **1.** To become defensive. (Conestoga wagons under attack were traditionally brought into a circular defensive position.) *I'm not questioning your decision, so don't circle the wagons—I'm just looking for some more information.* **2.** To confer only with people within a trusted group. *Callie's new group of friends really circles the wagons, so she hardly talks to me anymore. Circle the wagons, people. We can't have word of this getting out to the press.*

circuit slugger In baseball, a player who often hits home runs, running the full circuit of bases when they do so. *The new circuit slugger has been an incredible asset to the team this season.*

circular file A jocular term for a trashcan or waste basket, i.e., a receptacle for unwanted files. *You have to make your application really stand out if you don't want it to end up in the employer's circular file.*

circular firing squad A group, usually a political party, that is allied against a common enemy or opponent but whose internal disagreements and attacks end up doing more damage to each other than to their target. *The lead up to the presidential nomination saw the party devolve into a circular firing squad, as each candidate's vociferous bid to unseat the incumbent president ended up creating huge divisions and disarray within the party itself.*

circulate among (someone or something) To move through or within a group of people or things. *Here, take this tray of hors d'oeuvres and circulate among the guests in the living room. There's a rumor circulating among the press corps that the senator is going to resign.*

circulate through (something) **1.** Of a liquid, to travel through a system or network of pipes. *Water doesn't seem to be circulating through the pipes from this point on, so there must be a clog.* **2.** To move through or within a group of people or things. *Here, take this tray of hors d'oeuvres and circulate through the guests in the living room. There's a rumor circulating through the press corps that the senator is going to resign.*

circumstances alter cases Unique circumstances can spur unconventional action. *I know offering such a big refund isn't protocol, but*

it's for the CEO's grandmother, and circumstances alter cases.

cite chapter and verse See [give chapter and verse](#).

cite (one) for (something) **1.** To acknowledge or honor someone for admirable behavior. *The mayor wants to cite those firefighters for saving all of the school children in the blaze.* **2.** To give someone a citation for a particular legal infraction. *Sir, if you don't stop yelling, I'll have to cite you for disorderly conduct.*

cite (something) chapter and verse To recite all the facts or details of something. Likened to quoting scripture by citing the exact chapter and verse where it appears. *Ask Stan if you need to be updated on the case—he can cite it chapter and verse.*

city slicker A derisive term for a city dweller who is assumed to be (or actually is) completely ignorant of life in a rural setting, and/or suave and deceptive. *Look at that fool city slicker—he has no idea how to get that horse to listen to him. Don't let that city slicker con you out of all your hard-earned money!*

a civil question deserves a civil answer If someone asks a reasonable question, then it warrants an answer. Often used as a reprimand. *Why won't you answer me, Alice? A civil question deserves a civil answer! All Jim did was ask about your day. Come on, a civil question deserves a civil answer.*

civility costs nothing It is easy to be respectful. *You don't have to be their best friends, but you could at least say hi to them—civility costs nothing.*

claim a/the/(one's) life To result in one's death. *This crime spree has already claimed the lives of 10 innocent people—when will the perpetrator be caught? That debilitating illness ultimately claimed her life.*

claim check A ticket or receipt used to collect an item that has been deposited or is being held somewhere. *Be sure to have your claim check ready or you will not be able to collect your car from the valet.*

claim (something) for (oneself or something) **1.** To declare something as one's property or jurisdiction. *You can't have his potato chips—I already claimed them for myself! Do you think he might actually claim the throne for himself? After the battle, the victorious country claimed the contested area for itself.* **2.** To officially request money as repayment for

damages. *I can't believe he's claiming thousands of dollars for repairs when I barely dented his fender.*

claim the moral high ground To claim, purport, or make it appear that one's arguments, beliefs, ideas, etc., are morally superior to those espoused by others. *The senator always tries to claim the moral high ground during a debate so as to shift public opinion in his favor.*

claim to fame The reason why someone or something is famous or well-known. *I've heard that name before—what's his claim to fame? Jeff's big claim to fame is being on that reality show for one episode.*

clam up To suddenly stop talking or refuse to speak, typically due to a particular reason. The phrase refers to a clam closing its shell. *Naturally, everyone clammed up as soon as the check came. Our usual informant clammed up when he realized there was a mole in the department.*

clamber onto (something) To climb onto something in a lumbering or uncoordinated manner. *The bus swayed as the boys clambered onto it, whooping and laughing.*

clamber up (something) To climb something. *Everyone else was able to clamber up the rope in gym class, but I struggled, thanks to my scrawny arms.*

clamor against (something) To object to something vocally or passionately. *Many townspeople have clamored against this construction project because they feel it will greatly increase traffic through the town.*

clamor for (something) To support or request something vocally or passionately. *Many townspeople have clamored for this construction project because they like the idea of not having to drive 10 miles to the nearest grocery store. We decided to bring out the cake early because the kids were clamoring for it.*

clamp down on (someone or something) **1.** Literally, to press down on something firmly. *When the dog's teeth clamped down on my leg, I'd never felt so much pain in my life. Now clamp down on this surface so that you don't lose your grip while drilling.* **2.** To limit, reduce, bring under tighter control. *My parents really clamped down on me after seeing my report card, so my curfew is only 9 PM now. We really need to clamp down on spending before our department loses funding altogether. The cops are trying to clamp*

down on speeding on this stretch, so you should slow down.

clamp (something) on(to) (something) To attach something to another object or surface. *First, you need to clamp that tool onto the table.*

clap back **1.** verb To respond to an insult or criticism, sometimes in a vengeful manner. *She calmly clapped back at critics by asserting that her weight is none of their business. I'm not proud of it, but I did clap back at the girl who stole my boyfriend by starting a vicious rumor about her.* **2.** noun A response to an insult or criticism, sometimes in a vengeful manner. *I'm not great at the clap back because I get easily flustered by criticism. Her clap back was a vicious rumor targeting the girl that stole her boyfriend.*

clap eyes on (someone or something) To look at or see someone or something. *Honestly, I loved my wife the minute I clapped eyes on her. I haven't clapped eyes on that book in weeks, so good luck finding it in my office!*

clap (one) in(to) To forcibly push someone into a particular place, often jail. *You can't just clap him into a jail cell without any explanation!*

clap out To clap one's hands along to the beat of a song, typically so that one can learn it. A noun or pronoun can be used between "clap" and "out." *You clap out the beat, and I'll try to play it on the bass.*

clap (something) on(to) (something) To attach something to another object or a surface. *You can't just clap fliers onto the wall outside my classroom—that's what the bulletin boards are for!*

clap (something) together To slap or smack two things together, typically resulting in a clapping noise. *Please clap your shoes together outside to get the dirt out of them. He clapped his hands together to the music of the band.*

clarion call A call to action. *The mayor's clarion call to eliminate poverty in the city prompted a number of local organizations to work together to address the problem.*

clash against (someone or something) To fight against someone or something. *The two sides have been clashing against each other in the streets for weeks—when will the fighting stop?*

clash of the ash In the sport of hurling, the sound of opponents' hurleys (long paddle-like sticks, made from ash wood) striking each other, or (by

extension) the contest between two hurling teams in general. Primarily heard in Ireland. *It was an intense match, and the fierce clash of the ash could be heard ringing through the pitch. Fans are gearing up for spectacular clash of the ash this Saturday afternoon.*

clash with (someone or something) 1. To fight or disagree with someone or something. *My house is always full of yelling because my kids clash with each other on everything.* 2. To contradict or be in disagreement with something. *The governor's new tax plan clashes with his campaign promises. Our idea got rejected because it clashed with the boss's vision for our department.* 3. To look visually displeasing when paired or juxtaposed with something, usually as of colors. *That eyeshadow totally clashes with her skin tone, unfortunately. We're all wearing pink, so you're definitely going to clash with us if you wear orange.*

clasp (something) to (something) To press or hold something firmly against something else. *Suzy clasped her new doll to her chest. Clasp this icepack to your knee to alleviate the swelling.*

class clown A mischievous or impudent student who frequently disrupts the class with jokes, pranks, or wry comments as a means of drawing attention to him- or herself. *Every teacher has to deal with class clowns eventually.*

class (someone or something) with (someone or something) To group someone or something with similar people or things. *I studied hard, so don't class me with the kids who don't care. Please class these bedsheets with others that are the same size.*

class warfare Conflict between different socio-economic classes *The politician was accused of trying to promote class warfare with his comments about the haves and the have-nots.*

classical style A phrase used to refer to the art and architecture of ancient Greece. *Look at these beautiful buildings, all in the classical style. Corinthian columns like this are common in the classical style.*

clatter around To make noise while moving around in a space or container. *What on earth is clattering around in my bag? Quit clattering around in here—the baby is napping! Hold that container still so those marbles don't clatter around.*

claw me, claw thee Help me, and I'll help you. A phrase used to describe a reciprocal relationship. *After how much you helped me with the budget, of course I'll work with you to finish the project! Claw me, claw thee!*

claw off To rip or tear something off of someone or something else. A noun or pronoun can be used between "claw" and "off." *Unfortunately for me, my puppy just loves clawing the upholstery off my couch.*

claw (one's) way back from (something) To work hard to regain something after a significant loss or setback. *He'll have to claw his way back from that serious injury if he wants to be our starting quarterback next season.*

claw (one's) way (somewhere) To physically exert oneself to reach a particular destination. *We had to claw our way through dense brush to reach the river.*

claw (one's) way to the top To reach the highest level of something through unscrupulous methods. *She clawed her way to the top, sabotaging everyone in her path—I see no honor in that.*

clay pigeon A person who is easily exploited, deceived, or taken advantage of, especially due to being in a position of vulnerability. Likened to the clay pigeons (small clay discs) used as targets in trapshooting. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *He was used as a clay pigeon by the mafia, who laundered money through his accounts.*

clean as a hound's tooth See [\(as\) clean as a hound's tooth](#).

clean bill of health 1. A doctor's report that a patient is in good physical health. *Josie was relieved when she received a clean bill of health from her physician.* 2. An assurance that an organization or process is operating properly according to specific standards. *Despite accusations that the company was responsible for polluting the lake, it received a clean bill of health from the environmental agency after a thorough investigation.*

clean break A complete removal from a (usually negative) situation, relationship, or attachment, with no intention of returning. *After spending years in an emotionally abusive relationship, Patrick finally decided to make a clean break and leave his girlfriend.*

clean code Computer programming code that is written concisely, efficiently, and in an organized manner, so as to be easily read and

understood by another. *We encourage all our programmers to write clean code so that anyone else in the company can easily use and add to their work if necessary.*

clean conscience See [have a clean conscience](#).

clean-cut Neatly groomed. *My sister likes long-haired bad boys, but I've always thought that clean-cut guys are cuter.*

clean down To clean someone or something by brushing or hosing the dirt off. A noun or pronoun can be used between "clean" and "down." *You need to clean down your muddy car before the wedding tomorrow. We had to clean ourselves down after doing that color run.*

clean house **1.** To rid a group or organization of the people or policies that are deemed to be troublesome or lacking. *After five losing seasons, the owner cleaned house, firing the team's general manager and the entire coaching staff.* **2.** To strike one violently. *If you humiliate me like this again, I'll clean house on you.*

clean off To rid a surface of dirt, grime, or objects. A noun or pronoun can be used between "clean" and "off." *Just clean off the desk and stack those books over here. Get me a sponge so I can clean this sticky table off.*

clean (one's) act up To improve one's behavior. *After I got in yet another fight at school, the headmaster told me that I had to clean my act up or else I'd be expelled.*

clean (one's) plate (up) To eat all of the food that is on one's plate. *He's usually a really picky eater, so I'm shocked that he cleaned his plate! You'll have to clean your plate up if you want dessert.*

clean (one's) plow To deliver a violent and prolonged physical attack. *If you humiliate me like this again, I'll clean your plow!*

clean out **1.** To rid a space or area of dirt, grime, or objects. A noun or pronoun can be used between "clean" and "out." *Hand me that sponge so I can clean out the oven. How often do we need to clean out the rabbit's cage?*

2. To impel people to leave a space or area. A noun or pronoun can be used between "clean" and "out." *The sound of approaching sirens quickly cleaned out the high schooler's house party.* **3.** To remove things from a space or area.

A noun or pronoun can be used between "clean" and "out." *We need to clean all this junk out of the garage so that I can actually put my car in it!* **4.** To

significantly deplete one's finances. A noun or pronoun can be used between "clean" and "out." *I got cleaned out at the poker game last night, so can you pay for dinner? Christmas shopping this year really cleaned me out.* **5.** To rid a group or organization of someone or something. A noun or pronoun can be used between "clean" and "out." *After five losing seasons, the team's owner cleaned out the front office.* **6.** To use a particular resource in its entirety. A noun or pronoun can be used between "clean" and "out." *Unfortunately, that big event cleaned out our department's funds. It looks like we don't have any cookies left—the boys must have cleaned them out after school.* **7.** To cause one to thoroughly empty one's bowels. A noun or pronoun can be used between "clean" and "out." *That bout of illness really cleaned me out.*

clean sheet **1.** An opportunity to start fresh despite past mistakes or problems. *I know we've had our differences, but I'd like to repair our friendship. Can we start with a clean sheet?* **2.** In sports, a game or series of games in which one side wins with the opposing side(s) being unable to score any points. Primarily heard in UK. *The football team has kept a clean sheet for the last three games. I don't think anyone can score against them!*

clean slate An opportunity to start fresh despite past mistakes or problems. *I know we've had our differences, but I'd like to repair our friendship. Can we start over with a clean slate? I really appreciate you giving me a clean slate after I failed that first test.*

clean (someone or something) out of (something) To remove someone or something from something. *After five losing seasons, the team's owner cleaned the entire coaching staff out of the front office. We need to clean all this junk out of the garage so that I can actually put my car in it!*

clean (someone's) clock To thoroughly trounce, defeat, or beat up someone. *Watch it, pal, or I'll clean your clock for you! The visitors really cleaned the home team's clock tonight!*

clean sweep **1.** A large-scale removal of unwanted people or objects to expedite change. *In an effort to save the company, the new CEO made a clean sweep and replaced everyone in the finance department. Wow, the garage looks completely different after our big clean sweep!* **2.** A victory by a large margin, especially one in which the opposing side accumulated none or a very small fraction of the votes, points, etc., required to win. Used especially in politics. *The election was a clean sweep for the senator, who*

won in nearly every county. My team achieved a clean sweep at the national mathematics competition.

clean the floor (up) with (one) 1. To deliver a violent and prolonged physical attack. *I'm worried that the captain of the football team will clean the floor with me if he finds out that I'm secretly seeing his girlfriend. Oh, my boyfriend knows that I would clean the floor up with him if he ever lies to me about something that serious.* 2. To defeat an opponent decisively. ("Up" is not typically part of the phrase in this usage.) *The final score was 17-1? Wow, we really cleaned the floor with that team!*

clean up 1. To clean; to make a person or space cleaner or neater in appearance; to tidy up. In this usage, a noun or pronoun can be used between "clean" and "up." *You really need to clean up your room. It's like a pigsty in there! Get me a sponge so I can clean this sticky table up. I'll clean up the baby while you take the stroller out to the car.* 2. To obtain a lot of earnings, winnings, or desired goods (most often money) from a particular venture or action. *I'm buying you dinner because I really cleaned up at the poker game last night! If our little invention gets mass-produced, we'll clean up! I cleaned up at the thrift store—look at all this neat stuff I got for five bucks!* 3. To stop the practice of illegal or seedy behavior or activities in a particular place. In this usage, a noun or pronoun can be used between "clean" and "up." *This part of town used to be dominated by the drug trade until the police were able to clean it up.* 4. To easily attain victory (typically over an opponent). *Half the players on that team were sidelined with injuries, so we cleaned up.* 5. To refine something (such as a piece of writing) by removing errors, inconsistencies, offensive elements, etc. In this usage, a noun or pronoun can be used between "clean" and "up." *I paid an editor to clean up my manuscript, and after that I got multiple offers! No radio station will play this song as-is—you need to clean it up a bit and remove the foul language.* 6. To address, rectify, or complete something. *You go ahead up to the room—I'll clean up the paperwork at the front desk.*

clean up nice(ly) To appear presentable after grooming oneself. This is a set phrase used to compliment one's appearance. However, because it implies that one was previously dirty or unattractive, it can be received as an insult or backhanded compliment. *Did you see Owen in his suit and tie? He sure cleans up nice! All I said was that she cleans up nicely, and she got mad at me!*



clean up (one's) act To improve one's behavior. *After I got in yet another fight at school, the headmaster told me that I had to clean up my act or else I'd be expelled.*

cleaned out **1.** Having significantly depleted finances. *I'm cleaned out after the poker game last night, so can you pay for dinner? I just had all my bills come due at once, so I'm cleaned out right now.* **2.** Having been caused to thoroughly empty one's bowels. *I am really cleaned out after that bout with the stomach bug.*

cleaned out See [be cleaned out](#).

cleanliness is next to godliness A phrase that strongly encourages and promotes neatness and personal hygiene. *My grandmother is always adamant that we wash our hands before every meal because cleanliness is next to godliness.*

cleans the Augean stables To rid a place or entity of an accumulation of something (often corruption). In Greek mythology, Hercules was tasked with cleansing the Augean stables—which had not been cleaned in 30 years. *The town council is so full of corruption that I'm skeptical that any new member can cleans the Augean stables.*

clear as a bell See [\(as\) clear as a bell](#).

clear as crystal See [\(as\) clear as crystal](#).

clear as mud See [\(as\) clear as mud](#).

clear away **1.** To move someone or something aside, especially if it causes an obstruction or is no longer needed. *Now that I've cleared away those overgrown bushes, our living room gets so much more sunlight! Tell the busboys to go and clear away all the dinner plates so that we can start serving dessert.* **2.** To move away from something. *The sound of approaching sirens caused most of the partiers to clear away.*

clear-cut **1.** adjective Easily understandable and unquestionable; free of doubt. *I know you're unhappy about it, but grandma's will was clear-cut—all of her money goes to Elise. There is no one clear-cut path to success.* **2.** verb To cut down all the trees in a particular forested tract. *The environmental group is attempting to stop the logging company from clear-cutting a vast swath of forest.* **3.** adjective Describing a forested tract that has been cut in such a way. *The clear-cut tract looks like an alien landscape with its acres of*

stumps.

clear of (something) **1.** adjective Away from or avoiding (something). *Keep clear of Mr. Jamison, he's very irritable today. If you boys are going to play outside, please stay clear of the street.* **2.** verb To exonerate oneself or another of a criminal charge or allegation of wrongdoing. In this usage, a noun or pronoun is used between "clear" and "of." *Vince hired a high-powered attorney to try to clear himself of the crime.*

clear off **1.** To remove something, often multiple objects, from a particular place or surface. In this usage, a noun or pronoun can be used between "clear" and "off." *Just clear those books off the desk and stack them over here.* **2.** To leave a place. To convey this meaning, the phrase is often used as an imperative. *You all clear off, or I'll call the cops!* **3.** To become clear or sunny, as of the sky after a period of clouds or fog. *It sure became a beautiful, sunny day once the fog cleared off!*

clear (one's) lines In rugby and soccer, to kick the ball from or near one's own goal line far up the field. *Though their opponents have been bringing continuous offensive pressure, the home team's defense has been there each time to clear their lines.*

clear (one's) name To exonerate oneself or another of a criminal charge or allegation of wrongdoing. *I was only accused of that crime because I look like the perpetrator, so I was able to clear my name. Good luck trying to clear your name once people think you've done something wrong.*

clear (one's) throat **1.** Literally, to cough or make a guttural sound in an attempt to relieve a blockage in the throat, as is often caused by phlegm. *I'm worried that I'm getting sick because I've had to clear my throat constantly all day long.* **2.** To make a coughing sound in order to attract attention. *When the boss cleared her throat, we immediately stopped talking so that she could start the meeting.*

clear out **1.** To remove things from a space or area. A noun or pronoun can be used between "clear" and "out." *The kids always seem to relish clearing out their desks at the end of the school year. We need to clear some of this junk out of the garage so that I can actually put my car in it!* **2.** To leave a place, perhaps quickly. *The staff cleared out when they saw the boss asking for volunteers to work on the weekend. Clear out, everyone. We are now closed.* **3.** To impel or force to leave a place. A noun or pronoun can be

used between "clear" and "out." *If we call the cops, they'll clear out that raucous house party immediately. The fire alarm cleared the building out in a hurry.* **4.** To become or cause to become empty, as of a place or area. A noun or pronoun can be used between "clear" and "out." *Let's wait to leave until the parking lot has cleared out more.*

clear sailing Describing a situation that is free of obstacles or challenges, especially after obstacles or challenges have been overcome. *We should be there soon—now that we're past the traffic jam, it should be clear sailing from here on out.*

clear (someone or something) out of (some place) **1.** To remove from a space or area. *We need to clear some of this junk out of the garage so that I can actually put my car in it!* **2.** To impel or force to leave a place. *If we call the cops, they'll clear everyone out of that raucous house party immediately.*

clear (something) for publication To confirm that something is ready to be published; to approve for publication. *We need to clear this story for publication as soon as possible so we get it out there before any of our competitors.*

clear (something) from (something) To remove something, often multiple objects, from a particular place or surface. A noun or pronoun can be used between "clear" and "from." *Just clear those books from the desk and stack them over here.*

clear (something) with (someone) To get someone's approval or permission to do something. *Did you clear this request for funds with the head of finance? Mom said no, but I'll clear it with dad—he'll definitely let us go to the concert.*

clear the air **1.** To remove or improve stale air or an unpleasant odor. *Please open a window and clear the air in here—it's too stuffy.* **2.** To discuss or otherwise confront a troublesome issue, usually with the goal of alleviating tension or confusion. *The silent treatment isn't helping the situation between you two, so just clear the air already. Once we cleared the air, we found that it had just been a simple misunderstanding.* **3.** To remove doubt from a situation. *They were able to clear the air by producing the document in question, so that we could all see it for ourselves.*

clear the atmosphere To alleviate tension, often in a group setting.

Similar to the phrase "clear the air." *I know my parents are still mad at me for missing curfew, so I'm going to try to clear the atmosphere this morning by apologizing profusely.*

clear the deck(s) **1.** Literally, of sailors, to prepare for something (such as a battle) by removing or securing objects on the deck of a ship. *That enemy ship is getting too close—clear the deck!* **2.** By extension, to cease doing something in preparation for a more important task or happening. *I know you're busy with that paperwork, but clear the decks—I've got a big client coming in this afternoon.* **3.** To flee hastily; to depart quickly *Uh oh, here comes mean old Mr. Jerome. Clear the decks, everyone! The staff cleared the decks when they saw the boss asking for volunteers to work on the weekend.*

clear the table To remove objects from a table. This phrase is often said after a meal, as one removes dishes, silverware, and leftover food from the table. *I'll clear the table, and Chris will wash the dishes. Clear the table of all that junk so I can put down these placemats.*

clear the way **1.** To make a physical path clear of obstacles by stepping aside or moving objects out of the way. This phrase is usually said as an imperative as someone or something in need of more space approaches. *Clear the way! We need to get this cart down the hallway! Make sure you clear the way for the floats when they come down the parade route.* **2.** To make it possible for something to happen by removing challenges, restrictions, or resistance. *The compromise in congress cleared the way for the spending bill.*

clear the way for To make it possible for something else to happen. *The compromise with congress cleared the way for the president's spending bill. The blockers need to help clear the way for a touchdown.*

clear up **1.** To make clear or understandable. A noun or pronoun can be used between "clear" and "up." *That tutoring session really cleared up my confusion about sine and cosine. How did two teens clear up a murder mystery that stumped the police?* **2.** To alleviate tension in a particular situation. A noun or pronoun can be used between "clear" and "up." *The silent treatment isn't helping the situation between you two, so just talk to Betsy and clear this issue up already.* **3.** To heal an inflammatory skin condition, such as acne or a rash. A noun or pronoun can be used between "clear" and "up." *That acne cream cleared up my skin practically overnight.*



4. Of an ailment, to resolve or be resolved. A noun or pronoun can be used between "clear" and "up." *The doctor thinks this new allergy medicine will clear my symptoms right up. It seems that my cold has finally cleared up, thank goodness—it's nice to get through the day without using a whole box of tissues!* **5.** To become clear or sunny, as of the sky after a period of clouds or fog. In this usage, a noun or pronoun is not usually used between "clear" and "up." *It sure became a beautiful, sunny day once the sky cleared up!*

cleave to (one) To have sexual intercourse with one's spouse only, and no one else. *I would never cheat on my husband—after all, I vowed to cleave to him until my dying day.*

clever boots A light-hearted or humorous way to refer to an intelligent or clever person. Primarily heard in Australia. *Judy's such a clever boots. She solved the puzzle in 30 seconds.*

clever clogs A light-hearted or humorous way to refer to an intelligent or clever person. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *He's such a clever clogs. There is no question he can't answer.*

clever dick A person who irritates others by constantly trying to prove their superior intelligence. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *Don't be such a clever dick! It's not necessary to correct everyone's grammar all of the time.*

click with (one) **1.** To have a positive connection or friendly rapport with one, often quickly. *I just don't click with those people—I doubt we have anything in common. I clicked with Ashley immediately, and we've been best friends ever since.* **2.** To quickly resonate with one or a group. *If our invention clicks with consumers, then we'll be millionaires!* **3.** To make sense to one; to be able to be understood by one. *The tutor's explanation of sine and cosine really clicked with me—I think I finally understand it now.*

clickbait Online articles (especially on social media sites) that use provocative or intriguing headlines (often in combination with images) to drive traffic to the source. *I wouldn't put too much faith in that article about "the one food no one should ever eat"—it's probably just clickbait.*

cliffhanger **1.** An ending of a piece of fiction (e.g., a television episode, chapter of a book, a film, etc.) characterized by a dramatically suspenseful and uncertain end. *A good summer book always has a cliffhanger at the end of each chapter so that you never want to put it down! Judging by that movie's cliffhanger, I'd say we'll be seeing a sequel coming out fairly soon.* **2.**

A serial television or film production characterized by such endings. *That show is a cliffhanger—the episodes never really have endings.* **3.** Any contest, competition, or other such situation in which the outcome is suspenseful and uncertain until the very end. *The two teams have been neck and neck for the entire second half, and with two minutes left this match has become a real cliffhanger. This election is looking like a cliffhanger, and we won't be able to truly say who's won until all the votes are counted.*

climb down To physically descend to a lower point by climbing. *Climb down from there this minute, young lady! My little brother climbed down from the tree and ran across the yard to join me.*

climb on (one's) high horse To adopt an attitude of moral superiority. *My sister was a troublemaker as a teenager, yet she always climbs on her high horse and lectures me about everything. The radio host is known for always climbing on his high horse, despite the fact that everyone knows he's a creep.*

climb on the bandwagon To join or follow something once it is successful or popular. *I can't stand these people who just climb on the bandwagon after a win. Where were they last year when the team was terrible? A: "I thought your mom hated that candidate." B: "Well, he's the president now, so she's climbed on the bandwagon."*

climb on(to) (someone or something) To mount someone or something. *We can reach the cookies on that shelf if you climb on my back. I was nervous, but I climbed onto the horse nonetheless.*

climb out To leave a place or area by climbing or clambering. *It doesn't look like there are any other ways out of this canyon. We'll have to climb out. The back seats in my car are so low that it feels like you have to climb out when you sit back there.*

climb Parnassus To write poetry. Parnassus is a mountain in Greece that was sacred to the Muses. *With the literary magazine deadline looming, I need to climb Parnassus this weekend—and pray that some decent poems come out of it!*

climb the social ladder To improve one's position within the hierarchical structure or makeup of a culture, society, or social environment. *Miss Dumfrey hopes to climb the social ladder by marrying the local diplomat. John's had a chip on his shoulder from being raised in a trailer*

park, so climbing the social ladder has been his only aim since leaving home.

climb the walls To be anxious or annoyed to the point of frenzy. *If she makes another foolish blunder like that, I'll be ready to climb the walls. The doctor hasn't called me with the test results yet, so I've been climbing the walls.*

climb up To scale; to climb. *Everyone else was able to climb up the rope in gym class, but I struggled, thanks to my scrawny arms. How long did it take them to climb up this mountain?*

climbing the walls Anxious or annoyed to the point of frenzy. *The doctor hasn't called me with the test results yet, so I've been climbing the walls. If she makes another foolish blunder like that, I'll be climbing the walls.*

clinch the deal In business, to secure agreement on an offer, proposal, or some other exchange. *After two weeks of negotiations, we were finally able to clinch the deal with the other firm.*

cling on by (one's) fingernails To narrowly avoid problems or failure. *They're clinging on by their fingernails out there—the other team's offensive is totally overwhelming them. Now that I have three small children to care for, I feel as if I'm clinging on by my fingernails every day.*

cling on by (one's) fingertips To narrowly avoid problems or failure. *They're clinging on by their fingertips out there—the other team's offensive is totally overwhelming them. Now that I have three small children to care for, I feel as if I'm clinging on by my fingertips every day.*

cling to (someone or something) 1. Literally, to hold on to someone or something tightly. *The little girl clung to her dad's legs and cried as he tried to leave for work. I clung to the side of the rock and prayed that a search party would find me.* 2. By extension, to remain devoted to or entrenched in something, often a belief or opinion. *In this ever-changing world, you can't just stubbornly cling to your old beliefs.*

cling together 1. Of two or more things, to adhere to one another. *The pages in this book are so thin that they usually cling together.* 2. Of two or more people, to hold each other tightly. *The wind was so strong that we had to cling together just to cross the parking lot!*

clinging vine A person, typically a woman, whose relationship with

someone or others is characterized by emotional overdependence and/or helplessness. *I was at first attracted to her intrepid sense of adventure, but when we began dating, it became obvious she was a bit of a clinging vine emotionally.*

clip on 1. An earring that clips onto the earlobe, as opposed to being inserted through a piercing. *Jen never got her ears pierced, so we're going to need to find her some nice clip ons for her wedding day.* **2.** A necktie that clips onto the collar, as opposed to being tied. *When I was a kid, I used to wear a clip on before I knew how to tie a tie.*

clip (one's) wings To restrict one's freedom, power, or full potential. A reference to the practice of clipping a bird's wings to prevent it from flying. *The kids need to be able to explore the world around them—don't clip their wings. The boss is always trying to clip my wings and micro-manage me.*

clip on(to) (someone or something) To attach something to someone or something else by using a clip. A noun or pronoun can be used between "clip" and "on." *Clip on your ID badge before you leave so that you can get back into the building. I clipped the doctor's note onto the rest of my paperwork.*

clip over the ear A slap, smack, or cuff on the side of the head, usually as a reprimand for bad behavior. *If you don't start your homework right now, I'm going to give you a clip over the ear!*

clip (something) from (something) To cut something so that it is no longer attached to something else. *Can you clip this tag from my shirt? I clipped some coupons from the newspaper but totally forgot to bring them to the store with me.*

clip (something) out of (something) To cut something so that it is no longer attached to something else, often a publication (such as a magazine or newspaper). *I clipped some coupons out of the newspaper but totally forgot to bring them to the store with me.*

cloak-and-dagger Using or involving secrecy, deception, or espionage, especially the kind portrayed in dramatic depictions of spying. *During the Cold War, there were always rumors of the latest cloak-and-dagger tactics being used by spies. I know I said I wanted to meet you in private, but you didn't have to be so cloak-and-dagger about it. A parking garage isn't what I had in mind.*

cloak (someone or something) in secrecy To hide someone or something from another person or from public view. *The residents complained that the board cloaked its decision process in secrecy, not allowing anyone to see the final plan.*

clock cleaned See [get \(one's\) clock cleaned](#).

clock in **1.** To mark one's arrival at work, as on a time clock (a device that stamps the arrival and departure time onto each employee's timecard, or records the times digitally). In this usage, a noun or pronoun can be used between "clock" and "in." *I got in trouble with the boss because I clocked in 20 minutes late today. Go see Janet, she'll clock you in.* **2.** To complete a task or competition in a certain length of time. *Unfortunately, you clocked in five-tenths of a second behind the swimmer who won the race.* **3.** To reach a certain speed. *Did you see that? His slap shot clocked in at 80 miles per hour!*

(the) clock is ticking **1.** There is only a finite amount of time left. *The clock is ticking, so be sure to complete your exams efficiently so you don't have to skip questions. They have a chance to tie the game, but the clock is ticking. I know it is a pessimistic view, but in my mind, the clock is ticking on the human race.* **2.** Of a woman, there is a limited amount of time in which to be able to conceive a child. *I've been very successful in my career and want to see it to its fullest, but I would also love to have kids, and I know my clock is ticking. For women who may want to have children, the clock is always ticking—a concern that men never have to worry about.*

clock out To mark one's departure from work, as on a time clock (a device that stamps the arrival and departure time onto each employee's timecard, or records the times digitally). A noun or pronoun can be used between "clock" and "out." *I really need to clock out now because my shift was over an hour ago. Go see Janet, she'll clock you out.*

clock (someone or something) at (a certain speed) To track the speed at which someone or something moves. (The speed is stated after "at.") *You're getting a ticket because I clocked you at 90 miles an hour—and the speed limit here is only 55.*

clock up To accumulate, or to record the total or accumulated amount of something. A noun or pronoun can be used between "clock" and "up." *Considering how many miles I've clocked up on my car, I think it's time to get*

a new one. Their star player has clocked up an impressive number of points this early in the season. Clock another win up for the home team.

clock-watcher One who often checks the time during an activity or event, as due to boredom and/or a desire to leave. *He's a total clock-watcher, so I doubt that he likes his job.*

clog (something) with (something) To obstruct something with something. A noun or pronoun can be used between "clog" and "up." *This cold has clogged my nose with so much mucus that I can hardly breathe. One of the kids clogged the pipes with action figures.*

clog up 1. To obstruct. A noun or pronoun can be used between "clog" and "up." *This cold is clogging up my nose and I can hardly breathe.* **2.** To make constipated. A noun or pronoun can be used between "clog" and "up." *That type of food always clogs me up—I was constipated for days the last time I ate it.*

clogs to clogs in three generations The idea that a family can escape poverty for a time but then become impoverished again, all in the span of three generations. Primarily heard in UK. *With the way you're spending our family's money, we'll be clogs to clogs in three generations!*

close a/the deal To reach an agreement with another party, thus concluding negotiations. *We need to move in a month, so how quickly can you close a deal and get our house sold? After months of negotiating, I hired a high-powered attorney to finally close the deal.*

close a/the sale To reach an agreement with a buyer; to finalize a sale by persuading the interested party to complete the purchase. *We need to move in a month, so how quickly can you close a sale? Obviously, we're looking for salespeople who can consistently close the sale.*

close as a clam Safe from harm. Likened to a clam closing its shell to protect itself. *All of the doors and windows are locked. Don't worry, we'll be close as a clam in here.*

close as the bark to the tree As connected as is possible. Often used to describe a particularly intimate relationship or friendship. *Jenna and Elise are as close as the bark to the tree—I rarely see one without the other!*

close as two coats of paint See [\(as\) close as two coats of paint](#).

close at hand Nearby; physically within one's reach. *Your mother will*

need you close at hand to help as she makes the big dinner. I always keep a glass of water close at hand when I sleep, because I hate waking up thirsty.

close but no cigar A phrase said when one is almost correct or successful but ultimately fails. Cigars were once commonly used as prizes or awards. *You all had some very good guesses—close but no cigar.*

close by Near. In close proximity to something or someone. A: *"Where are Mark and Derek staying?"* B: *"I think they're close by. Maybe a block or two away, actually."* *Even though he likes to toddle off, I try to keep little Billy close by at all times.*

close call **1.** A narrow escape from or avoidance of a situation, often an unfavorable or dangerous one. *It was a close call, but I managed to avoid hitting the deer that ran directly in front of my car.* **2.** A decision or judgment that is difficult to make due to each possibility being nearly equal in one's consideration. *I'm sorry, it really was a close call, but we've decided to go with another candidate for this position.* **3.** A contest or competition whose winner is not clear due to very close competition or results that are difficult to distinguish. *With the two candidates having nearly equal amounts of delegates, this election is going to be a very close call.*

a close chewer and a tight spitter One who is very frugal or thrifty. *I'm sure he hasn't spent any of that money he won because he's such a close chewer and a tight spitter.*

close down **1.** To cease business operations for any length of time (often permanently). *I loved that restaurant, so I'm very disappointed that it closed down. That shop always closes down for two weeks in the summer to accommodate the owner's vacation.* **2.** To force a business to cease operations. In this usage, a noun or pronoun is often used between "close" and "down." *After a thorough investigation, the police were finally able to close the shop down for money laundering.*

close enough for government work Good enough; OK; only satisfactory. The phrase implies that government work is usually of mediocre quality. *When my project ripped in half as I walked out the door, my mom glued it back together and sent me on my way, saying, "It's close enough for government work!"*

close enough to use the same toothpick Having a very close relationship; inseparable. *I haven't talked to Patty in years, but as kids we*

were close enough to use the same toothpick.

close in **1.** To physically surround, encircle, or approach someone or something. *As the opposing troops closed in on us, I knew we would never win the battle.* **2.** To trap or confine someone or something in a particular space. In this usage, a noun or pronoun can be used between "close" and "in." *The blizzard has closed us in, unfortunately, and we won't even be able to go skiing.* **3.** To approach very quickly or become imminent, as of a deadline. **4.** To overwhelm or engulf someone, as of emotions.

close (in) around (someone or something) To physically surround or encircle someone or something, often very closely and encroachingly. *As the opposing troops closed in around us, I knew we would never win the battle. I need to get out of this little cabin—I feel like the walls are closing around me.*

close in for the kill **1.** Literally, to approach someone or something with the intent of killing it. *The lion closed in for the kill when it saw the injured antelope.* **2.** By extension, to approach someone or something with the intent to achieve a particular outcome. *If someone finally shows interest in buying the house, I'm sure our realtor will close in for the kill.*

close in on (one) **1.** To physically surround, encircle, or approach someone or something. *As the opposing troops closed in on us, I knew we would never win the battle. When I'm in a small space for too long, I start to feel as though the walls are closing in on me.* **2.** To overwhelm or engulf someone, as of emotions. *For a long time, I couldn't drive because feelings of fear closed in on me every time I got behind the wheel.* **3.** To approach very quickly or become imminent, as of a deadline or other requirement. *I procrastinated, and now the deadline for my paper is really closing in on me!*

close of play **1.** In cricket or a tennis tournament, the end of play for a given day. Primarily heard in UK. *At the close of play, England leads India by 140 runs, with only one wicket lost.* **2.** In business, a working day's end. Often used in the construction "by the close of play." Primarily heard in UK. *I'm under a lot of pressure to finish this report by the close of play.*

close off **1.** To prevent access to a particular area or thing. In this usage, a noun or pronoun can be used between "close" and "off." *We had to close off that section of the restaurant for a private party. I had to take a detour on my way home because the water department closed off a bunch of streets.* **2.** To

avoid emotional connection with others; to isolate. In this usage, a reflexive pronoun can be used between "close" and "off." *Todd really closed himself off after his last break-up. I have a hard time making friends because I usually close myself off from other people.* **3.** To refuse to listen to viewpoints, ideas, or opinions that differ from one's own. In this usage, a reflexive pronoun can be used between "close" and "off." *Grandpa, you can't just close yourself off to the ways of the modern world. Can you please listen to what I think, instead of automatically closing yourself off?*

close on To complete the process of buying or selling property, most often a house. In this usage, "close on" is a set phrase followed by a noun or pronoun. *So when do you guys finally close on the new house?*

close (one) out of (something) To exclude one from something. A noun or pronoun can be used between "close" and "out." *I'm in this relationship too, so stop closing me out of decisions. Unfortunately, the teacher closed us out of the class because we got to the lecture hall late.*

close (one's) eyes and think of England **1.** Typically of a woman (specifically a wife), to endure unwanted or unpleasant sexual intercourse—as out of a sense of duty or obligation—by distracting oneself with more pleasant thoughts. Refers to alleged advice for wives in the 19th and early 20th centuries, placing unwanted sexual activity as the price of the security of marriage. Primarily heard in UK. *It's horrible to think that women who were not attracted to their husbands, but who depended on the security of their marriage, were once told to simply close their eyes and think of England to satisfy his desires.* **2.** By extension, to endure any unpleasant or unwanted task or experience by thinking of one's duty, the benefits of the experience, or by distracting oneself with more pleasant thoughts. Primarily heard in UK. *Whenever I have to have a tooth filled at the dentist, I just close my eyes and think of England.*

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of England to satisfy their husband's desires. **2.** By extension, to endure any unpleasant or unwanted task or experience by thinking one's duty, the benefits of the experience, or by distracting oneself with more pleasant thoughts. Primarily heard in UK. *Whenever I have to have a tooth filled at the dentist, I just close my eyes and think of England.*

close (one's) eyes to (something) To willfully ignore or overlook something. *All parents want to believe their child is perfect, so many close their eyes to their child's wrongdoings or flaws on some level. Our boss would rather close his eyes to the truth than figure out how to keep the company from going bankrupt.*

close only counts in horseshoes (and hand grenades)

Being nearly successful or accurate is not the same as being successful or accurate; being close to achieving something does not provide any benefit. *It doesn't matter that we only lost the game by two points—we still lost! And close only counts in horseshoes. A: "You should be proud that you came so close to being valedictorian." B: "Close only counts in horseshoes and hand grenades."*

close out 1. verb To prevent from entering a certain place or area. A noun or pronoun can be used between "close" and "out." *Keep that door shut—I'm trying to close out the bugs.* **2.** verb To sell the remaining inventory of an item that will not be restocked. A noun or pronoun can be used between "close" and "out." *We need close out this model of TV, so we're offering a deep discount.* **3.** verb To end the registration period for something. A noun or pronoun can be used between "close" and "out." *I'm sorry, so many people signed up for the workshop that we had to close it out.* **4.** verb To exclude one from something. A noun or pronoun can be used between "close" and "out." *I'm in this relationship too, so stop closing me out of decisions. Unfortunately, we got to the studio late and were closed out of the class.* **5.** verb To bring about the end of something; to conclude something. A noun or pronoun can be used between "close" and "out." *If the home team wins tonight, they can close out this playoff series and move on to the next round.* **6.** verb To discontinue something. A noun or pronoun can be used between "close" and "out." *What steps do I have to take to close out my account with your bank?* **7.** adjective A sale of the remaining inventory of an item that will not be restocked, usually at a significant discount. In this usage, the phrase is typically hyphenated or written as one word. *I bought so many things because*

the store was having a big close-out sale.

close ranks **1.** Literally, to move closer to the other troops while in a military formation. *As soon as the captain called for us to close ranks, we all moved closer together.* **2.** By extension, to show support for someone or something, especially as a response to criticism. This phrase is typically applied to a group of people. *Our family was sure to close ranks behind mom as she suffered public backlash during her campaign for mayor.*

close shave A narrow escape from or avoidance of a situation, often an unfavorable or dangerous one. *I had a close shave this morning when a tractor trailer unexpectedly swerved into my lane.*

close the barn door after the horse has bolted To try to prevent or rectify a problem after the damage has already been done. *It isn't worth replacing the oil filter on the engine now—you can't close the barn door after the horse has bolted.*

close the books on (someone or something) To decide that a particular situation has ended; to conclude something; to stop considering something as an option. *Mindy was our top candidate for the job, but we had to close the books on her when we learned that she had lied on her resume. I think it's time for me to close the books on this situation because I'm clearly never getting my money back.*

close the deal See [close a/the deal](#).

close the door on (something) **1.** Literally, to shut a door on something else, usually accidentally. *Whoa, hang on, I closed the door on my gown! I accidentally closed the door on my finger, and I think it might be broken.* **2.** To hinder something; to make something impossible. *If they find out that you lied on your resume, it will definitely close the door on this job opportunity.* **3.** To conclude something. *Graduation will close the door on my high school experience.*

close the sale See [close a/the sale](#).

close the stable door after the horse has bolted To try to prevent or rectify a problem after the damage has already been done. *It isn't worth replacing the oil filter on the engine now—you can't close the stable door after the horse has bolted.*

close to home Affecting one deeply and emotionally because one can

strongly relate to it. *My patient's lung cancer diagnosis is close to home for me because my uncle recently died of the same thing. Because I was bullied as a kid, I teared up when my son told me that he gets teased at school—it's just so close to home.*

close to (one's) heart Personally important to, or loved by, someone. *The little girl who came to visit the elderly woman every weekend was very close to her heart.*

close to (someone or something) 1. verb To exclude one from something. A noun or pronoun can be used between "close" and "to." *This is an advanced class, so it is closed to freshmen.* 2. adjective Near or similar to something. This usage can be applied to physical closeness or to more abstract ideas, like personal attributes. *You're too close to the curb, so pull the car up a little. In terms of talent, Darrell doesn't even come close to you!* 3. adjective Having a very friendly relationship with someone. *I was very close to Patty when we were kids, but I haven't talked to her in years.*

close to the bone Very close to the truth in a hurtful way. *Of course I'm mad—dad's remarks about how I'm wasting my life were close to the bone.*

close to the wind Into the direction that the wind is coming from. A nautical phrase. *We should be sailing close to the wind in conditions like this.*

close up 1. verb Literally, to shut something that is open. *Be sure to close up the oven after you take out the cookies.* 2. verb To sew an opening shut at the end of a surgical procedure. In this usage, a noun or pronoun is used between "close" and "up." *The procedure is finished. Now we need to close him up.* 3. verb To heal, as of a cut or wound. *The cut isn't too deep, so it should close up on its own, no stitches needed.* 4. verb To become completely closed or sealed shut. *After I got hit in the face with a baseball, my eye swelled so much that it actually closed up.* 5. verb To cease business operations for any length of time (often permanently). *I loved that restaurant, so I'm very disappointed that it closed up permanently. That shop always closes up for two weeks in the summer to accommodate the owner's vacation.* 6. verb To close something, typically a place, securely. *I hope you closed up the store before you left for the night.* 7. noun A shot in which the camera is positioned very close to the subject. In this usage, the phrase is typically hyphenated. *I want the next scene to start with a close-up of Caroline standing in the doorway. Her close-ups of flowers are just gorgeous—she's a*

very underrated photographer. **8.** noun A detailed or intimate portrayal or exploration of something. In this usage, the phrase is typically hyphenated. *This novel is a close-up of Depression-era America.*

close up shop To cease business operations for any length of time (often permanently). This phrase can be used to describe an enterprise or an employee. *I loved that restaurant, so I'm very disappointed that it closed up shop. The owner always closes up shop for two weeks in the summer to accommodate her vacation. You need to close up shop and go home—your shift ended an hour ago.*

close with (someone or something) **1.** verb To conclude something, usually an event or performance, with someone or something. *For the talent show, let's close with a choir performance.* **2.** adjective Having a very friendly relationship with someone. *I was very close with Patty when we were kids, but I haven't talked to her in years.*

closed-door (used as a modifier before a noun) Not open to or in view of the public; private and/or secret. *There have been a lot of closed-door meetings recently to discuss the sale of the company.*

a closed mouth gathers no feet If you say nothing at all, then you can't say anything embarrassing or inappropriate. A play on the idiom "put (one's) foot in (one's) mouth" (to say something stupid). A: "Oh my god, I can't believe I said that. Why are you being so quiet?" B: "Because a closed mouth gathers no feet!" *Knowing that I would inevitably say something ridiculous, I kept my mouth shut—a closed mouth gathers no feet, after all.*

closes down See [close down](#).

closes in See [close in](#).

closes in for the kill See [close in for the kill](#).

closes off See [close off](#).

closes out See [close out](#).

closes up See [close up](#).

closet (someone/oneself) with (someone) To sequester someone or oneself with someone else in order to accomplish something. *If we can just closet one party with the other, I think they will finally reach an agreement.*

closing her out of See [close \(one\) out of \(something\)](#).

closing in on See [close in on \(one\)](#).

closing on See [close on](#).

closing time The time at which an establishment closes for the day. *Aw man, it's closing time already? I barely got any of my shopping done! I think we can squeeze in one more beer before it's closing time!*

cloth ears A humorous name for one who has not heard something that has been said. Primarily heard in UK. *Come on, cloth ears, she practically shouted the answer—how did you miss it?*

clothe (someone/oneself) in (something) To dress someone or oneself in something *She clothes her newborn in the cutest outfits. I clothed myself in a beautiful gown for the gala.*

clothes don't make the man You cannot judge a man's character based on his clothing and appearance. *A: "I can't believe John embezzled all that money. I always thought he seemed so professional." B: "Well you know what they say—the clothes don't make the man." I really need to get some better work clothes, but I just don't have the money right now. At least the clothes don't make the man!*

clothes make the man You can judge a man's character based on his clothing and appearance. *I'm not surprised John was fired for cause—he never dressed professionally, and the clothes make the man. You really need to get some better work clothes before starting this new job. The clothes make the man, you know*

the cloud A term that refers collectively to programs and servers that allow one to save and access files over the Internet, rather than on one's physical computer or personal device. *If you don't have any more space on your hard drive, start saving things to the cloud.*

cloud-cuckoo land A state or realm of unrealistic and idealized fancy, beyond the realms of possibility. Often preceded by "live/be in." *He's always got some harebrained schemes on how to fix the world, all of them right out of cloud-cuckoo land! If Tom thinks he'll be able to live off his bad poetry, he's living in cloud-cuckoo land!*

cloud nine A state of extreme happiness. Typically appears in the phrase "on cloud nine." *Ever since Mary got her promotion at work, she's been on cloud nine. I don't think I've ever seen her happier!*



cloud of suspicion A general sentiment of suspicion of wrongdoing or illegality. *There's a cloud of suspicion in work after it came to light that someone has been stealing from the cash registers.*

cloud on the horizon An omen that something bad or problematic will happen in the near future. *Financial analysts believe that the sudden drop in oil prices points to a cloud on the horizon for the national economy.*

cloud over 1. To become overcast, as of the sky. *Enjoy this sunshine while it lasts because the sky is supposed to cloud over this afternoon.* **2.** To become difficult to see through or opaque. *I wouldn't try to put makeup on in the bathroom just yet—the mirror is still clouded over from when I showered.*

cloud the issue To obfuscate or distract from the topic at hand by introducing irrelevant and/or misleading information. *Politicians are always clouding the issue during debates by pointing out their opponents' history in other issues. Don't cloud the issue with talk about your past achievements, stick to the question I'm asking you. His muddled explanation only served to cloud the issue further for his students.*

cloud up 1. To become overcast, as of the sky. *Enjoy this sunshine while it lasts because the sky is supposed to cloud up this afternoon.* **2.** To become very sad or upset. *Her face clouded up at the mention of her ex-girlfriend. When I saw the baby cloud up, I prepared myself for the wails to follow.*

clout list A secret list of people who, through advantageous connections and relationships with people of affluence, authority, or political influence, are given preferential consideration during an admissions or appointments process. *Even though he didn't do well in school, his father's connections to state senators and local politicians enabled him to be put on the university's clout list, and he eventually gained admission.*

clown around slang To joke, play, or otherwise behave in a silly way. *I can see you boys clowning around back there! Sit down and do the math problems I assigned. The kids are just clowning around with each other in the backyard, if you want to call them for dinner.*

clue-by-four A metaphorical stick one uses to "beat" correct information into an ignorant, incompetent, or slow-learning person (i.e., to help them "get a clue"). A pun on the term "two-by-four," a piece of timber that measures 2 by 4 inches (5 by 10 cm) in height and width. *I hate reading comments on*

online news articles—there are so many stupid people out there that I just want to get a big clue-by-four and knock some sense into them with it!

clue (one) in To give one new information or to correct misinformation. *Why is everyone mad at Bruce this morning? Clue me in. Someone needs to clue her in before she keeps spreading these lies.*

clue stick A metaphorical stick one uses to "beat" correct information into an ignorant, incompetent, or slow-learning person (i.e., to help them "get a clue"). *I hate reading comments on online news articles—there are so many stupid people out there that I just want to get a big clue stick and knock some sense into them with it!*

clued in See [be clued in](#).

clung to See [cling to \(someone or something\)](#).

clung together See [cling together](#).

clunk down 1. To set something down clumsily or loudly. In this usage, a noun or pronoun can be used between "clunk" and "down." *The guys lugged the couch inside and clunked it down in the middle of the living room.* **2.** To fall heavily or loudly. *Did you hear that tree branch clunk down in the middle of the night?*

cluster around (someone or something) 1. To gather around someone or something. *The kids clustered around the clown to watch him make balloon animals.* **2.** To position someone or something around someone or something else. In this usage, a noun or pronoun is used between "cluster" and "around." *Mom clustered the kids around the clown so that they could all see him make balloon animals. Now we need to cluster the purple flowers around the white ones.*

cluster together To gather or bunch together. *The kids clustered together to watch the clown make balloon animals. Why are all of our nicest Christmas ornaments clustered together on one side of the tree?*

clutch at a straw To make a desperate attempt to salvage a bad situation. A: *"But what about all those times I took the trash out when you hadn't even asked me to?"* B: *"That has nothing to do with why you're in trouble now, so stop clutching at a straw."*

clutch at (someone or something) To grasp at someone or something. *The baby clutched at her mother and wailed. My daughter*

clutched at the string on the balloon so that it wouldn't fly away.

clutch at straws **1.** To make a desperate attempt to salvage a bad situation. *A: "But what about all those times I took the trash out when you hadn't even asked me to?" B: "That has nothing to do with why you're in trouble now, so stop clutching at straws."* **2.** To consider positive suggestions or thoughts in a bad situation. *OK, you're just clutching at straws now, fantasizing about a potential buyer when your house has been on the market for months.*

clutch (one's)/the pearls To react in a scandalized or mortified manner to once-salacious but now relatively common things, events, situations, etc. *Parents should try not to clutch the pearls every time their teenagers come out of their room dressed outrageously—it only makes them want to push the envelope even further. My mother would always clutch her pearls whenever I began telling her about a new boyfriend, so eventually I stopped filling her in altogether.*

clutch (someone or something) to (something) To press or hold something firmly against something else. *Suzy clutched her new doll to her chest. Clutch this icepack to your knee to alleviate the swelling.*

clutter up To overcrowd a space or area with something. A noun or pronoun can be used between "clutter" and "up." *I have so many books at home that they're starting to clutter up the place. Every time my kids come home from college for the summer, they clutter up the whole house with their stuff.*

co-opt (someone) into (something) To convince one to take a certain action or position. *I think he was beginning to see the benefits of our plan, but we'll never co-opt him into it now that you've insulted him!*

coach (someone) for (something) To help someone to prepare for something. *My daughter struggles with public speaking, so I coached her for the debate.*

coalesce into (something) For two or more separate thing to merge or form into one thing. *Initially, I wasn't sure if the movie was a drama or comedy, but it coalesced nicely into a dramedy as the plot unfolded.*

coast along To proceed with little effort. *Because the route was mostly downhill, the car just coasted along. I'm worried that you're just coasting*

along through your senior year without taking your future seriously.

the coast is clear It is safe to proceed, typically because no one is present or nearby who may interfere. *I don't see the security guard, so go ahead—the coast is clear.*

coast to coast 1. (From) one side of the country to the other. *I've never seen the Pacific Ocean before, thanks to growing up in Boston, so I'm excited to travel coast to coast this summer. This is not an isolated issue—it's affecting people from coast to coast.* **2.** slang In basketball, a term used to describe an offensive play in which a player travels from one end of the court to the other to score a basket. *Boy, he is quick! He went coast to coast past all five defenders.*

coat and tie Semi-formal attire for men that consists of a sports coat and tie. *Tell him that he doesn't need to get all dressed up for this event—a coat and tie is perfectly fine.*

coat (someone or something) with (something) To cover someone or something with something, often a substance. *Be sure to coat the kids with sunscreen before you let them play outside! You need to coat the wall with primer before you try to paint it.*

coax (someone or something) in(to) (something) 1. To convince or persuade a person or animal to enter something. *It takes the promise of many songs and books to coax my kids into going to bed. Good luck coaxing the cat into her carrier—she's been hiding under the bed ever since she heard the word "vet."* **2.** To convince or persuade a person or animal to do something. *Come on, see if you can coax her into dancing for us—I hear she's a trained ballroom dancer. Good luck coaxing the cat into going to the vet—she's been hiding under the bed ever since she heard the word "vet."*

coax (someone or something) out of (something) 1. To convince or persuade a person or animal to exit something. *Right, like I can coax a teenage boy out of bed before noon on a Saturday! Good luck coaxing the cat out of her carrier at the vet—she's already shaking in terror.* **2.** To convince or persuade a person or animal to relinquish something. *I can't believe I coaxed this vintage lamp out of the guy at the yard sale for only \$3! Good luck coaxing the cat out of her favorite seat in the house.*

coax (someone or something) to (do something) To

convince or persuade a person or animal to do something. *Come on, see if you can coax her to dance for us—I hear she's a trained ballroom dancer. Good luck coaxing the cat to give up her favorite seat in the house.*

cobble (something) up To assemble or complete something quickly and/or sloppily. *The incoherent argument in your paper tells me that you cobbled it up in study hall. Look at that rickety bike—it looks like he just cobbled it up with old junk from his basement.*

cock a snook To regard someone or something with disrespect. Primarily heard in UK. *Don't you cock a snook at my instructions—I'm your superior!*

cock-and-bull story A wildly exaggerated or falsified story or explanation. *When I questioned Wendy about her recent tardiness, she gave me some cock-and-bull story about how her train took the wrong track and she had to hitchhike to work from the station across town.*

cock block rude slang To interfere with or prevent a man from having a sexual encounter. *That girl was totally into me, until you guys came along and cock blocked me!*

cock in the henhouse The only male in an all-female environment. *Getting a male teacher is a big deal when you go to an all-girls school! Finally, a cock in the henhouse! My grandpa always complains that he's a cock in the henhouse living here with my grandma, my mom, and my twin sister.*

cock of the roost An arrogant, conceited, or overly proud person, typically a man. *He struts around campus like he's the cock of the roost, all because his dad is some politician.*

cock of the walk One who is arrogant and narcissistic. *Don't invite Joe to lunch unless you want to hear him brag about all the important things he's doing in his new job. He's just the cock of the walk lately.*

cockles of (one's) heart The deepest part of oneself. Often used in the phrase "warmed the cockles of (one's) heart." *Thank you so much—your kind words really warmed the cockles of my heart.*

cocky as the king of spades See [\(as\) cocky as the king of spades](#).

code of silence The practice of not disclosing important or vital information by members of a group, as due to the threat of violence, reprisal, being branded as a traitor, or an inherent sense of honor. *There are parts of*

the city where the code of silence is so strong that police don't even bother questioning the residents there.

codfish aristocracy A disparaging term for people who are recently rich. It was originally applied to the nouveau riche in 19th-century Boston. Primarily heard in US. *I can't stand that members of the codfish aristocracy think that they belong at formal occasions with the more established families.*

coerce (one) into (something) To force, compel, or threaten a person or animal to take a certain action. *The maid coerced her famous employer into paying her an exorbitant sum of money. It took a lot of treats to coerce the cat into her carrier for a trip to the vet.*

coexist with (someone or something) To occupy the same space as someone or something, often peacefully. *Can you please stop fighting and just coexist with your sister for a few hours? It took some time, but our cat and dog are now able to coexist with each other.*

coffee and A non-specific request for coffee and something else, usually a pastry. *Take these croissants out to the guests who want coffee and.*

coffee shop A café where coffee, tea, and other light refreshments are typically served. *I definitely need some caffeine before class, so I'll meet you at the coffee shop after I finish up at the library.*

coffee table book A large hardbound book primarily containing pictures that is often displayed on a coffee table in a common area as a conversation piece. *Jenna published a coffee table book that featured beautiful photographs from her European vacations.*

coffee-table book A large, typically hardcover book full of glossy photos that is meant to be displayed on a coffee-table for casual viewing, as opposed to thorough reading. *At least there were some interesting coffee-table books to flip through while we waited.*

cog in the machine Someone or something that is functionally necessary but of small significance or importance within a larger operation or organization. *I'm tired of working in this thankless IT support job. I don't want to be just a cog in the machine anymore!*

a cog in the machine Someone or something that is functionally necessary but of small significance or importance within a larger operation or organization. *I'm tired of working in this thankless IT support job. I don't*

want to be just a cog in the machine anymore!

cog in the wheel Someone or something that is functionally necessary but of small significance or importance within a larger operation or organization. *I'm tired of working in this thankless IT support job. I don't want to be just a cog in the wheel anymore!*

a cog in the wheel Someone or something that is functionally necessary but of small significance or importance within a larger operation or organization. *I'm tired of working in this thankless IT support job. I don't want to be just a cog in the wheel anymore!*

cogitate on (something) To contemplate something. *This is a big decision, so I need some more time to cogitate on it, all right?*

cohabit with (someone or something) 1. Literally, to live with someone or something. This usage is often applied to different species of animals that are living together. *It took some time, but our cat and dog are now able to cohabit with each other peacefully.* 2. To live with a romantic partner whom one is not married to. *My daughter is already cohabiting with her new boyfriend, and I am not thrilled about it.* 3. euphemism To have sexual intercourse with one. *I heard a rumor that you've been cohabiting with Steve—is it true?*

coil around (someone or something) To twist around someone or something. A reflexive pronoun can be used between "coil" and "around." *The explorer froze when he felt the snake coil itself around his leg. That vine is now coiling around the tree—is there any way I can move it?*

coil up To curl oneself or something into a small, compact position. A noun or pronoun can be used between "coil" and "up." *The snake coiled itself up and began hissing at us. Coil up that hose when you're done with it.*

coil up into (something) To curl oneself or something into a certain shape. A noun or pronoun can be used between "coil" and "up." *Unfortunately, the yarn in this basket is all coiled up into a ball—it'll take some time to untangle it.*

coin a phrase To create a new expression. *Don't try to coin a phrase, just write a straightforward headline.*

coin it (in) slang To earn a lot of money, usually quickly. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *That company has such a great product that it's no surprise*

they're coining it in.

coin money To earn a very large amount of money, especially by doing something very successfully. *We'll be coining money if we can manage to secure a trading partner in China. I hear Sarah been coining money with sales from her latest novel.*

coincide with (something) 1. To happen at the same time as something else. *Election day is going to coincide with the festival, so they are expecting a low turnout.* 2. To match or be identical to something. *My personality just coincides with his—that's why we get along so well.*

cold as a well digger's ass See [\(as\) cold as a welldigger's ass \(in January\)](#).

cold check A written order to a bank for a certain amount of funds that has been dishonored, either because such funds are not available or because the given checking account does not exist. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *A lot of cold checks have been circulating in the area lately, claiming to be from the local university; in reality, they are scams trying to swindle people out of money.*

cold comfort Something that has failed as an intended source of solace. *The news that I got a meager raise is cold comfort after not getting that big promotion. The fact that it's "stage one" is cold comfort to me—it's still cancer!*

a cold day in Hell An impossible event used as an analogy for something the speaker thinks will never happen. Often used in the phrase "it will be a cold day in Hell before (something happens)." *It will be a cold day in Hell when I let you borrow my car! Shelly wants a later curfew? Well, it will be a cold day in Hell before that happens!*

a cold day in July A time or event that seems unlikely or will never come to pass. It refers to the fact that the weather is usually very hot in July. *It'll be a cold day in July before they get that new interstate built.*

cold enough for you A humorous question one asks another when it is obviously quite cold. *How are you enjoying this winter? Cold enough for you?*

cold enough to freeze the balls off a brass monkey rude Extremely cold, usually said of the weather. Though often believed to refer to

so-called "brass monkeys" of a naval ship (brass trays where cannonballs were supposedly stored), this has been widely discredited as anachronistic; it is more likely a semi-vulgar reference to bronze replicas of the Three Wise Monkeys (i.e., "Hear no evil, see no evil, speak no evil") often sold as popular tourist souvenirs in China and Japan. *I wouldn't want to be trapped out in this weather tonight, it's cold enough to freeze the balls off a brass monkey!*

cold feet Nervousness or anxiety felt before one attempts to do something. *I wasn't nervous until the morning of my wedding, but everyone assured me that it was just cold feet. Good luck getting her out on stage—she always gets cold feet before a performance.*

cold fish Someone who shows no emotion and comes across as unfriendly or disinterested. *The manager decided not to hire Bill as the store greeter because he came across like a cold fish during the interview.*

cold hands, warm heart Cold hands—or, by extension, a reserved disposition—are often traits of a kind, loving person. *A: "Don't touch me with your icy hands!" B: "Come on, cold hands, warm heart." I always thought he was aloof before he donated so generously to our cause. I guess he's just one of those cold hands, warm heart people.*

cold one A cold glass, can, or bottle of beer. *There's nothing better than a couple cold ones after a hard day's work. Pass me another cold one there, Jim.*

cold reading 1. The reading aloud of a script or performative text, as for television, theater, or film, with little or no rehearsal, practice, or study in advance. *It's always a little awkward doing a cold reading for the first time, because you know things will be much different once everyone has had a chance to get familiar with the script.* **2.** A technique or series of techniques used by paranormal performers (such as mentalists, psychics, spiritual mediums, fortune tellers, etc.) in which the appearance of clairvoyance is achieved by gleaning personal details about a subject through the use of intuition, broad questions, and educated guesses and assumptions. *It's amazing how convincing psychics can seem when all they're doing is giving a cold reading of people in the audience. I can't believe you fell for that fortune teller nonsense—it was just a cold reading!*

cold shoulder 1. noun A display or appearance of disinterest; a snub.

This phrase usually refers to the act of ignoring someone. It originated with the 19th-century practice of serving of a cold shoulder of meat to tiresome guests. *She thinks you started that rumor about you—that's why she's been giving you the cold shoulder all day.* **2.** adjective Describing a type of women's shirt that has sleeves but leaves the shoulders exposed. The phrase is typically hyphenated in this usage. *I think I'm too old to be wearing a cold shoulder top like that!*

cold snap A short period of cold temperatures. *It was finally beginning to get warm outside when we were hit with a cold snap that damaged my newly blossoming tulips.*

cold turkey The abrupt cessation of something (most often the use of a drug). *After smoking for so long, I should have never tried to quit cold turkey—the withdrawal symptoms are unbearable. I'm so impressed that you stopped gambling cold turkey!*

cold, hard cash Dollar bills and coins, as opposed to checks or credit. *The deal won't go through unless we pay him in cold, hard cash.*

collaborate with (someone or something) To work on a task with another person or group. *Which department are we collaborating with on this campaign?*

collapse into (something) **1.** To physically drop or fall into something. *Once Sarah crossed the finish line, she collapsed into her boyfriend's arms. After I got home from a 12-hour day at work, I collapsed into a comfy chair and dozed off.* **2.** To abruptly enter a negative state, such as a depression. *After I lost my job, I collapsed into a serious depression. Economists have been warning that the country could collapse into another recession if preventative measures are not taken.*

collapse under the weight of (someone or something) To fall down after supporting someone or something that is too heavy. *The roof collapsed under the weight of all that snow.*

collar-and-tie men A phrase that refers to businessmen collectively by their usual attire of a dress shirt and tie. *I like working with my hands too much to ever become one of those collar-and-tie men who stay cooped up in an office all day.*

collar (someone) **1.** To detain or restrain someone, either physically or

figuratively. Likened to grabbing someone by the collar. *I was trying to get out of the office early, but my boss collared me on my way out. I spent all afternoon running around collaring the kids to bring them in for supper. I thought I'd be able to sneak out of the assembly, but one of the nuns collared me and pulled me back inside.* **2.** Of police, to arrest or detain someone, such as a suspect of a crime. *Police were able to collar the suspect after he fled down one of the neighborhood's back alleys.*

collate (something) with (something) To pair or compare something with something else. *Collate this spreadsheet with that one and look for any discrepancies.*

collect around (someone or something) To gather around someone or something. *The kids collected around the clown to watch him make balloon animals.*

collect dust To be in a state of disuse for a prolonged period of time. *Why do you want another video game console? You already have three collecting dust under the television! My father has lots of old trinkets and memorabilia collecting dust in the attic.*

collect for (someone or something) To solicit money, especially that which is owed, for a particular reason. *People keep calling to collect for my credit card bills. There's a boy at the door collecting for charity.*

collect on (something) To request or pursue something that has been offered or promised to one. *Remember when you offered to watch the baby? Well, I need to collect on that now. It's time to collect on that debt he owes me.*

collect (one's) thoughts To pause and think before speaking or taking action. *Can I please just have a second to collect my thoughts before I respond? Susie paused to collect her thoughts and come up with a tactful response to her seething sister.*

collect (one's) wits To try to calm oneself and think clearly and rationally. *Take a moment to collect your wits, then tell us how the accident happened.*

collect (something) from (someone) **1.** To solicit or gather something, often money, from someone. *There's a boy at the entrance collecting money from people for charity. They're doing a food drive at work,*

and they want to collect canned food from us. 2. To obtain a biological specimen from someone, as for medical testing. We'll need to collect a urine sample from you.

collect up To gather items. A noun or pronoun can be used between "collect" and "up." *I need someone to help me collect up all of these donations for the food drive. Collect your toys up—it's time for bed!*

collector's item An item that is especially noteworthy for its value, rarity, and/or history and would thus be prized by someone who collects such things. *We went through my grandfather's attic and came upon a number of different collector's items, from rare toys to vintage rifles.*

collector's piece An item that is especially noteworthy for its value, rarity, and/or history and would thus be prized by someone who collects such things. *We went through my grandfather's attic and came upon a number of different collector's pieces, from rare toys to vintage rifles.*

collide with (someone or something) To accidentally strike or crash into someone or something. *There's a major traffic jam because a tractor-trailer collided with a car earlier. The runner did collide with the first baseman, but neither one was injured.*

collude with (someone or something) To scheme or conspire with someone or something. *The president of the company colluded with his receptionist to conceal all evidence of his crime.*

Colonel Blimp An older man who is pompous or irritable and adheres to an outdated ideology. The name comes from a British comic strip character that first appeared in the *London Evening Standard* newspaper in 1934. Primarily heard in UK. *He's such a Colonel Blimp when he starts ranting about his views on welfare and the poor.*

color in To fill something with color, as of the outlines of pictures in coloring books. A noun or pronoun can be used between "color" and "in." *My daughter loves art, so just give her crayons and a coloring book, and she'll color in pictures all day long.*

color inside the lines To think or act in accordance with set rules. Likened to the way a child is encouraged to neatly color within the lines of a coloring book. *That poor girl is so rigid. I think she's only capable of following rules and coloring inside the lines.*

color outside the lines To think or act in a way that does not conform to set rules. Likened to the way a child might color outside the lines of a coloring book. *My coworkers don't always understand my ideas, especially since I like to color outside the lines. Don't be surprised if Janet shows up wearing something bizarre—she really likes to color outside the lines.*

comb (something) for (someone or something) To look through an area in an attempt to find someone or something in particular. *We combed the wreckage for survivors but still haven't found any. I've been combing the house for my glasses—have you seen them?*

comb (something) out of (something) To remove something, such as debris or knots, from something by combing. *My poor daughter cries every time I try to comb the tangles out of her hair.*

comb through (something) To carefully look through an area or an item in an attempt to find someone or something. *We combed through the wreckage but still haven't found any survivors. I combed through my bag in search of my glasses, and they were on my head the whole time!*

combine (something) against (someone or something) To integrate multiple things, people, or qualities in order to counteract or oppose someone or something else. *We have to combine all possible research methods against this disease before it becomes an epidemic. We must combine forces against this dreadful foe!*

combine (something) with (something) To add or mix two or more things together. *Now, we need to combine the meat with the rest of the ingredients in the stew.*

come a cropper 1. informal To fall down. Primarily heard in UK. *These shoes are too big and caused me to come a cropper as I was walking down the street.* 2. informal To fail completely. Primarily heard in UK. *Once heralded as a future star of the tech world, Shane came a cropper when his product proved to be a dud.*

come a gutser 1. informal To fall down. Primarily heard in Australia. *These shoes are too big and caused me to come a gutser as I was walking down the street.* 2. informal To fail. Primarily heard in Australia. *Once heralded as a future star of the tech world, Shane came a gutser when his product proved to be a dud.*

come a long way To make significant progress. Almost always used in the past perfect tense ("has come a long way," "have come a long way"). *He can play entire songs now, and they sound pretty good! He's really come a long way from when he could barely hold a guitar.*

come aboard To board a ship or boat. *Once the boat docks, you can come aboard.*

come about 1. To happen or materialize. *This great job offer came about very quickly—I only interviewed for it a few days ago! I didn't realize that you were dating John. How did that come about?* **2.** To change the direction in which a ship is traveling. *We need to come about because it seems we've gone off-course.*

come across 1. Literally, to cross something, such as a bridge or road, when traveling. *Once you come across Eagle Road, you can turn onto my street.* **2.** To be viewed by others in a particular way; to have one's personality, behavior, intentions, etc., interpreted in a particular way. *Did I come across as confident when I made my speech? She comes across as cold and uptight, but she's actually a very kind lady. Tell me honestly, when you first met me, how did I come across?* **3.** To find or see someone or something incidentally. *I came across him in the library after work, and we got into a great conversation about Hemingway. I came across a \$20 bill on my way to school this morning! If you come across my jacket, please let me know. I forget where I left it.* **4.** To submit or yield to another's wishes. *I think he was beginning to see the benefits of our plan, but he'll never come across now that you've insulted him!* **5.** To fulfill another's demands or expectations. *She had previously offered to watch the baby for me, and thank goodness she came across on that because I needed some sleep! Don't expect him to come across on the debt he owes you—I'm still waiting for him to pay me back!*

come across as (someone or something) To be viewed by others in a particular way; to have one's personality, behavior, intentions, etc., interpreted in a particular way. *Did I come across as confident when I made my speech? She comes across as cold and uptight, but she's actually a very kind lady.*

come across like (someone or something) To be viewed by others in a particular way or as a particular thing. *Did I come across like a capable president when I made my speech to the school?*

come again **1.** Can you say that again? Sometimes used jocularly or sarcastically to indicate that one thinks that what was just said was ridiculous, unbelievable, etc. *Come again? I didn't hear what you said. You want me to pay you \$100 for that? Come again?* **2.** Return to this place (often a store) again in the future. *The shop owner handed me my bag and told me to come again.*

come again? Could you please repeat what you just said? The phrase can be used in a straightforward way, or by the speaker to indicate that they think what has just been said is unreasonable, ridiculous, or absurd in some way. *Sorry, Mike, come again? The connection is bad and I couldn't hear you. A: "I just quit my job to join the circus as a netless trapeze artist!" B: "Come again?"*

come along **1.** To go with another person to a particular location or gathering. The guest can be named between "come" and "along" or after "along." *Feel free to come along with your sister tonight—we'd all love to see you. Can my boyfriend come along? He's very interested in the lecture topic.* **2.** To materialize or emerge. *I would have told you about it sooner, but the job offer only came along yesterday. I know it's hard to consider right now, but a better guy for you will come along in the future.* **3.** To improve or make progress. *His guitar playing is really coming along—he can play songs now, and they sound pretty good!*

come along for the ride To accompany one to an event or activity without being significantly involved in it. *Oh, I'm just coming along for the ride with the rest of the department—I'm not presenting at the conference or anything.*

come and get it informal Come to a certain area to eat. *Come and get it, boys! Dinner's on the table.*

come and go To occur, exist, enter, or appear and then subside or disappear quickly and/or suddenly. *Ill effects of the medication come and go, but they're still better than the disease it's treating. I'm tired of you coming and going as you please, so either stay here or stay out!*

come apart **1.** To break, crumble, or disassemble into smaller pieces or components (unintentionally); to fall apart or come undone. *The cookie was so soft that it just came apart in my hands. Hold that mechanism carefully so it doesn't come apart—it's a chore to assemble it.* **2.** To separate or

disassemble into individual pieces. And when you're done with the clothing rack, it comes apart in three pieces for easy storage. **3.** To be approaching failure. *Boy, this party is really coming apart. First, there was the issue with the caterer, and now half the guests have canceled.* **4.** To become very emotional. *Poor Jane really came apart during the funeral service. I can't watch those sappy movies because I just come apart every time.*

come apart at the seams **1.** To be approaching failure. *Boy, this party is really coming apart at the seams. First, there was the issue with the caterer, and now half the guests aren't coming.* **2.** To become very emotional. *Poor Jane really came apart at the seams during the funeral service. I can't watch those sappy movies because I just come apart at the seams every time.*

come around **1.** To change one's view or opinion of someone or something. *My dad hates all of my boyfriends at first, but don't worry, he'll come around eventually. I think he was beginning to see the benefits of our plan, but he'll never come around now that you've insulted him!* **2.** To visit someone or a particular area. *I hope you'll come around more often now that you live in our neighborhood. That lowlife has no business with us, so tell him not to come around here anymore.*

come (a)round **1.** To visit. *Now that you're living in our neighborhood, please come around whenever you want.* **2.** To regain consciousness. *After Lily fainted, we used smelling salts to get her to come round. The patient who'd been knocked out finally came around.* **3.** To take a curved or circular route. *Once you come around the bend, you'll be able to see the city in the distance.* **4.** To avoid something. *I came around the block to avoid the house with the scary dog.* **5.** To happen or occur, typically regularly. *I've been saving for months, with the goal of buying a car by the time my next birthday comes around.* **6.** To change one's position or view on something. *He'll never come around to our side now that you've insulted him! What caused you to come round to our way of thinking?*

come as no surprise To be completely unsurprising. *Considering how much they had been fighting lately, their break-up came as no surprise. If you didn't study for that test at all, your failing grade should come as no surprise.*

come at a price To have a negative or unpleasant consequence due to some action. *I got the promotion, but it came at a price, as my ruthless behavior alienated a lot of people. That skateboard jump sure came at a*

price, now that you have two broken legs.

come at (someone or something) 1. To approach an issue or situation. *I think we should start over because we've been coming at this problem all wrong.* 2. To move toward someone or something in an aggressive or hostile manner. *You can't come at a cat like that, or you'll scare it off. I was walking home when this guy came at me out of nowhere asking for bus fare.* 3. To pelt or barrage someone with something. *When I tried to break up the food fight, snacks and drinks came at me from all directions. The kids were so excited about the project that the ideas came at me all morning.* 4. To achieve or attain something. *She can come at this scholarship with good grades and hard work.*

come away 1. To step or otherwise move away from something. *Please come away from those rickety old steps before you hurt yourself.* 2. To travel somewhere. Often used in the sense of a romantic getaway. *Come away with me to the islands, my darling. You're welcome to come away to my vacation home anytime you like.* 3. To be removed, as of a substance from a surface. *This sticky goo just isn't coming away from the table, no matter how much I scrub it.* 4. To depart from something, such as an experience, event, etc., typically after its completion. In this usage, the phrase is often followed by "with" and something acquired by the end of the experience. *It's miraculous that you only came away from that accident with a broken arm. I came away from student teaching with a whole new respect for teachers everywhere.*

come away empty-handed To return from an experience or event without having gained anything. *I worked so hard to prepare for the competition, and I still came away empty-handed, thanks to another fourth-place finish. Don't come away from the dessert table empty-handed—bring me a piece of cake!*

come away with (one) To travel with someone. Often used in the sense of a romantic getaway. *Come away with me to the islands, my darling. You're always welcome to come away with me to my vacation home.*

come back 1. verb To return to someone or something (often a place or situation). *We're coming back from our vacation on Tuesday. Our dog Sparky was missing for days, but he came back home last night, thank goodness. I'd like to come back to a point you made earlier.* 2. verb A call for someone or an animal to return to one. *Sparky, come back!* 3. verb To return to one's

memory. *The name of the song will come back to me, just give me a minute. OK, it's all coming back to me now—you were sitting over there, and you definitely asked that question.*

4. verb To reply to something, often in a snarky or irritable way. *I don't like Mary that much. Whenever I talk to her, she always manages to come back with something insulting. When you asked him about tomorrow's meeting, what did he come back with?*

5. verb To return to a former state of functionality, popularity, success, etc. *Oh, that's a career-ending knee injury for sure—there's no way he's coming back from that. I bought bell-bottoms because '70s fashions are coming back in style.*

6. verb To overcome a deficit in a sport, game, or contest. *After being down five goals, they came back and tied the game.*

7. noun The overcoming of a deficit in a sport, game, or contest. In this usage, the phrase is usually written as one word. *After being down five goals, they made a huge comeback and tied the game.*

8. noun A return to someone or something's former state of functionality, popularity, success, etc. In this usage, the phrase is usually written as one word. *Oh, that's a career-ending knee injury for sure—there's no way he'll make a comeback from that. I bought bell-bottoms because '70s fashions are making a real comeback.*

9. noun A rejoinder, often one that is (or tries to be) clever or snarky. In this usage, the phrase is usually written as one word. *"Your mom" is the lamest comeback you could possibly use.*

come back and see us Visit us again in the future. *Now that you live in the neighborhood, be sure to come back and see us soon.*

come back anytime A phrase about or directed at one who is always welcome as a visitor or guest. *Your sister is a total sweetheart—she can come back anytime. Oh, come back anytime! We're just so glad that you live in the neighborhood now.*

come back from the dead **1.** To become reanimated after death. *If you don't do exactly what I want at my funeral, I'll come back from the dead and harass you all!* **2.** To reappear or regain popularity after a period of absence or decline. *I haven't seen her in years, and now she's suddenly come back from the dead, so she must want something. I bought bell-bottoms because '70s fashions are coming back from the dead.*

come back to bite (one) For a past situation, decision, etc. to cause problems for one in the present or future. *His poor treatment of his employees might come back to bite him some day. Her remarks during the campaign have come back to bite her during the debate.*

come back to haunt (one) **1.** To pursue someone or something in a ghostly or otherwise supernatural form. *If you don't do exactly what I want at my funeral, I'll come back to haunt you all!* **2.** For a past situation, decision, etc. to cause problems for one in the present or future. *His poor treatment of his employees might come back to haunt him some day. Her remarks during the campaign have come back to haunt her during the debate.* **3.** To return to one's consciousness, as of a thought or memory. *I've barely slept because that nightmare has come back to haunt me every night this week. The fear that I'll get fired comes back to haunt me all the time.*

come back when you can stay longer A phrase directed at a guest who is welcome to extend their visit next time. *Well, I'm glad we got to see each other, even if it wasn't for very long. Come back when you can stay longer!*

come before (someone or something) **1.** To happen or exist before someone or something else. *We have to thank the generations that came before us for their hard work in establishing this organization. I can never remember which verse comes before the bridge.* **2.** To formally present oneself to another person or group. *Due to your inappropriate actions, you will have to come before a disciplinary committee.* **3.** To be more important than something else; to be prioritized over something else. *I'm constantly reminding my kids that schoolwork comes before any social events.* **4.** To be a topic of discussion or deliberation for a person or group. *When will my petition finally come before the local officials?*

come between (two or more people) **1.** To be positioned between two or more people. *Line up in alphabetical order. Billy, you come between Alice and Chris.* **2.** To cause problems for the romantic relationship or friendship of two or more people. *I know they're under a lot of stress, but I hope they don't let their financial troubles come between them. I feel like something has come between me and my roommate, but I don't know what it is.*

come by **1.** To obtain or acquire. *Steady work is hard to come by in this economy. I struggle with math, but my sister comes by it easily, of course.* **2.** To visit a place. *Jenny came by the house earlier, looking for you. I'm so happy that you're living in our neighborhood now—come by whenever you want!* **3.** To travel by a particular mode of transportation. *Oh, I came by train*

because I hate driving into the city. **4.** To enter or pass through a particular area or place. *I felt my mood lift once some sunshine came by and replaced the clouds.*

come by (something) honestly **1.** To obtain something without deception or other nefarious behavior. *Are you sure he came by that expensive handbag honestly?* **2.** To inherit something, usually a trait from one's parent. *She came by her compassion honestly, as her mother was the exact same way.*

come cap in hand To ask for help, often monetary, with embarrassment. *My daughter recently came cap in hand for help paying her rent.*

come clean To admit something to someone, often regarding a wrongdoing that one has tried to hide. *We have to come clean with the police before Joe gets punished for our crime! The kids finally came clean about eating the cookies I'd made for the bake sale.*

come close **1.** To physically move towards someone or something. *Come close, kids, so you can see better.* **2.** To nearly or almost do something. *We came close to hitting that car, but luckily, it swerved out of our way at the last second.* **3.** To be similar to someone or something else, often in a particular way. *Oh, your replacement doesn't even come close to you—she's totally disorganized, and bossy too. Megan's a genius, so no other student at school comes close to her.*

come close to blows To nearly devolve into a physical fight. *Shopping on Black Friday can be so frenetic and crazy that many customers come close to blows with one another!*

come down **1.** verb Literally, to descend from a higher point to a lower one. This usage is commonly used to describe precipitation. *Come down and look at this flood in the basement! The rain was coming down so hard this morning that I got soaked.* **2.** verb To decrease. *I hope house prices in this neighborhood come down so that we can actually afford one.* **3.** verb To be bequeathed or passed down through a line of inheritance. *Oh, that antique vase came down to me from my grandmother.* **4.** verb To originate with or be announced or decreed by a higher authority. *I'm not happy about this decision either, but it came down from the CEO, so we have to abide by it.* **5.** verb To scold or reprimand one harshly. In this usage, "down" is typically followed

by "on." *It was a mistake, so don't come down on him too hard, OK?* **6.** verb To lose one's wealth or social status. *In the early 20th century, a respected woman in high society came down dramatically if she got divorced.* **7.** verb To become ill. In this usage, "down" is typically followed by "with" and the particular illness. *I didn't do much this weekend because I came down with a cold. Our goalie came down with the flu and missed the game.* **8.** verb To be dependent on something else. In this usage, the phrase is typically followed with "to." *I can't make a decision about this job until I get a salary offer—my decision really comes down to that.* **9.** verb, slang To become sober again after using drugs or alcohol. *He's starting to come down from whatever he took.* **10.** verb, slang To happen. *Hey fellas, what's coming down tonight?* **11.** noun A disappointment or failure. In this usage, the phrase is typically written as one word. *Not getting into my dream school was a real comedown.*

come down in buckets Of rain, to pour down heavily and at great length. *It started coming down in buckets just as I began cycling home.*

come down in the world To lose one's wealth or social status. *In the early 20th century, a respected woman in high society dramatically came down in the world if she got divorced.*

come down on (someone or something) **1.** To scold or reprimand one harshly. *It was a mistake, so don't come down on him too hard, OK?* **2.** To establish one's opinion or view as being in support of a particular side of an issue. *And where do you come down on this issue, sir? I think the jury is going to come down on the side of the plaintiff.* **3.** To actively oppose someone or something or attempt to prevent or abolish something. *This issue is unjust, and as your mayor I promise to come down on it.*

come down on the side of (someone or something) To establish one's opinion or view as being in support of a particular side of an issue. *I think the jury is going to come down on the side of the plaintiff. This issue is unjust, and as your mayor, I promise to come down on the side of equality.*

come down the pike To materialize; to happen or become prominent. "Pike" is short for "turnpike"—a main thoroughfare. *You should take this job offer—who knows when another will come down the pike? That pitcher is the first young star to come down the pike for the team in many years.*

come down to **1.** To amount to something (usually the most important or



crucial aspect of something). In this usage, "to" is typically followed by a thing or idea. *It's a great offer, but my decision comes down to salary, to be honest with you. With rents skyrocketing, it all comes down to how much you want to keep living in this part of town.* **2.** To visit some place, often a location that is lower or farther south than one's starting point. In this usage, "to" is followed by a place. *Our Canadian relatives are coming down to our house in California for a few days. Can you come down to the basement to help me for a second?*

come down to earth To remember or consider reality when one is fantasizing or being overly optimistic. *I was excited to book a vacation, but I came down to earth when I checked my nearly-depleted bank account. Dean was thrilled to get into his dream school, but when he realized that he would have to pay for it entirely on his own, he came down to earth.*

come down to us To have existed before and survived until the present day. *Most of the stories we all recognize have come down to us from our ancestors as folk legends. From some of the relics that have come down to us from ancient times, we are able to surmise some of the survival techniques of early humans.*

come down with (something) To become ill. "With" is typically followed by the particular illness. *I didn't do much this weekend because I came down with a cold. Our goalie came down with the flu and missed the game.*

come face to face with (someone or something) To confront or encounter someone or something directly. *I had been trying to avoid my math teacher, but then I came face to face with her in the cafeteria. Training for a marathon has forced me to come face to face with my physical limitations.*

come for (someone or something) To go or arrive somewhere with the intent of retrieving someone or obtaining something. *I will come for you at 8 AM sharp, so be ready. Their fried chicken is famous, but we come for the apple pie.*

come forth 1. To move toward a point of congregation; to come forward. *Anyone involved in the ceremony may come forth at this time.* **2.** To flow, ooze, or otherwise come out of something. *A great deal of water came forth when the pipe in our basement burst.*

come forward **1.** To move toward a point of congregation; to step forward. *Anyone involved in the ceremony may come forward at this time.* **2.** To share information, often in court or otherwise regarding a wrongdoing. *Will the first witness please come forward? The police are asking anyone with more information on the crime to come forward.* **3.** To present oneself to offer help. *Luckily, an audience member came forward to help me with the microphone.*

come from a good place To have or be motivated by good or altruistic intentions, even if the results or consequences are undesirable. *I know that you're coming from a good place, but please stop trying to set me up on dates with people you know. Most diet fads come from a good place originally, before being distorted into something totally ludicrous.*

come from behind **1.** verb To overcome a deficit to win a game or competition. *Our defense is truly terrible. How else do you explain that team coming from behind to beat us?* **2.** adjective Describing a victory in which the winning team or person overcomes a deficit in order to win. In this usage, the phrase is typically hyphenated. *I turned the game off when they were down 6-0, so I missed their impressive come-from-behind win!*

come from far and wide Of many people, to come from many different places, often ones that are a long distance away. *People came from far and wide when they heard we were offering free doughnuts today. I was so touched that family and friends came from far and wide to attend my 40th birthday party.*

come from nowhere To arrive or emerge unexpectedly. *That car came from nowhere, and by the time I saw it, I couldn't stop. I wasn't expecting this job offer at all—it really came from nowhere.*

come from (someone or something) **1.** To travel from one location to another. *She's coming all the way from the city, so she'll probably be late to dinner.* **2.** To arrive after having been sent from someone or something or from somewhere. *Look at this beautiful gift that came from my best friend! She sent it last week, but it didn't get here in time for my birthday. That certified letter came from a law firm.* **3.** To have a particular perspective or attitude regarding a person or situation. *As your mother, I'm just coming from a place of love and concern; I'm not trying to smother you. I understand where you're coming from, but I still don't agree with your decision.* **4.** To

originate from a specific location. *I live in Texas now, but I come from Boston, where I was born. Did this coffee come from that new place on the corner?* 5. To be caused by something in particular. *Most of my illnesses come from the adorable preschoolers I teach. Where did this dent in my car come from?*

come full circle To return to the original or a similar position, situation, or circumstance where one or something started. *After the banking sector brought on the economic collapse through lack of federal oversight, things seem to be coming full circle as politicians are beginning to call for deregulation of the industry once again. I used to work in in kitchens during college to support myself, and now, after working for years as an attorney, I've come full circle and am the head chef of my own restaurant.*

come hell or high water No matter what. In spite of any obstacle. *I don't care if I have to drive through a blizzard—we are getting to this wedding come hell or high water!*

come her way See [come \(one's\) way](#).

come-hither look A sultry, suggestive gaze or facial expression. *You know I can't resist when you give me that come-hither look!*

come home 1. To return to one's home after time away from it. *I'm always thrilled to come home after a long day at the office. If you don't come home by curfew, you'll lose your driving privileges for a month.* 2. To become clear or apparent to one. This usage often refers to an unpleasant or troublesome realization. *The fact that I had been fired didn't come home to me until I was walking out of the building with a box of my belongings.*

come home by Weeping Cross To grieve or mourn. The phrase is not limited to death—it can apply to a disappointment as well. *I dread the day when I come home by Weeping Cross—my first loss in the battlefield will be too much to take.*

come home from (some place or something) To return to one's home from another place or event. *I'm always thrilled to come home from work after a long day at the office. If you don't come home from the party by curfew, you'll lose your driving privileges for a month.*

come home to roost 1. Literally, of chickens and other such birds, to return to an established place of shelter. *Put out some feed because the*



chickens will come home to roost. **2.** To cause problems or have consequences as a result of previous actions. *I knew not handing in my homework would be a problem eventually—stuff like that always comes home to roost. I'd be careful before making any rash decisions because they always come home to roost.*

come home to (someone or something) To return home to a particular person or thing. The phrase can also end at "to," typically when the person or thing at home is named earlier in the sentence. *I'm always thrilled to come home to my family after a long day at the office. My nephew is watching my kids, so I anticipate coming home to chaos. Now that the kids are all in college, it's strange having no one to come home to.*

come in 1. To enter a place, such as a room, house, etc. Often used as an imperative. In this usage, "on" can be used between "come" and "in." *I came in while the meeting was in progress, so I waited in the back. Come in! I'm in the kitchen! Come on in and have a seat.* **2.** To arrive at a particular place or destination. *Those dresses were scheduled to come in last Tuesday. When does your flight come in?* **3.** To finish a contest or competition in a particular position or place (as in first, second, third, etc.). *I didn't expect to come in first or anything, but finishing last is pretty disappointing.* **4.** To join something that is already in progress, often in a particular way or role. *Ashley will sing the verse, and then we'll all come in on the chorus.* **5.** To be received, as of a transmission. *Call me back later—you're not coming in well, so I can barely hear you.* **6.** To have or finish with a particular value or measurement. *You came in at two minutes and 30 seconds, which is a better time than your last race. The estimate came in way too high, so we have to solicit more bids.* **7.** To approach or reach the shore, as of the tide. *If you're trying to stay dry, we should move our chairs back before the tide comes in again.* **8.** To receive or be subject to something. *Those boys are going to have to come in for a punishment after starting the food fight.* **9.** To join a group in doing something. *We're pooling our money to get Sean a graduation gift, if you want to come in with us.*

come in and make yourself at home An invitation to enter a particular place and relax. *Come in and make yourself at home! I'm just finishing up a few things in the kitchen.*

come in and sit a spell An invitation to enter a particular place and relax. *I'm so happy to see you! Now come in and sit a spell with me.*

come in for (something) To receive or be subject to something. *Those boys are going to have to come in for a punishment after starting the food fight.*

come in from the cold **1.** Literally, to enter a place in order to warm one's body (because it is cold outside). *I know the kids are having fun building snowmen, but they need to come in from the cold before they get frostbite!* **2.** To be accepted after previous rejection. *After excluding me from their meetings for months, the rest of the executive team has finally let me come in from the cold.*

come in handy To be especially useful, often in a particular setting or situation. *It was a lot colder out than I thought it would be, so your jacket really came in handy! That flashlight comes in handy when I'm trying to find something in my car at night.*

come in out of the rain **1.** Literally, to enter a place in order to avoid rain. *Kids, come in out of the rain before you're all soaking wet!* **2.** To remember or consider reality while fantasizing or being overly optimistic. *I was excited to book a vacation until my nearly-depleted bank account forced me to come in out of the rain.*

come (in) over the transom To be offered without prior agreement, consent, or arrangement; to be unsolicited or uninvited. Said especially of written works submitted for publication or consideration. *My biggest task as an intern was sorting through and usually disposing of amateur works that came over the transom. Any journalist will tell you that a great story doesn't come in over the transom—you have to go and do the leg work to find one.*

come in useful To be especially helpful, often in a particular setting or situation. *It was a lot colder out than I thought it would be, so your jacket really came in useful! That flashlight comes in useful when I'm trying to find something in my car at night.*

come into **1.** To enter a room, house, or other place. *I was suspicious when everyone stopped talking as soon as I came into the room.* **2.** To inherit or otherwise acquire something, often in a way that involves good fortune. *I think she came into all of that money when her grandmother died.* **3.** To obtain power or a particular office. *Ever since Claire came into office, she's practically ignored the constituents she promised to help.* **4.** To reach a new level of maturity, independence, or success. Often said of young adults. In

this usage, the phrase is followed by "(one's) own." *Betsy has really come into her own this year. A full-time job, a new apartment—she's doing great!*

5. To reach a particular state. *Our lives came into normalcy after my husband stopped working 80-hour weeks.*

come into being To begin to exist. *This company only came into being through the hard work of my talented staff. The newly captured images are helping scientists to understand how some stars come into being.*

come into bloom To blossom, as of a flower, tree, or other such plant. *What time of year do these plants come into bloom? Our backyard is so colorful now that all the flowers have come into bloom.*

come into conflict To cause tension with someone or something else. *I came into conflict with Tiffany when she found out that I had started that rumor about her. I'm sorry, but I just can't support your plan—it comes into conflict with my religious beliefs.*

come in(to) contact 1. Literally, to touch someone or something. *Jill got chicken pox too after coming in contact with her cousins while they were sick. Be careful not to come into contact with that plant—it's poison ivy.* 2. To encounter someone or something. *I'd never come into contact with this theory before, but it's pretty interesting.*

come into effect Of a law, policy, etc., to become official, legitimate, or valid. *These changes in the uniform policy come into effect at the start of next year.*

come into existence To appear or arise; to begin to exist. *This company only came into existence through the hard work of my talented staff. The newly captured images are helping scientists to understand how some stars come into existence.*

come into fashion Of a particular style, trend, etc., to become popular or stylish. *Once a style of dress is outdated, it's hard to believe that it ever came into fashion in the first place.*

come in(to) heat To be in a state of sexual excitement and able to breed, as of a female animal. *Do you hear the stray cat howling and screeching at night? She must have come into heat.*

come in(to) line 1. To become straight; to form into a line or row. *The teacher waited for her students to come into line before they walked to the*

auditorium. The cars all came in line after the traffic merged into a single lane. **2.** To conform, adhere to, or agree with that which is established or generally accepted, such as rules, beliefs, modes of behavior, etc. *You might have some wild ideas for the future, but you'll never get anywhere in this business if you don't start coming into line with your boss's expectations. We all tend to have revolutionary ideals in our youth, but we usually come in line with the general populace as we grow older.*

come into (one's) head To be thought of by one. *Take time to form your response to the interviewer—don't just blurt out the first thing that comes into your head.*

come into (one's) own To reach a new level of maturity, independence, or success. Often said of young adults. *Betsy has really come into her own this year. A full-time job, a new apartment—she's doing great!*

come into play To become a factor in a particular situation. *Once personal insults come into play, it's very hard to resolve a situation calmly. My kids usually get cranky as bedtime approaches and tiredness comes into play.*

come into prominence To gain recognition or fame. *That artist didn't come into prominence until long after his death.*

come into question To become doubted, scrutinized, or a matter of serious discussion. *The government's ability to lead the country has come into question after a fifth straight week of protests at the nation's capital. This reluctance to act has caused your leadership skills to come into question.*

come into season 1. To be able to be hunted legally, as of a wild animal. *We're going hunting this weekend, now that deer have come into season. 2. To be in a state of sexual excitement and able to breed, as of a female animal. *Do you hear the stray cat howling and screeching at night? She must have come into season.**

come into service To begin to be utilized. *When will this ship come into service? These repairs are taking much longer than anticipated.*

come into sight To suddenly emerge or become visible. *I wasn't sure what the bunny was running from, until a dog came into sight.*

come into (some) money To obtain money suddenly, often through inheritance. *I heard that she came into some money when her grandfather*

died.

come into the world To be born. *Your new sister came into the world at 3:25 this morning.*

come Monday On Monday. *I don't have enough money right now, but don't worry, I'll pay you back come Monday.*

come naturally To be a skill that one learns easily or with little effort. *Playing the guitar just doesn't come naturally to me—maybe because I have no sense of rhythm. Jackie isn't a great outfielder, but pitching seems to come naturally to her.*

come of To be the result of something or some action. *Very little came of our efforts to control the outbreak of smallpox. Feeling sick, huh? Well, that's what comes of eating four chocolate bars in a row.*

come of age 1. To reach adulthood. *Watching my daughters come of age has been the biggest joy of my life. That was the summer I came of age, and learned what real responsibility is. 2.* To develop or progress fully. *It will take time for this program to come of age—try not to lose faith in the meantime.*

come off 1. To detach from something else. *Help! The bathroom doorknob just came off in my hand! We need to fix the shutters that came off in the storm last night. 2.* To happen. *Now that the caterer has quit, I don't think the party will come off as scheduled. 3.* To be interpreted in a particular way. *How did my speech come off? Did I sound like a capable student council president? 4.* To get or climb off of something. *Come off that rickety old slide right now! As soon as the kids came off the roller coaster, they wanted to ride it again. 5.* To succeed. *After months of planning, the launch came off thrillingly.*

come off it slang Stop it. This set phrase is usually used in the imperative and directed at one who is deemed to be acting foolishly. *Oh, come off it, you're as smart as anyone in this program.*

come off second best To finish something, such as a contest or competition, in second place. *Even though I'd spent weeks working on my project for the science fair, I still came off second best.*

come on 1. expression Stop it. *Oh, come on, you're as smart as anyone in this program. Come on, leave me alone! 2.* expression Please agree to this

request. *Come on, mom, all of my friends will be there. Can't I go too?* **3.** verb To hurry up or move faster. To convey this meaning, the phrase is often used in the imperative. *Come on, we're going to be late!* **4.** verb To flirt with or otherwise show romantic or sexual interest in someone. *I can't believe he came on to you—he's a married man!* **5.** verb To appear on stage. *And then you two come on after Greg finishes that line. When does the band come on?* **6.** verb To find someone or something accidentally or without looking. "Come upon" can also be used to convey this meaning. *Please don't be upset, we didn't mean to exclude you! When Chad and I went out, we just came on the rest of the group, that's all! Were you snooping in my room? How else would you just come upon my love letter?* **7.** verb To be seen in a particular way by other people. *Molly comes on cheerful and bubbly, and that's truly her personality—you'll find that out once you get to know her better.* **8.** verb To develop or advance. *Once the storm comes on, be ready to contend with much stronger winds. Nightfall comes on so much earlier in the winter.* **9.** verb To start a work shift. *I gave that patient to Sally when she came on last night.* **10.** verb To be experienced, as of an onset of pain or discomfort. *The stomach pain came on suddenly last night and was so severe that it woke me up.* **11.** verb To turn on or begin working. *When the house lights came on, we knew the band wasn't going to play another encore. Why isn't this computer coming on? Am I doing something wrong?* **12.** verb To be broadcast, as on a TV. *When does that show come on? Grab the popcorn, the movie's coming on now!* **13.** noun A flirtatious statement or gesture. In this usage, the phrase is typically hyphenated. *I told him that I have a boyfriend, but he just won't stop with the come-ons.* **14.** noun Something done or offered to appeal to potential customers. In this usage, the phrase is typically hyphenated. *Even though we lowered prices as a come-on to customers, we're still far from meeting our sales goal.*

come on as (something) To be seen in a particular way by other people. *Molly comes on as a very cheerful girl, and that's truly her personality—you'll find that out once you get to know her better.*

come on in A polite request or command to enter some place. *Come on in, we've got a place at the table ready for you! Thank you for calling over, won't you please come on in?*

come on in See [come in](#).

come on in, the water's fine **1.** Literally, a request for others to join

one in the water, such as a swimming pool or the ocean, by indicating that the water is an agreeable temperature, etc. *"Come on in, the water's fine," my brother called to me while floating in the pool.* **2.** By extension, a phrase of encouragement for one to start something. *We're so glad to have you as a volunteer, so come on in, the water's fine!*

come on like gangbusters informal To do something with a lot of energy and enthusiasm. Primarily heard in US. *When I presented the case to my students, they came on like gangbusters to try to solve the mystery. Our offense came on like gangbusters and overwhelmed the other team.*

come on over A polite request or command to come to the same place as the speaker (usually their home). *Come on over whenever you're ready, we'll be waiting for you.*

come on the scene **1.** To reach a destination, usually as something is happening there. *When did the police come on the scene? By the time I came on the scene, Kate and Jen were already arguing.* **2.** To become involved in a particular situation. *Caitlin and I used to be best friends, until Liz came on the scene.*

come on to (one) To flirt with or otherwise show romantic or sexual interest in one. *I can't believe he came on to you—he's a married man!*

come on (too) strong **1.** To behave aggressively. *You're going to have to come on strong to get them to take you seriously as a leader. Although she was simply trying not to come on too strong, many people found her to be wishy-washy instead.* **2.** To flirt in an abrasive or overly forceful way. *Vince has a hard time getting dates because he always comes on too strong with the ladies.* **3.** To gain popularity. *1970s fashions seem to be coming on strong this summer.*

come on top of (something) To occur very soon after something else. *To have another tragedy come on top of a death in the family is just devastating.*

come one, come all A phrase used to indicate that something is directed at or open to all people. *Auditions are at 3:30 this afternoon—come one, come all! I don't know how to get more customers into my store, short of standing outside and shouting, "Come one, come all!"*

come (one's) way To be encountered or obtained by one. *I really hope*

this promotion comes my way because it sounds like a fascinating position. Good opportunities always seem to come my brother's way, whether he works hard for them or not.

come online 1. To become active or begin operating. *We've had the building finished for days now, but we're still waiting for the power to come online. Hundreds of new factories are slated to come online over the next year, which will bring a much-needed boost to the economy.* **2.** To log onto the Internet, usually meaning some social communication service thereof. *I'm just waiting for my dad to come online, I haven't spoken to him in weeks!*

come out 1. To exit a particular place. *Please come out of your room and talk with me. Will a car be waiting for us when we come out of the party?* **2.** To be blurted out; to be said unexpectedly or unintentionally. *I didn't mean to insult her hairdo, it just came out!* **3.** To be rendered in a particular way, often a way that was not intended. *I didn't mean to insult her hairdo, but everything I said just came out wrong. I double checked my typing, but the text still came out all garbled. There must be a problem with the interface.* **4.** To be revealed or exposed. *When will the truth finally come out?* **5.** To become visible. *After so much rain, I was thrilled when the sun finally came out.* **6.** To be removed or washed away. *I hope this stain comes out in the wash.* **7.** To have a particular result or level of quality; to turn out. *How did your project come out? For my first try at baking, these cookies came out pretty good!* **8.** To equal a monetary amount. *What do all of your medical bills come out to?* **9.** To be made available to the public; to be officially released. *I'm so excited that my favorite author has a new book coming out in a few weeks.* **10.** To make one's formal debut in society, as of a debutante. *Will your daughter come out at the Debutante Ball this year?* **11.** To reveal a personal secret, typically one's homosexuality, after having kept it hidden. *Once you come out to your parents, you will be very relieved.* **12.** To make a stance public. *The senator, long undecided, has finally come out in support of the bill.* **13.** To join one's friends in public socializing. *Jen and Dean never come out anymore now that they have kids.*

come out (a certain way) on (something) To have a particular outcome with some project, venture, or other thing. *We definitely came out well on that merger—it saved the company after all!*

come out against (someone or something) To reveal or voice one's opposition to someone or something. *Many people in our small town*

have come out against that big construction project because they feel that we don't need more stores so close to our homes.

come out ahead To finish something with an advantage, often in the form of a profit. *You've spent so much money on this project that you'll be lucky to come out ahead.*

come out at 1. To leave a particular place to attack someone or something. In this usage, "at" is followed by a person or thing. *Keep that door closed because the cat will come out at this bird if it lands.* **2.** To equal a certain amount. In this usage, "at" is followed by a total or other terms related to numbers or money. *My medical bills have come out at such a high number that I don't know how I will pay them.*

come out badly To result in something negative or unpleasant. *I didn't mean to insult her hairdo, but everything I said just came out badly.*

come out fighting To compete or defend someone or something passionately or aggressively. *After hearing so much opposition to his proposed construction project, the developer came out fighting at the town hall meeting. They may be underdogs in this series, but you can be sure that they'll come out fighting.*

come out for (someone or something) To reveal or voice one's support for someone or something. *Many people in our small town have come out for that big construction project because the closest store right now is 10 miles away.*

come out in (something) 1. Literally, to go outside while wearing something in particular. *My mom won't let me come out in my bathing suit without a cover-up. I had to come out in my robe to scold the neighbors for being so loud at 3 AM.* **2.** To show symptoms of a rash. *Every time I eat that particular fruit, I come out in hives.*

come out in the open with (something) To reveal something to the public. *After months of tabloid speculation, the young starlet has finally come out in the open with news of her divorce.*

come out in the wash 1. slang To be exposed, as of a lie or something hidden. *Whatever the mayor is trying to cover up will all come out in the wash.* **2.** slang To have a positive resolution (like a clothing stain that is washed away). *Try not to worry too much about this setback—it will come*



out in the wash.

come out in(to) the open **1.** To leave a hiding place. *We're surrounded by enemy troops, so it's too dangerous to come out into the open right now. The cat is still hiding under the couch. Food, treats, and toys have not enticed her to come out in the open.* **2.** To appear in public after a period of seclusion. *This event is the first time the young starlet has come out in the open since announcing her divorce.*

come out of a/the clear blue sky To happen unexpectedly. *She seemed so surprised by the news that it must have come out of a clear blue sky. You need to work hard—opportunities don't just come out of the clear blue sky.*

come out of left field To originate from a surprising or strange place. ("Left field" is the metaphorical origin of something uncommon, unpopular, or otherwise strange.) *That suggestion certainly came out of left field! How did you come up with that one?*

come out of one's shell To be or become less shy or reticent and more sociable, outgoing, or enthusiastic. *Samantha was quite a quiet girl growing up, but she really started coming out of her shell in college. Jack is actually a very funny, engaging guy when he comes out of his shell.*

come out of (one's) shell To become more outgoing. Usually said of a shy or introverted person. *Wow, Anna has really come out of her shell lately. I remember when she wouldn't even talk to anyone, and now she's likely to be voted "Most Talkative."*

come out of the closet **1.** To reveal one's homosexuality after having kept it hidden. *Once you come out of the closet, you will feel so relieved.* **2.** To publicly reveal a secret. *After months of tabloid speculation, the young starlet has finally come out of the closet and confirmed her divorce.*

come out of the woodwork To appear unexpectedly, or from unexpected places. *No one had anything negative to say when I first pitched this idea, but now people are coming out of the woodwork to criticize it. Ever since Liam won the lottery, his so-called relatives have been coming out of the woodwork.*

come out on top To finish something in a positive or advantageous position; to win. *She's been training for months because she's determined to*

come out on top in the race this year.

come out smelling like a rose To maintain a favorable reputation despite involvement in a scandalous or otherwise negative situation. *By reporting his colleagues as soon as he learned of their dishonest business practices, the CEO came out smelling like a rose.*

come out smelling of roses To maintain a favorable reputation despite involvement in a scandalous or otherwise negative situation. *By reporting his colleagues as soon as he learned of their dishonest business practices, the CEO came out smelling of roses.*

come out swinging To compete or defend someone or something passionately or aggressively. *After hearing so much opposition to his proposed construction project, the developer came out swinging at the town hall meeting. They may be underdogs in this series, but you can be sure that they'll come out swinging.*

come out the little end of the horn To suffer significant losses in the process of doing something. *When we went to sell our investment property, we came out the little end of the horn because house prices in that neighborhood had tumbled.*

come out to be To have certain qualities or be a particular way in the end. *I didn't want the finale of our show to be too sad, but that's just how it came out to be when we sat down to write the script.*

come out well To have a positive outcome. *We definitely came out well on that merger—it saved the company after all! All of my medical tests came out well, thank goodness.*

come out with (something) **1.** To voice something, often bluntly. *You can always count on Ed to come out with his true feelings. We're waiting for someone to come out with a rationale for his sudden firing. What's the secret? Come out with it already!* **2.** To make something available to the public. *I'm so excited that my favorite author is coming out with a new book in a few weeks.*

come over **1.** To go to someone else's house. *Do you want to you come over after school today?* **2.** To move near to someone or something. *Come over here and look at the layout I've designed.* **3.** To affect one, as of an affliction of some kind. *I left the party early because nausea came over me.*

My dog is usually very docile, so I'm not sure what came over him when he started barking like crazy. **4.** To change one's position or view on something. *He'll never come over to our side now that you've insulted him! What caused you to come over to our way of thinking?*

come over the transom See [come \(in\) over the transom](#).

come rain or shine No matter what the weather is. *Pack a poncho because the outdoor concert is happening come rain or shine.*

come right in A polite request or command to enter some place. *Come right in, we've got a place at the table ready for you! Thank you for calling over, won't you please come right in?*

come round See [come \(a\)round](#).

come short To disappoint. To not meet certain expectations or goals. *I came short on my sales goal this month, which is really disappointing. I know I was supposed to run a full mile. I didn't want to come short, but I was going to collapse if I didn't take a break!*

come short of (something) To almost get, achieve, or accomplish something. *She came short of the gold medal because her leg cramped in the last few meters. We came just short of our goal to raise \$10,000 in donations.*

come the acid To be unpleasant or offensive, usually due to speaking in a caustic or sarcastic manner. Often followed by "with (someone)." *Don't come the acid with me, son, or I'll knock you upside the head. I try to avoid her whenever I can, for she's far too quick to come the acid.*

come the raw prawn informal To act as though one has no knowledge of something. Primarily heard in Australia. *I know she's coming the raw prawn with me because her fingerprints were found at the scene of the crime.*

come their way See [come \(one's\) way](#).

come thick and fast To come rapidly and in large quantities (as in an attack). *Those bees came thick and fast after you disturbed that beehive.*

come through **1.** To win, achieve, or accomplish something exceptionally well or very successfully. Said especially of a test, examination, or training of some kind, often in the expression "come through with flying colors." *Samantha was rather nervous taking her final exam, but she came through just fine. Your brother has come through his*

apprenticeship with flying colors. He'll be a master builder in no time! 2. To be revealed, often despite an attempt at masking or hiding. She tried to act happy for us, but her grief came through nonetheless. 3. To be approved. Good news—your auto loan came through! 4. To perform or act as expected. After promising a victory, the captain of the team came through with a great game on Friday night. Ask Ben to bring the ice—he'll come through. Any time I call my mom, she comes through for me with love and support. 5. To be received, transmitted, or broadcast. Call me back later—you're not coming through well, so I can barely hear you. 6. To travel through a particular place or area. It was starting to snow as we came through Chicago. We came through New Jersey to get to New York—how did you get here?

come through (something) with flying colors To win, achieve, or accomplish something exceptionally well or very successfully. Said especially of a test, examination, or training of some kind. Primarily heard in US. *Samantha was rather nervous taking her final exam, but she came through with flying colors! Your brother has come through his apprenticeship with flying colors. He'll be a master builder in no time!*

come to 1. To regain consciousness. *After Lily fainted, we used smelling salts to get her to come to. The patient wasn't sure where he was when he came to in the emergency room. 2. To be called to one's mind. Give me a minute, that song will come to me. Why do the best ideas always come to me in the shower when I can't write them down? 3. To reach a conclusion of some kind, such as a decision. How did you come to this decision? Tell me your thought process. 4. To arrive at or visit a particular place. I came to this city because it's home to such beautiful architecture. I'll come to your house tonight and drop off your cake pan. 5. To reach a particular sum, as of a bill. Your total comes to \$47.80. 6. To have a particular impact, result, or consequence. I hope my lies don't come to any consequence. That meeting nearly came to blows after the fiery testimony. 7. To be revealed or exposed. This meaning is often conveyed through the phrase "come to light." Discrepancies in the yearly budget report only came to light after the auditors began analyzing it. These incriminating documents came to light because of a whistleblower's tireless efforts. 8. To resume acting or feeling as one normally does. In this usage, a reflexive pronoun is used after "to." I was starting to get disoriented after being awake for 36 hours straight, but I came to myself after a good night's rest. 9. To anchor a ship. We'll come to in this*

port for now and regroup. **10.** To position a ship with its bow in the wind. *The ship needs to come to so that we can visit the port.*

come to a bad end 1. To suffer an unpleasant death. *The poor victims in that bus accident came to a bad end.* **2.** To reach an unpleasant or problematic final state. *My cell phone came to a bad end when I accidentally ran it over with my car.*

come to a boil 1. Literally, for something (a liquid) to reach its boiling point. *After the water comes to a boil, we will add the pasta.* **2.** By extension, to become very angry. *Watch what you say to him—he tends to come to a boil over criticism of his novel.* **3.** To reach a crucial point. *Tensions between them came to a boil when one found out that the other had been lying. Your problems with Mary will definitely come to a boil if she finds out you're dating her ex!*

come to a close To reach an end point. *If there are no other issues to discuss, then this meeting can come to a close. The play's lengthy run on Broadway comes to a close tonight.*

come to a dead end 1. Literally, to reach the end of a route where one cannot continue traveling. *I knew my GPS was wrong when it told me to turn onto a road that came to a dead end.* **2.** By extension, to reach a point after which no more progress is possible, as in a project. *My research has come to a dead end—every experiment I've tried so far has failed.*

come to a full stop 1. To physically halt forward motion. *When you take your driving test, remember to come to a full stop at every stop sign. Every driver came to a full stop as the police car, with its flashing lights and siren, sped by.* **2.** To reach an end point, often abruptly or due to difficulties. *My research has come to a full stop because every experiment I've tried so far has failed.*

come to a halt To stop abruptly. *Every driver came to a halt as the police car, with its flashing lights and siren, sped by. Our research came to a halt after a sudden reduction in funding.*

come to a head To reach a point of intensity at which action must be taken. *The issues that you're trying to ignore in your relationship will come to a head eventually, so you might as well deal with them now. Tensions in our community came to a head following the mayor's insensitive comments.*

come to a parting of the ways To separate. To leave someone or something behind, often at a dramatic moment. *It looks like we have come to a parting of the ways, old friend. I hope your endeavor in the city works out, and I will keep you in my prayers on the farm.*

come to a pretty pass To encounter or develop into a particularly difficult, troublesome, or bad state or situation. *Now don't spread this around, but I hear things have come to a pretty pass between Mark and his girlfriend. Negotiations between management and the striking employees came to a pretty pass when the labor union rejected the company's latest compromise deal.*

come to a standstill To stop. *All the other drivers came to a standstill as the police car, with its flashing lights and siren, sped by. Our research came to a standstill after a sudden reduction in funding.*

come to a sticky end To experience an unpleasant death, usually as a result of one's own actions. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *The serial purse snatcher came to a sticky end when he encountered a little old lady trained in karate. You will come to a sticky end if you don't change your reckless ways.*

come to a stop To stop, cease, or conclude. *Every driver came to a stop as the police car, with its flashing lights and siren, sped by. Our research came to a stop after a sudden reduction in funding.*

come to a/the conclusion 1. To make a determination about someone or something. *The jury came to the conclusion that the defendant is guilty.* 2. To reach an end point. *If there are no other issues to discuss, then this meeting can come to a conclusion. That play's lengthy run on Broadway comes to a conclusion tonight.*

come to aid See [come to \(someone's\) aid](#).

come to an end To wind down to an ending or conclusion. *Festivities came to an end well after the sun had risen the next morning. I'm just dreading when the nice summer weather finally comes to an end.*

come to an impasse To reach a point or problem that is insurmountable or from which there is no possible exit, progress, or negotiation. *After hours of bitter debate, the two parties came to an impasse, and the discussion was left for the following day.*

come to an untimely end **1.** To die, usually at a young age. *That poor little girl came to untimely end because her illness worsened so quickly.* **2.** To end abruptly. *Once he was linked to that scandal, his career in politics came to an untimely end.*

come to attention Of military personnel, to stand at attention (which, in most cases, means looking forward and standing erect with one's arms at one's sides). *When they heard the drill sergeant's call, the troops abruptly stopped marching and came to attention.*

come to blows To get into a fight, often physically. *Shopping on Black Friday can be so frenetic and crazy that many customers nearly come to blows with one another!*

come to fruition To successfully be brought into existence or to completion. *Although we struggled to get funding, our project ultimately came to fruition.*

come to grief To fail or otherwise suffer a problem or setback. *The project came to grief after we lost our funding.*

come to grips with (someone or something) To begin to or make an effort to understand, accept, and deal with a difficult or problematic person, thing, or situation. *I should have the report ready for you by this afternoon, I just need to come to grips with this new software update first. I've tried, but I just can't come to grips with Amy, she's totally out of control!*

come to harm To encounter an unpleasant situation, often one involving injury or damage. *If anyone comes to harm in this operation, you will have to answer to the chief. My car came to harm during the storm when a tree branch fell on it.*

come to heel To assume a position of subjugation, discipline, or submission to authority. *You need to come to heel because the CEO was not pleased when you spoke out of turn at the annual general meeting. Sir, the members of your squad are all out of control. They must come to heel right away!*

come to herself See [come to](#).

come to Jesus **1.** Literally, to accept Jesus Christ as one's savior. *An inspirational homily sparked my come to Jesus moment, and I've been a Christian ever since.* **2.** A phrase used to describe a persuasive conversation

aimed at getting the listener to change (and, often, to stop doing something negative or self-destructive). *When my parents found out that Jack was doing drugs, they sat him down for a come to Jesus talk, in the hopes that they could get him to agree to rehab. After months of poor performance, the boss is calling Janet in for a come to Jesus meeting.*

come-to-Jesus meeting 1. A spiritual meeting in which participants are encouraged to repent their sins and accept Jesus Christ as their savior. *I've told her that I am an avid atheist, but she still insists on me attending one of her come-to-Jesus meetings.* **2.** Any meeting in which a frank, often unpleasant, conversation is held so as to bring to light and/or resolve some issue at hand. *Boys, we're going to have a come-to-Jesus meeting about the drugs I found in the house, and if no one tells me the truth, then you're both going to get a whooping. The boss called us in for a real come-to-Jesus meeting about our sales for this quarter.*

come-to-Jesus moment 1. A moment when one chooses to accept Jesus Christ as one's savior and follow the Christian faith. *I had something of a come-to-Jesus moment after my car crash last month.* **2.** A moment of epiphany, enlightenment, or intuition regarding the truth of a matter. *I had something of a come-to-Jesus moment after college when I realized that I wanted to be an editor for a living.* **3.** A point in time in which fundamental priorities and/or beliefs are challenged, reassessed, or reaffirmed. *After waking up in the hospital from a drug overdose, I had a frightening come-to-Jesus moment about what I was doing with my life. The political party needs to have a real come-to-Jesus moment and decide who they are and what they stand for as a whole.* **4.** Any moment or meeting in which a frank, often unpleasant, conversation is held so as to bring to light and/or resolve some issue at hand. *Boys, we're going to have a come-to-Jesus moment about the drugs I found in the house, and if no one tells me the truth then you're both going to get a whooping. The boss called us in for a real come-to-Jesus moment about our sales for this quarter.*

come to life 1. Literally, to become reanimated, as of a person or animal that has died. In this usage, "back" is often used between "come" and "to." *The patient did die on the table, but she came back to life once we used the defibrillator.* **2.** By extension, to become energized, especially after a period of inactivity or lethargy. *A: "OK, schedule Tuesday's meeting, get John on the phone, and then come in my office so we can all discuss that big project." B:*

"Wow, you really came to life after that cup of coffee!" This team came out sleepwalking, but they've come to life in the second half.

come to light To be revealed or exposed. *Discrepancies in the yearly budget report only came to light after the auditors began analyzing it. These incriminating documents came to light when they were leaked by a whistleblower.*

come to mention it An expression used when one remembers or realizes something because of what the other person has just said. An abbreviated form of the full phrase "now that you have come to mention it."
A: "The weather's been a bit unpredictable lately, huh?" B: "Come to mention it, I hear there could be a blizzard next week." A: "I hate filling out these tax forms." B: "Come to mention it, I don't think I ever filed my taxes last year!"

come to mind To suddenly or immediately materialize in one's mind. A: "What would you like to have for dinner?" B: "I'm not sure, nothing's really coming to mind." *He's not a writer who comes to mind when you think of crime thrillers, but his books are edgy, brilliant page-turners.*

come to much 1. To equal a substantial amount of money; amount to much. Usually used in the negative. *Naturally, Ted only offered to pay the bill after he saw that it didn't come to much.* 2. To be successful or significant; amount to much. Usually used in the negative. *He got arrested so much as a teenager that I never thought he would come to much, but look at him now—he's an accomplished lawyer! The boss is just mad right now—I doubt his new rules will come to much.*

come to naught To be totally unsuccessful or amount to nothing. *Our efforts to keep the farm came to naught in the end. All those hours I spent researching my graduate thesis have come to naught.*

come to no good To reach an unpleasant or problematic final state. *You'll come to no good if you keep ignoring your studies. My cell phone came to no good when I accidentally ran it over with my car.*

come to nothing To result in no tangible or appreciable difference; to fail. *Well, all of our efforts came to nothing in the end, really. The bank decided to foreclose on us regardless of the money we raised.*

come to nought To be totally unsuccessful or amount to nothing. *Our*



efforts to keep the farm came to nought in the end. All those hours I spent researching my graduate thesis have come to nought.

come to (one's) assistance To help one. *Because Nancy is a senior member of the team, I really appreciated her coming to my aid. When that case had me stumped, I asked another detective to come to my assistance.*

come to (one's) attention To be noticed by one; to enter one's awareness. In this usage, a noun or pronoun is used between "to" and "attention." *Once the employee's complaint of mistreatment came to my attention, I knew I had to address it right away.*

come to (one's) feet To stand up, often to show one's approval through applause and/or cheering. *Everyone came to their feet after hearing the singer's powerful voice. We all came to our feet when the CEO walked into the conference room.*

come to (one's) senses To start thinking reasonably. *I'm glad she finally came to her senses and decided against those hideous bridesmaids' dresses. Don't worry, Paul will come to his senses and agree to the terms of the contract.*

come to papa **1.** An entreaty or encouragement—typically jocular—for something or someone to approach. Usually said by a man. *"That's it, come to papa," I said to myself as the suspects neared our undercover camera. It's immature, I know, but I can't help but whisper "come to papa" every time the ATM dispenses my cash.* **2.** An entreaty by gamblers for good fortune, especially when throwing dice. Usually said by a man. *I need a seven on this roll—come to papa!*

come to pass To happen. The phrase often indicates that what is happening is the result of a course of events. *Our only hope now is that these dire predictions will not come to pass, but can be avoided somehow. When it finally came to pass, it almost felt like a letdown.*

come to rest To stop moving. *All the other drivers came to rest as the police car, with its flashing lights and siren, sped by. The golf ball came to rest just shy of the hole.*

come to (someone's) aid To provide assistance, support, or rescue to someone. *Thank goodness the Coast Guard came to my aid, or I might have drowned out there. We were in serious financial trouble until Susan's mother*



came to our aid and helped us with some of our debt.

come to (someone's) rescue To help someone in trouble. The phrase can be used for both serious and trivial situations. *Thank goodness the lifeguard came to my rescue; otherwise, I might have drowned! Thanks for the notes! You totally came to my rescue after I missed so many classes.*

come to terms 1. To agree to or do something, especially a set of demands or conditions. *The government came to terms after the rebels' unflinching siege of the king's palace.* **2.** To begin to or make an effort to understand, accept, and deal with a difficult or problematic person, thing, or situation. *I should have the report ready for you by this afternoon, I just need to come to terms with this new software update first. I've tried, but I just can't come to terms with Amy, she's totally out of control!*

come to terms with (someone or something) To begin to or make an effort to understand, accept, and deal with a difficult or problematic person, thing, or situation. *I should have the report ready for you by this afternoon, I just need to come to terms with this new software update first. I've tried, but I just can't come to terms with Amy, she's totally out of control!*

come to that In fact; for that matter; what's more. *Most Americans have never been to a different country; come to that, many haven't even been to another state. You owe me \$20 for dinner last night. Come to that, you owe me another 10 for the cab ride home, too!*

come to the conclusion See [come to a/the conclusion](#).

come to the fore To be emphasized or made more noticeable. *This argument needs to come to the fore when you rewrite your paper. Questions of corruption came to the fore after the auditors found discrepancies in the yearly budget report.*

come to the job with (something) To provide or offer a useful skill or attribute. *He comes to the job with years of leadership experience.*

come to the point To reach the most important or crucial part of something. *OK, I have to leave soon, so please come to the point of your story.*

come to the same thing To be the same or nearly the same as something else, especially after consideration. *When you get down to it, downloading pirated music for free online and stealing CDs from a store*

really come to the same thing.

come to the table To meet in order to negotiate or discuss how to resolve a particular issue or situation. *If we can just get both sides to come to the table, I really think we can get them to agree to a contract.*

come to their assistance See [come to \(one's\) assistance](#).

come to their attention See [come to \(one's\) attention](#).

come to their feet See [come to \(one's\) feet](#).

come to their rescue See [come to \(someone's\) rescue](#).

come to their senses See [come to \(one's\) senses](#).

come to them See [come to](#).

come to think of it A set phrase used when one has had a sudden realization. *Yeah, come to think of it, Dave was at the party, too. I know a faster route we can take, come to think of it.*

come to this A set phrase used when something has reached a certain point. *We'll have to sell the house—I never thought it would come to this. Did you think our workplace would come to this and have surveillance cameras everywhere?*

come together **1.** Of two or more things, to meet or touch; to be joined. *According to the directions, those two pieces need to come together.* **2.** To attend something with someone else. *We're coming together so we don't have to take two cars.* **3.** To unite on a certain issue. *What will it take to for both sides to come together to finally agree on a contract?* **4.** To happen or form successfully. *Despite all of the last-minute chaos, the party came together splendidly. Now that I've finished my research, my term paper is really starting to come together.*

come true To become a reality after having been a fantasy, hope, expectation, fear, etc. *Wow, you've got a great job and a baby on the way—everything you've ever wanted is coming true! I'm afraid our worst fears have come true. The sharks have grown legs.*

come under fire To be subject to intense criticism or judgment. *The company came under fire after a newspaper reported allegations of the CEO's misappropriation of funds. You will definitely come under fire if they find out that you were responsible for the printing error.*

come under (someone or something) 1. To be categorized in a particular way. *What classes come under the Liberal Arts discipline at this school?* 2. To be one's responsibility. *The benefits team comes under the Director of Human Resources.*

come under the hammer To be put up for or sold at auction. *The banker's family estate had to come under the hammer to cover some of his mounting debt.*

come unglued 1. informal To become extremely upset or emotional. Primarily heard in US. *Poor Jane really came unglued during the funeral service.* 2. informal To encounter setbacks or fail altogether. Primarily heard in US. *Boy, this party is really coming unglued. First, there was the issue with the caterer, and now half the guests aren't coming.*

come unhinged 1. To become mentally unbalanced, disturbed, or confused. *After my friend's suicide, I came a little unhinged for a few months. Because I'd stayed up all night to finish my paper, I was worried I might come unhinged in class.* 2. To be angered to such a degree as to be or seem mentally unbalanced or insane. *Mom came totally unhinged when she saw what I did to the car.*

come unstuck To encounter setbacks or fail altogether. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *Boy, this party is really coming unstuck. First, there was the issue with the caterer, and now half the guests aren't coming.*

come up 1. To physically travel from a lower point or level to a higher one. *When you get here, just come up to my apartment—it's on the fourth floor. Come up here and look at this leak in the bathroom.* 2. To rise in the sky, as of the sun. *These days, I'm always awake before the sun comes up, thanks to my infant daughter.* 3. To become a topic of discussion. *Unfortunately, the idea of a raise never came up in our meeting.* 4. To happen or occur unexpectedly. *Setbacks keep coming up in our investigation.* 5. To come near or approach. *He came up to me in the club and asked if I would like to dance.* 6. To compare with or equal something in value, size, standards, etc. *The new courthouse doesn't come up to the grand elegance of the old building, but it will be much more functionally efficient. My electric car doesn't come up to sports cars in terms of speed, but I'd rather have one that doesn't require gasoline.* 7. To be increasingly successful, especially by advancing one's social status or financial situation. This definition is often

used in the phrase "come up in the world." *You will always reap the rewards of hard work, but you can truly come up by making connections and knowing the right people. After college, Lauren came up quickly in the world of medicine.* **8.** To increase in value. *Luckily, housing prices in our neighborhood have come up since we bought our house.*

come up a storm To begin to storm. *I didn't expect it to come up a storm today, so I had to run around and gather up all the toys and furniture in the yard.*

come up against a brick wall To be stymied by difficulties or obstacles that seem unlikely to change. *There are so few properties available in our town right now that prospective buyers are basically coming up against a brick wall. I'm trying to get funding for my project, but so far I've come up against a brick wall and have made only \$20.*

come up against (something) To face a particular obstacle, problem, difficulty, stress, etc. *Each year, more and more families come up against debt going into the holiday season. Sorry I haven't been in touch recently, I've just really come up against issues at work the last few weeks.*

come up for air **1.** Literally, to raise one's head out of the water (as in the ocean or a pool) in order to breathe. *When the swimmer came up for air, she immediately asked what her time was. I can't stay under water for too long without having to come up for air.* **2.** By extension, to pause in the middle of doing something. *When Mary came up for air in her monologue, I was finally able to get a word in about my own weekend! Joe and his new girlfriend have been kissing for so long that I doubt they'll ever come up for air!*

come up for (something) **1.** To travel north for a particular reason. *We only came up for my cousin's wedding in Boston, so we won't be in town for very long—we're heading back to Florida on Sunday.* **2.** To become available or eligible for something. *I doubt that such a thorny topic will come up for discussion at a dinner party. Our subscription comes up for renewal this month—do you want to keep it?*

come up from behind To improve one's position in relation to other people or things. *I'm confident that you can come up from behind in the race for valedictorian.*

come up heads To land on the "heads" side of a coin (as opposed to

"tails"). *But if this quarter comes up heads, you're doing my laundry for a month!*

come up in the world To be increasingly successful, especially by advancing one's social status or financial situation from where it stood before. *You will always reap the rewards of hard work, but you can truly come up in the world by making connections and knowing the right people. After college, Lauren came up quickly in the world of medicine.*

come up roses To result in success or an exceptionally good outcome, especially in the face of doubts or difficulties. *It looked like the negotiations might break down at any stage, but everything came up roses in the end.*

come up smelling like a rose To maintain a favorable reputation despite involvement in a scandalous or otherwise negative situation. *By reporting his colleagues as soon as he learned of their dishonest business practices, the CEO came up smelling like a rose.*

come up smelling of roses To maintain a favorable reputation despite involvement in a scandalous or otherwise negative situation. *By reporting his colleagues as soon as he learned of their dishonest business practices, the CEO came up smelling like roses.*

come up through the ranks To reach a prominent position after serving in subordinate ones. *Those employees trust Stu because they know that he came up through the ranks and once held the same entry-level position that they have now.*

come up to 1. To come near or approach. *He came up to me in the club and asked if I would like to dance. 2. To compare with or equal something in value, size, standards, etc. *The new courthouse doesn't come up to the grand elegance of the old building, but it will be much more functionally efficient. My electric car doesn't come up to sports cars in terms of speed, but I'd rather have one that doesn't require gasoline.**

come up to (one's) expectations To be as good as or have the qualities that someone predicted, expected, or hoped for. *We'd heard so many good things about the new restaurant, but the food didn't come up to our expectations at all, so we were rather disappointed. I'm so excited for the movie in the series—I hope it comes up to my expectations!*

come up to standards To improve someone or something enough to

meet a certain requirement or expectation. *If your intern doesn't come up to standards, expect him to be fired.*

come up trumps To achieve success, especially in the face of adversity. (In card games, "trumps" are the cards that have been assigned the highest value.) Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *After our gig got canceled, I came up trumps by finding our band an even better one!*

come up with (something) To devise or produce something. *Who came up with the idea for this marketing campaign? Good luck coming up with the money for a new car!*

come upon See [come on](#).

come way See [come \(one's\) way](#).

come what may No matter what happens. *As your parents, we'll always support you, come what may.*

come with (one) To accompany one. In informal situations, the phrase can end at "with" and convey the same meaning. *I'm coming with Bill, and we should get there by 8. If I go to the mall later, do you want to come with?*

come with the territory To typically accompany a certain situation; to be a usual consequence or related issue. *When you're the boss, staying late at the office just comes with the territory. Sleep deprivation comes with the territory of being a new parent.*

come within a whisker of (something) To almost get, achieve, or experience something. *She came within a whisker of the gold medal, but her leg cramped in the last few meters. Hundreds of people came within a whisker of death when their apartment building caught on fire in the middle of the night.*

come within an ace of (something) To almost get, achieve, or experience something. *She came within an ace of the gold medal, but her leg cramped in the last few meters. Hundreds of people came within an ace of death when their apartment building caught on fire in the middle of the night.*

come within an inch of (something) To almost get, achieve, or experience something. *She came within an inch of the gold medal, but her leg cramped in the last few meters. Hundreds of people came within an inch of death when their apartment building caught on fire in the middle of the night.*

come within (something) **1.** To be categorized in a particular way. *What classes come within the Liberal Arts discipline at this school?* **2.** To fall in a certain range. *Don't worry, your baby's weight comes within the normal range for her age group.*

the comeback See [come back](#).

a comedown See [come down](#).

comedy of errors A situation or series of events characterized by a number of humorous or ridiculous mix-ups, mishaps, or blunders. Taken from one of Shakespeare's early comedies, *The Comedy of Errors*. *Their business was a comedy of errors by the end, with orders constantly being confused, employees arriving at the wrong time, and the financial accounts being all over the place. The story is a delightful comedy of errors, in which every sort of mistake and confusion that can arise does—with everything working out just fine in the end, of course.*

comfort girl A euphemism for a woman or girl forced into sexual slavery or recruited into prostitution by and in service of the Japanese Imperial Army before and during World War II. *Although the Japanese government officially admitted to its role in coercing women to become comfort girls during the Second World War, there are still many who deny how many women were affected and the extent to which the government was responsible at the time.*

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comfort zone **1.** A place, activity, situation, or psychological state in which a person feels free from anxiety and is within their of ability, experience, security, and/or control. *Though it is often outside your comfort zone, traveling to foreign countries gives you a much greater perspective on how other people in the world live. The new job is a little out of my comfort zone, but it will give me a great opportunity to see what I'm truly capable of.* **2.** The temperature range wherein the human body feels naturally comfortable, being neither too hot nor too cold. *Many retired Americans,*

being more sensitive to the cold, settle in Florida, where the balmy weather better suits their comfort zones.

comfortable as an old shoe See [\(as\) comfortable as an old shoe](#).

comfortable circumstances The state of having enough money to live well. *We used to have barely enough money to pay rent, but ever since Pat got that promotion, we've been living in comfortable circumstances.*

comfortable in (one's) own skin Displaying a relaxed confidence in and clear understanding of oneself and one's abilities, especially when presenting oneself to or interacting with other people. *Though his girlfriend's group of friends are all older and more established in life, he is comfortable enough in his own skin to have no problem mingling with them at parties. Janet is so comfortable in her own skin that I have no doubt that she'll find her ideal path in life.*

comfortably off Having enough financial means or assets to be able to live in comfort. *Jim is now quite comfortably off after marrying Suzanne, whose father is a billionaire oil tycoon.*

coming events cast their shadows before Clues indicate important events to follow. *Come on, the boss has reprimanded you for this many times. Coming events cast their shadows before, and you need to pay attention to that!*

coming-of-age Describing something, such as a book or film, that focuses on a character's maturation to adulthood. *Her coming-of-age novel focuses on a child born into poverty who goes on to be a Harvard graduate.*

coming out of (one's) ears Occurring or present in a great amount or abundance. *Because the end of the semester is almost here, I've got panicked students in search of extra credit coming out of my ears.*

coming through A phrase said (perhaps shouted) when one is trying to pass through a crowded area. *Emergency patient coming through! Everybody, move! Excuse me, coming through.*

coming up a cloud Appearing like it's going to rain. *Wow, it got dark out there all of a sudden! It's really coming up a cloud.*

command performance 1. A performance, such as a play, ballet, opera, etc., that is presented at the behest of royalty or a head of government. *The theater troupe was always at the ready to give a command performance,*

should the queen so desire it. **2.** By extension, any task or activity (typically outside of normal work duties) that one undertakes or performs at the request of someone in a position of authority. *When I was an intern, I always had to give command performances for visiting businessmen, such as taking them out to dinner or arranging entertainment for them during their stay.* **3.** Any obligatory occasion or situation that one is required or expected to attend, as at the behest of an employer or person of authority. *These fundraising dinners, though technically "optional," are really command performances for the members of staff.*

commence with (someone or something) To start something with a particular person or action. *The presentations will commence with you, Michael, so go on up to the podium. Once the band is ready, we'll commence with the dancing!*

commend (one) to (someone or something) To speak favorably of someone to another person or group. *I commended Jeff to the award selection committee because his extraordinary bravery in rescuing all of those people from the apartment fire deserves to be recognized.*

commend (someone) for (something) To compliment or praise someone for something that they have done. *I have to commend you for your extraordinary bravery in a dangerous situation. I'm sure all of the people you rescued from the fire see you as a hero.*

comment about (someone or something) To speak about a particular person or topic. *The young starlet refused to comment about the rumors surrounding her latest movie.*

comment back A common comment on popular social media posts that informs others that the commenter will like the first picture on someone's page if they like the first picture on the commenter's page. Often abbreviated as "CB." *Ever since I started writing "comment back" on famous people's posts, my Instagram pictures have been getting way more comments!*

commiserate with (one) To express mutual sympathy with one about a shared negative experience. *Luckily, I can commiserate with my classmates about how mean our science teacher is.*

commit (oneself) on (something) To agree to something; to make a commitment to something. *I'm sorry, but I can't commit myself on your project because it seems fundamentally flawed.*

commit (oneself or something) for To agree to involvement in something; to make a commitment to something. *Can you believe she asked us to commit ourselves for her move on Saturday? I want to enjoy my day off! Unfortunately, I can't commit my time for your project.*

commit (someone or something) to (something) 1. To agree to something. *I'm sorry, but I can't commit myself to your project because it seems fundamentally flawed.* 2. To devote or dedicate oneself or another to someone or something. *You need to fully commit yourself to your family and stop working so many hours. Jana won an academic award after committing herself to her studies. I can commit six of my employees to this project.* 3. To engage in an exclusive romantic relationship. *I really want to commit to Ryan, but his history of womanizing makes me reluctant to trust him.*

commit (something) to memory To make an effort to learn something; to memorize something. *Everyone in our English class had to commit a poem to memory and then recite it before the class. I just can't seem to commit your phone number to memory!*

a committee is a group of men who keep minutes and waste hours Committees take a very long time to accomplish something, if they accomplish anything at all. A pun on "minutes," which is a record of what is discussed at a particular meeting. A: *"The task force has been in a meeting all day! How can they not have reached a decision by now?"* B: *"Well, a committee is a group of men who keep minutes and waste hours."*

commode-hugging drunk slang Intoxicated to the point of vomiting. (A commode is a toilet, which one may "hug" while vomiting into it.) *I found Henry sleeping on the bathroom floor, so he must have been commode-hugging drunk last night.*

common as an old shoe See [\(as\) common as an old shoe](#).

common as muck See [as common as muck](#).

common cause Any interest, goal, or other motivating factor that is shared between two or more people, groups, or organizations. *The two political parties, typically so divided on social issues, were united in the common cause of eliminating homelessness.*

the common cold Another name for a "cold"—an ordinary, mild illness characterized by congestion, sneezing, and coughing. *The doctor said that I*

just have the common cold, not anything serious, thank goodness. If you have the common cold, you should be resting!

common decency Common, everyday courtesy, respect, and politeness that is expected and assumed by social convention. *Please have the common decency to at least consult me before you make some extravagant purchase. It is just common decency that you should help someone if they are in distress.*

common ground Collectively, shared ideas, interests, or beliefs, especially between people who often disagree. *I was worried when my boyfriend and uncle started arguing over their different political views, but luckily they found common ground when discussing their favorite TV shows.*

common knowledge Something that is (or is believed to be) generally or widely accepted as true, whether or not it has been verified or officially recognized. *It's common knowledge that corporate interests play a major role in directing politicians and the laws they create. A healthy diet and regular exercise are the best defense against disease—common knowledge at this point.*

common law Law that is not written or defined in legislative statutes but rather is based on the precedential decisions of judges in courts or other tribunals. *It is common law that those who enter into a written agreement must adhere to the terms contained therein.*

common name The name of a species of organisms based on normal, everyday language, as opposed to the Latinized scientific (taxonomic) name. *A single common name is often attributed to what are in fact multiple, distinct species of animals.*

common or garden (used before a noun; sometimes hyphenated) Standard, unexceptional, or commonly found. Primarily heard in UK. *That's just your common or garden house spider; there's no need to be concerned about its bite. I'm just looking for a common-or-garden mobile phone; I don't need anything fancy.*

common or garden variety A standard, unexceptional, or commonly found kind (of thing). Primarily heard in UK. *That's just your common or garden variety house spider; there's no need to be concerned about its bite.*

common salt Another name for the type of salt that is typically used to

flavor food. *If there's no common salt on the table, my uncle will inevitably ask for it, as he adds salt to everything he eats. Be sure to add some common salt to the roast before putting it in the oven.*

common thread An idea or theme that is consistently present in several different areas or things. *What is the common thread in these three novels?*

the common weal The common good of public society; the welfare of the general public. *Having ousted the dictator from power, the new president has pledged to focus all his energy on the common weal.*

commune with (something) To experience a meaningful connection with something, often on a spiritual level. *Tim really enjoys going off into the woods and communing with nature.*

communicate (something) to (someone) To tell or otherwise convey something to someone. *You must communicate your needs to people if you want them to help you! I hope you communicated a sense of urgency to Joanna when you assigned this project to her.*

communicate with (one) 1. To talk to one. *Well, if you didn't communicate with him, how was he supposed to know what you needed?* 2. To convey a message to and be understood by another person. *Even though they've been married for years, they still sometimes have a hard time communicating with each other.*

commute between (places) To make a routine trip between one's home and one's place of work or school. *Until you relocate, you'll have to commute between Philadelphia and Manhattan every day.*

commute from (some place) To make a routine trip to one's place of work or school from another location (often where one lives). *Until you relocate to Manhattan, you'll have to commute from Philadelphia for work.*

commute (something) into (something) 1. To make a routine trip (typically into a city) to one's place of work or school. *Until I relocate, I'll have to commute into Manhattan for work every day.* 2. To change or transform something into something else. *I doubt that the judge will commute that sentence into a lesser punishment.*

company man A male employee whose allegiance to his company or its management—or the interests thereof—takes precedence or priority over his own opinions or the interests of his fellow workers. *It's no use trying to get*

his help in persuading the boss to increase worker safety—he's just a company man.

company manners Exceptional manners; those that are preferred or required in and among polite society. *One must at all times exhibit company manners if one is to make a good impression among the more influential members of society.*

company town A town or city that is built, maintained, dominated by, and/or wholly dependent on the influence and economic vitality of a single business, industry, or company. *During the industrial boom in America following World War II, many company towns sprang up where major manufacturing outfits could support thousands of workers and their families.*

compare apples and oranges To try to highlight the similarities between two different things—which typically cannot be done. *You can't compare your job as a nurse to mine as an engineer—that's comparing apples and oranges!*

compare notes To discuss one's feelings on or experience of someone or something with another person. *This afternoon, we'll have to compare notes on the applicants we've interviewed so far.*

compare notes on (someone or something) To discuss one's feelings on or experience of someone or something with another person. *This afternoon, we'll have to compare notes on the applicants we've interviewed so far.*

compare (someone or something) to (someone or something) To highlight the similarities between two people or things. *Well, if Shakespeare can compare someone to a summer's day, then so can I! Unfortunately, I can only compare her performance to a train wreck.*

compare (someone or something) with (someone or something) To highlight the similarities between two people or things. *Well, if Shakespeare can compare someone with a summer's day, then so can I! Unfortunately, I can only compare her performance with a train wreck.*

compartmentalize (something) into (something) To separate something into different parts or categories. *We'll use cubicles to compartmentalize the office into smaller workspaces.*



compel (someone) to (do something) To strongly encourage or pressure someone to do something. *Threaten me all you want—you'll never compel me to be a traitor to my country!*

compensate for (something) 1. To offset (or attempt to offset) something. *His sudden honesty cannot compensate for all the lies he told me over the past year.* 2. To reimburse someone for something. In this usage, the recipient is named between "compensate" and "for." *If you take the job, we will compensate you for all of your relocation expenses.*

compete against (someone or something) To work or put forth effort against someone or something in an attempt to do something successfully. *I'm probably competing against a hundred people for this job. Instead of competing against the loud music out here, let's go inside and talk.*

compete for (someone or something) To work or put forth effort against someone or something in an attempt to gain someone or something else. *I refuse to compete for a guy's affections—if he likes someone more than me, then I need to move on. I'm feeling discouraged now that I know just how many people are competing for this job.*

compete in (something) To participate in a competition. *Who is competing in this heat?*

compete with (someone or something) To work or put forth effort against someone or something. *How many people am I competing with for this job? Instead of competing with the loud music out here, let's go inside and talk.*

compile (something) from (something) To assemble something from component parts. *Don't worry, I'm compiling a study guide from the notes I took this semester.*

complain about (someone or something) To voice one's annoyance or displeasure with someone or something. *Oh boy, which dead president is grandpa complaining about today? If you hate your job so much, quit complaining about it and look for a new one!*

complain of (something) To state the physical ailments or symptoms of illness that one is experiencing. *The appendicitis patient came into the ER complaining of stomach pain.*

complain to (someone or something) To voice one's annoyance

or displeasure to someone or something. *If you hate your job so much, quit complaining to me about it and look for a new one! If we complain to the school board, I'm sure we can get this decision overturned.*

complete game In baseball, a game in which one pitcher pitches all nine innings. (A starting pitcher is typically replaced with a relief pitcher after several innings.) *If Smith can keep pitching through the ninth inning, he can add a complete game to his resume!*

compliment (someone) on (something) To praise someone for something specific. *I have to compliment you on this dinner you made—it's just delicious! The salesman just complimented me on my beautiful smile!*

comply with (something) To follow or adhere to a particular rule or regulation. *Please be advised that your construction project needs to comply with all building codes.*

comport (oneself) with (something) To act in a particular way. *You need to comport yourself with class at the gala tonight, so please stay away from the bar.*

composed of (something) Made up of (something); consisting of (something). *This paint is actually composed of several natural ingredients. Your grade is composed of several factors, such as homework, projects, and test scores.*

compound (something) with (something else) To add something to something else; to combine things. *That protein powder tastes so bad that I have to compound it with something else.*

compress (something) into (something) 1. To mold something into a particular shape. *We compressed the cookie dough into little balls and then put it on a baking sheet.* 2. To push on something so that it fits into a receptacle. *Even sitting on my suitcase didn't help to compress the clothes into it.*

comprised of (something) Made up of (something); consisting of (something). *Your grade is comprised of several factors, such as homework, projects, and test scores. This paint is actually comprised of several natural ingredients.*

compromise on (something) To reach an agreement in which both sides make concessions. *Living in this seedy neighborhood is not something*

I'm willing to compromise on. We couldn't agree on what to have for dinner, so we compromised on tacos tonight and Italian tomorrow.

compromise (with) (one's) principles To forsake, ignore, or otherwise go against one's fundamental beliefs or virtues. *I never thought he would compromise his principles just to get ahead in business like that. Jane felt really guilty about compromising with her principles when she didn't turn her friends into the police after she saw them stealing.*

compute (something) at (some amount) To determine the total to be a particular amount. *Unfortunately, I computed the amount you owe at more than \$1,000.*

con artist 1. A person who exploits the vulnerability of others for their own sake by manipulating and taking advantage of their confidence (the act of which is known as a confidence trick or game). It is the common abbreviation of the full term, "confidence artist." *Be wary of con artists who send emails claiming to be a bank or some other trustworthy establishment: they often ask for your personal bank details to have access to your finances.* 2. By extension, a person who is skilled at duplicity, cajolery, or self-serving manipulation or persuasion. *John is such a con artist, always convincing others to pay for him on nights out under the pretense that he'll "pay them back later."*

con man 1. A man who exploits the vulnerability of others for his own sake by manipulating and taking advantage of their confidence (the act of which is known as a confidence trick or game). It is the common abbreviation of the full term, "confidence man." *Be wary of con men who send emails claiming to be a bank or some other trustworthy establishment: they often ask for your personal bank details so as to have access to your finances.* 2. By extension, a man who is skilled at duplicity, cajolery, or self-serving manipulation or persuasion. *John is such a con man, always convincing others to pay for him on nights out under the pretense that he'll "pay them back later."*

con (someone) into (something) To trick or deceive someone into doing something. *I can't believe that guy conned you into loaning him hundreds of dollars. They'll never con me into a bogus business deal!*

con (someone) out of (something) To obtain something from someone through deception. *I can't believe that shady salesman conned you*

out of hundreds of dollars. I'm confident that we can con that sweet old lady out of her diamond necklace.

conceal (someone or something) from (someone or something) To hide someone or something from someone or something. *If you conceal him from the authorities, you might end up getting arrested yourself. We need to conceal this from mom and dad so that we don't get in trouble.*

concede to (someone or something) To yield to someone or something. A noun or pronoun can be used between "concede" and "to." *He's so stubborn that I doubt he'll ever concede to what I want. The candidate called to concede to his opponent after the final vote was announced.*

conceited as a barber's cat See [\(as\) conceited as a barber's cat](#).

conceive of (someone or something) To think of someone or something, often in a particular way. *Considering her lack of patience, I have a really hard time conceiving of her as a kindergarten teacher. Leave it to Ben to conceive of a totally ridiculous plan.*

conceive of (someone or something) as (someone or something) To think of someone or something in a different way than usual. *Considering her lack of patience, I have a really hard time conceiving of her as a kindergarten teacher.*

concentrate at (some place) **1.** To have people gather in a particular place or area. In this usage, a noun or pronoun is used between "concentrate" and "at." *Concentrate all the guests at the entrance to the venue for now—I don't want them to see the wedding party just yet.* **2.** To gather in a particular place or area in large numbers. *Most of the guests are concentrated at the buffet right now. I had a hard time getting down the hallway because so many students were concentrated at the door to the gym.*

concentrate on (someone or something) To focus on a particular person or thing. *I'm sorry, but I can't concentrate on what you're saying with that music blaring in the background. If you want to get into the college of your choice, you really need to concentrate on your schoolwork.*

concern (oneself) about (something) To become focused on someone or something because one feels partly responsible for dealing with it. *Your mother really doesn't need to concern herself about our financial*

issues—we're perfectly capable of sorting them out on our own.

concern (someone) in (something) To involve someone in something. *You really don't need to concern your mother in our financial issues—we're perfectly capable of sorting them out on our own.*

concern (someone) with (someone or something) 1. To involve someone in something to the extent that they feel partly responsible for dealing with it. *You really don't need to concern your mother with our financial issues—we're perfectly capable of sorting them out on our own.* 2. To cause someone to worry about something. *I don't want to concern my parents with this news until we get more information about how serious the illness is.*

concerned about (someone or something) Worried about someone or something. *I'm getting concerned about the dog because he hasn't eaten all day. I'm sure everything is fine—try not to be so concerned about it.*

concrete jungle An overcrowded, unsafe and/or crime-ridden urban environment or city, characterized by the congestion of large buildings and roads. *After years living in that concrete jungle, I'm looking forward to being in a place with a bit of grass and friendly neighbors.*

concur on (someone or something) To agree on a particular person or idea. *Have you two concurred on a recipient for the scholarship? We definitely concur on the fact that this town is the ideal place to raise our family.*

condemn (someone or something) as (something) To judge someone or something harshly and unfavorably. *The other troops have condemned me as a traitor. The actress was quick to condemn the report as slander.*

condemn (someone or something) for (something) To judge someone or something harshly for a particular action. *The other troops have condemned me for consorting with a known enemy. The actress was quick to condemn the newspaper for spreading lies about her.*

condemn (someone) to (something) To assign one a particular fate or punishment. *That criminal has been condemned to a life of hard labor.*

condense (something) (in)to (something) To reduce something

into fewer parts, or to make something smaller or shorter. *You definitely need to condense this paper into a shorter version because you're currently 20 pages over the limit.*

condescend to To act as though others are less important or inferior to oneself. *Jim has been condescending to us ever since he found out he got cast in that movie. Can you please stop condescending to me? Contrary to what you may think, I'm not an idiot.*

condescend to (do something) To do something that one feels is unworthy or demeaning. *Now that Jim thinks he's a big movie star, I doubt he'll condescend to talk to us common folk.*

condition (someone or something) to (something) 1. To train someone or an animal to do something in a particular way or to act in a certain way. *Years of office work have conditioned me to get up at 6 AM, even on the weekends. The dog has been conditioned to run to his bowl when I open the cabinet where we store his food.* 2. To acclimate someone or an animal to something. *It will take time to condition ourselves to the pace of life in our sleepy new town. How long will it take to condition the dog to our commands?*

conduct (someone or something) away To move someone or something away from someone or something else. *Go out and conduct the kids away from the pool. I was quick to conduct the dog away from the stray cat.*

conduct (someone or something) into (some place) To move or lead someone or something into a particular place or area. *Can you conduct the kids into the house for birthday cake? I was quick to conduct the dog into the house when I noticed the stray cat.*

conduct (someone or something) out of (some place) To move or lead someone or something out of a particular place or area. *Can you conduct the kids out of the house for relay races? Once the stray cat was gone, I conducted the dog out of the house for a walk.*

confederate with (someone or something) To unite or work together with someone or something. *Those two groups confederated with each other to form this proposal.*

confer (up)on (someone or something) 1. To discuss something

with someone. *We need to meet this afternoon and confer on the candidates we've interviewed so far. Your mother and I need to confer on this issue before we make a decision.* **2.** To bestow something, often a title or honor, on someone. In this usage, a noun or pronoun is often used between "confer" and "on," and "upon" can be used in place of "on." *The queen will confer an official title upon him at the ceremony tonight.*

confess to (someone or something) **1.** To admit something. *I don't think he has any intention of confessing to the crime. Everyone knows that you have a crush on Lauren, so you might as well just confess to it!* **2.** To admit something to someone. *I don't think he has any intention of confessing to the police. Everyone knows that you have a crush on Lauren, so you might as well just confess to us!*

confession is good for the soul See [\(open\) confession is good for the soul](#).

confide in (one) To share one's secrets with someone, usually a trusted person unlikely to divulge them. *Of course you can confide in me—I'm your best friend! This issue is just so embarrassing that I can't possibly confide in anyone about it.*

confidence artist See [con artist](#).

confidence-building measure Any action taken to eliminate or reduce the fear of attack or escalation of conflict between two or more parties, as in international politics, interpersonal communication, business interactions, etc. The term is usually pluralized. *The two countries, long on the brink of all-out war, have introduced several confidence-building measures between their governments to facilitate better communication and hopefully avert the need for a military offensive by either side. One of our goals in marriage counseling is to create confidence-building measures between spouses, so that each person learns to communicate their frustrations before they turn into a source of conflict.*

confidence man See [con man](#).

confine (someone or something) to (someone or something) **1.** To restrict a person or animal to a particular place or area. *Don't worry, the baby is confined to her playpen right now. Maddy is scared of dogs, so we need to confine Fido to the backyard.* **2.** To restrict something

to a particular person or thing; to limit the scope of something. *We need to confine our investigation to the area around the park for now. Please confine your requests to the essentials, so as to not overwhelm the staff.*

confine (someone or something) within (something) To restrict a person or animal to a particular place or area. *Don't worry, I confined the baby within her playpen. Maddy is scared of dogs, so we need to confine Fido within the backyard.*

confirm (someone) in (something) To incorporate one more thoroughly into one's religion through a specific ceremony. *The bishop will confirm the students in the church later this year.*

confiscate (something) from (someone) To take something away from someone, often as a form of punishment. *I always confiscate cell phones from students who try to use them in my classroom.*

conflict with (something) To interfere or clash with something. *Wait, no, I can't meet with you at 3:00—that conflicts with a conference call I have. I cannot support you in this action, sir, as it conflicts with my religious beliefs.*

conform to (something) To follow or adhere to a particular set of rules, regulations, or norms. *Please be advised that your construction project needs to conform to all building codes.*

conform with (something) To adhere to a specific plan or directions. *The playhouse you built can't possibly conform with the instructions—the foundation's all lopsided!*

confront (someone) with (something) To approach someone with the intention of presenting or discussing something unpleasant. *If you confront him with evidence of his crime, I think he'll try to leave town.*

confuse about (something) To puzzle or make uncertain about something. A noun or pronoun can be used between "confuse" and "about." *I wasn't trying to confuse my students about sine and cosine, but it seems that I have. I'm sorry I'm so early—I must have been confused about the party's start time.*

confuse (someone or something) with (someone or something) 1. To puzzle or perplex a person or animal by doing something in particular. *I wasn't trying to confuse my students with my lesson*

on sine and cosine, but it seems that I have. If you're not consistent, you'll just end up confusing your dog with your commands. **2.** To mistake someone or something for someone or something else. *People are always confusing me with my sister because we look so much alike. Oh, I'm not a biology major—you must be confusing me with my roommate. Please don't confuse the pile of clothes I'm donating with the pile of ones I'm keeping.*

confuse the issue To obfuscate or distract from the topic at hand by introducing irrelevant and/or misleading information. *Politicians are always confusing the issue during debates by pointing out their opponents' history in other issues. Don't confuse the issue with talk about your past achievements, please stick to the question I'm asking you. His muddled explanation only served to confuse the issue further for his students.*

confusion worse confounded Confusion made worse. *Recess was already underway when the fire alarm rang, leading to confusion worse confounded. Trying to wrangle all those kids was certainly a chore!*

congratulate (someone) (up)on (something) To praise someone for an accomplishment or other positive development. *I just have to congratulate you on winning the tournament—you totally deserve it. Have you congratulated Fran on her new house yet?*

conjecture on (something) To speculate or wonder about something. *A murmur went through the stands as people conjectured on which dog would be named the winner.*

conjure up **1.** Literally, to cause something to appear, as by magic or other supernatural means. A noun or pronoun can be used between "conjure" and "up" or after "up." *The magician wowed the crowd when he waved his hands and seemingly conjured up a rabbit.* **2.** To locate something. A noun or pronoun can be used between "conjure" and "up" or after "up." *Hang on, let me see if I can conjure up a pen for you. Any luck conjuring up some limes?* **3.** To evoke thoughts or images of someone or something. A noun or pronoun can be used between "conjure" and "up" or after "up." *We can't name our baby Glinda—that name immediately conjures up images of The Wizard of Oz! As an author, your job is to conjure up the action in the reader's mind.*

conk off **1.** slang To fall asleep. *He was so tired after his long day at work that he conked off during the movie.* **2.** slang Of a machine, to break or completely lose functionality. *Judging by all that noise coming from her car,*

I'm pretty sure it's about to conk off. The blender stopped working again today—it must be ready to conk off.

conk out **1.** slang To fall asleep. *He was so tired after his long day at work that he conked out during the movie.* **2.** slang Of a machine, to break or completely lose functionality. *Judging by all that noise coming from her car, I'm pretty sure it's about to conk out. The blender stopped working again today—it must be ready to conk out.* **3.** To faint. *Sarah conked out as soon as she crossed the finish line, but luckily her boyfriend was able to catch her.* **4.** To die. *When Jared has any sort of illness, he immediately frets that he's going to conk out.*

connect the dots **1.** Literally, to draw a line between dots, often as part of a children's activity to create an illustration or design. *The kids are having fun connecting the dots and making pretty pictures for us.* **2.** To understand something by piecing together hints or other bits of information. *Once I started to connect the dots, I realized that, if they hadn't called me by now, I probably wasn't getting the job.*

connect up To attach or link something to something else. *Let me just connect up these two cords, and then everything should be running again.*

connect (up) to (someone or something) **1.** To physically join people or things together. A noun or pronoun can be used between "connect" and "to." *The handcuffs kept the thief connected to the chair as he was questioned. If you don't connect this piece to that one, the base will be lopsided.* **2.** To be involved in or linked to something. A noun or pronoun can be used between "connect" and "to." *Once he became connected to that scandal, his political career was over.* **3.** To successfully access a connection to something, such as electricity or the Internet. A noun or pronoun can be used between "connect" and "to." *I'm having a hard time connecting to the Wi-Fi here.*

connect (up) with (someone or something) **1.** To have a positive or meaningful connection with someone, often quickly. *I just don't connect with those people—I doubt we have anything in common. I connected with Ashley immediately, and we've been best friends ever since.* **2.** To communicate with someone. *I've been having a hard time connecting with Stephanie, since she's been out of the office every time I've tried to call her.* **3.** To form a relationship or a group. *I'm sure you'll be able to connect with*

other photography enthusiasts in your new town.

conned her into See [con \(someone\) into \(something\)](#).

conned her out of See [con \(someone\) out of \(something\)](#).

connive at (something) To plot or conspire about something. *What are you kids whispering about back there? You better not be conniving at something!*

consarn it informal Darn it! *Oh, consarn it—I overslept again!*

conscience does make cowards of us all The conscience often prevents one from doing things that one wants to do (perhaps things that wrong or inappropriate). The phrase comes from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. *I really want to insult him back, but I just can't. Ugh, conscience does make cowards of us all.*

(one's) conscience is clean One is guiltless or has no feelings of guilt or remorse over something. *Don't you dare accuse me of causing this, my conscience is clean! Some people think I should have treated him better, but my conscience is clean in this whole affair.*

(one's) conscience is clear One is guiltless or has no feelings of guilt or remorse over something. *Don't you dare accuse me of causing this, my conscience is clear! Some people think I should have treated him better, but my conscience is clear in this whole affair.*

conscience money Money paid to another in an attempt to alleviate the payer's guilty conscience. *I felt so badly about breaking my mom's lamp that I eventually gave her conscience money, in the hopes that it would make me feel better.*

conscientious objector A person who refuses to serve in the military due to religious or ethical beliefs running contrary to violence or war. *My great-grandfather was imprisoned for refusing to fight in the first World War as a conscientious objector.*

conscript into (something) To draft one into the armed forces. A noun or pronoun can be used between "conscript" and "into." *Young people fear that they will be conscripted into service if these tensions explode into all-out war.*

consecrate (someone or something) to God To devote or

dedicate someone or something to God's service. *I'm going to the ceremony to consecrate our new chapel to God.*

consent to (something) To agree to something. *Do you have your permission slip? We need proof that your parents have consented to your participation in the field trip. Good luck getting her to consent to such dramatic changes to the script.*

consider (someone) for (something) To contemplate giving something (often a particular job or role) to someone. *I considered Walt for the promotion, but his constant lateness soon made me question that decision. Which actresses are you considering for the lead?*

consign (something) to (someone or something) 1. To give or assign something to a someone or something. *Who is the most responsible employee I can consign this project to?* 2. To mark something to be sent to a particular destination. *Consign these packages to the Savannah office, please.*

consist of (something) To be made up of (something). *Your grade consists of several factors, such as homework, projects, and test scores.*

console (someone) on (something) To comfort or soothe someone about a distressing topic or occurrence. *I think you'll have a hard time consoling her on that lost account, considering all the hard work she put into it. I'm trying to console my daughter on the loss of her beloved teddy bear, but nothing I've said has helped thus far.*

console (someone or oneself) with (something) To comfort or soothe someone with a particular thing or method. *After my daughter lost her beloved teddy bear, I tried to console her with other toys, but nothing has helped thus far. It's not the healthiest idea to console yourself with sweets.*

consort with (one) 1. To spend time with one. *I'm nervous about Jill consorting with those known troublemakers all of a sudden. Who are you consorting with these days?* 2. euphemism To have sexual intercourse with one. *My roommate hasn't been home any night this week—I wonder who he's consorting with.*

conspicuous by (one's) absence Noticeably missing from something. *You're the loudest one in the class, so of course you're conspicuous by your absence!*

conspicuous consumption The lavish expenditure of money or

acquisition of expensive items as a public display of one's wealth or financial success. *In rapidly developing economies, conspicuous consumption becomes more and more prevalent as a means for those who have done well to flaunt their new economic status.*

conspiracy of silence An agreement, either explicit or unspoken, among members of a group to keep secret certain information that, if exposed, could be damaging to the group, its interests, or its associates. *Knowing that public knowledge of their imminent takeover by the rival company could jeopardize their continued employment thereafter, the board of directors agreed to a strict conspiracy of silence until the deal was finalized. The doctors in the hospital were engaged in a tacit conspiracy of silence, as each knew that bringing to light their colleague's misbehavior could end up damaging their own reputations in the process.*

conspire against (something or someone) To join together in force or combine in such a way as to foil or defeat someone or something. *The wind and rain conspired against our plans for an outdoor barbecue. His two younger brothers conspired against him to have him removed from the head of the company.*

conspire with (one) To plot or scheme with one. *What are you kids whispering about back there? You better not be conspiring with each other! The president of the company conspired with his assistant to conceal all evidence of his crime.*

constant dropping wears away a stone Success is earned through persistence and determination. *My swing only got better after I started practicing it every day, so I guess it's true that constant dropping wears away a stone.*

constitution of an ox See [have the constitution of an ox](#).

constrain (someone) from (doing something) To prevent or hinder someone from doing something. *For years, stage fright constrained me from singing in public.*

construct (something) from (something) To build something from certain materials or items. *We constructed our solar system from foam balls and popsicle sticks—what did you guys use?*

construe (something) as (something) To view or interpret

something in a particular way *Although I believe that he's innocent, I can see how one could easily be construe his actions as a crime.*

consume mass quantities To eat, drink, or otherwise consume large amounts of something. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *Large family holidays are all typified by consuming mass quantities of food and alcohol. As the largest economy on the planet, our prerogative seems to be to consume mass quantities of the Earth's resources.*

consumed by desire Completely absorbed and controlled by one's passion or lust for something or someone. *Jonathan found himself consumed by desire to be with Stephen, such that he could no longer pay attention in class. Many men, consumed by desire for a woman, have committed atrocious and sometimes bizarre acts of depravity. Consumed by his desire to rule the world, the dictator was blind to the mutiny of his advisors.*

contaminate (someone or something) with (something) To pollute someone or something through exposure to something foul or dangerous. *Be sure to wash your hands first so you don't contaminate the sterile area with germs.*

contend against (someone or something) To compete against someone or something. *Andy hasn't trained enough to contend against other swimmers his age. If you push him to enter this race, he'll just end up disappointed.*

contend with (someone or something) 1. To compete against someone. *Andy hasn't trained enough to contend with other swimmers his age. If you push him to enter this race, he'll just end up disappointed.* 2. To struggle against or work to solve a problem or issue. *I'm not ready to contend with that problem just yet—I need coffee first. How can we contend with these huge financial losses and still stay in business?*

content (oneself) with (someone or something) To be happy or satisfied with something, often something that is lacking or disappointing in some way. *In order to get health insurance, I had to abandon acting and content myself with a boring office job. If you're trying to save money, you'll need to content yourself with the clothes you already own.*

a contented mind is a perpetual feast If happy and satisfied, one will not strive to acquire more. *Once I reframed my priorities, I realized that I had everything I could ever want. I guess it's true that a contented mind is a*

perpetual feast.

continue by (doing something) To persist in something or take the next step toward a particular goal or outcome. *Once you're done cleaning the bathroom, you can continue by sweeping the hallway—that's the last area we need to clean before the dinner party.*

continue with (something) To maintain the action that one has been doing. *After that unexplained crash in the hallway, the professor had a hard time continuing with his lecture.*

contract out To give a job or assignment to an outside entity (so as to avoid doing the job oneself). A noun or pronoun can be used between "contract" and "out" or after "out." *We contracted the project out because no one on our staff has the time to scan all of those documents.*

contract with (someone or something) To agree with someone or a group to do something. *No one on our staff has the time to scan all of those documents, so we'll contract with a company that can do it for us.*

contradiction in terms A phrase or expression that causes confusion because it contains words or ideas that contradict each other; an oxymoron. *Jumbo shrimp is such a contradiction in terms.*

contrary to all reason Despite what definitely should be the case. Describes an occurrence that is unthinkable or unimaginable. *And then, contrary to all reason, I found that my bank account was totally depleted. There should have still been thousands of dollars in there!*

contrary to popular belief Opposite to what is popularly or generally expected or believed. Usually used to introduce such a statement. *Contrary to popular belief, higher taxes end up benefiting people more than lower ones.*

contrary to popular opinion Opposite to what is popularly or generally expected or believed. Usually used to introduce such a statement. *Contrary to popular opinion, higher taxes end up benefiting people more than lower ones.*

contrary to (something) In opposition to something. *There's no way we can get all these documents scanned in a week, contrary to what the boss thinks. Contrary to popular opinion, higher taxes end up benefiting people more than lower ones.*

contrast (someone or something) with (someone or something) 1. To highlight the differences between two people or things.

A noun or pronoun can be used between "contrast" and "with." *Now contrast Joe's unenthusiastic reaction with Sally's unbridled glee over the news.* 2. To be obviously or clearly different from someone or something else. *I think the paint color of the trim contrasts with the walls nicely.*

contribute to (something) 1. To give or add something to something. *Are you planning to contribute to the toy drive again this year? I think you should keep Eric because he really contributes a lot to our team.* 2. To be a factor or catalyst for a particular occurrence or event. *I'm sorry, I think sleep deprivation contributed to my outburst just then. What factors contributed to the start of the First World War?*

control freak Someone who has an obsessive or compulsive need to control every aspect of a situation and/or the ways in which others act. *My father can be such a control freak sometimes, always dictating how I should be living my life. Janice is a real control freak—she wouldn't even let me help her vacuum the carpet!*

control over (someone or something) Power or influence over someone or something. *Unfortunately, you're asking the wrong person for help because I have no control over the budget. Do you have any control over this group of screaming children?*

control the purse strings To dictate the spending of a given group, such as a family, company, country, etc. *After my dad's gambling problem came to light, my mother started to control the purse strings. The finance department controls the purse strings around here.*

controlled substance A drug whose availability is limited by law. A: *"I thought you could just find your medication on the shelf at the pharmacy."* B: *"Nah, I'm on a new one, and it's a controlled substance, so I have a prescription for it." I'm really glad I didn't follow in my brother's footsteps and become addicted to controlled substances.*

convalesce from (something) To recover or heal from something, such as an injury or illness. *I needed a week off to convalesce from the flu. How long does the doctor think you'll need to convalesce from this procedure?*

converge in upon (someone or something) 1. To gather around and focus in on something or someone. *Protestors converged in upon the senator, demanding his resignation over the scandal.* 2. To come together and merge at a focal point. *In my nightmare, the shadows all converged in upon themselves to form some horrific, singular entity.*

converge (up)on (someone or something) 1. To gather near something or someone as a destination, point of interest, or target of confrontation. *Protestors converged on the senator, demanding his resignation over the scandal. Officials expect thousands of festivalgoers to converge on the rural fairgrounds.* 2. To come together and merge at a focal point. *In my nightmare, the shadows all converged upon themselves to form some horrific, singular entity.*

conversation piece Something unusual or interesting that becomes or is intended to become the topic of conversation when it is encountered by other people. *Did you see Helen's new chair that's shaped like a giant red stiletto shoe? Yes, it's quite the conversation piece! Jane's new hairstyle became a conversation piece in the office because people couldn't believe she would cut her hair so short.*

converse with (someone or something) To talk to someone or something. *I can't give you an answer until I converse with Carol about this issue—is she in the office today? I wouldn't cross a woman who converses with the spirits—who knows what kinds of punishments she can call down on us!*

convert from (something) 1. To leave one religion in order to follow another. *I converted from Catholicism to Judaism in preparation for my wedding.* 2. To change or shift from one thing into another. *Did she really convert from that shy kid into a punk rock singer?*

convict of (something) To be deemed guilty of a crime. *With all of the evidence against him, he'll surely be convicted of that crime.*

convince of (something) To cause someone to believe that something is true. A noun or pronoun can be used between "convince" and "of." *You have no experience in as a receptionist, so good luck convincing them of your qualifications for this job. You'll have a hard time convincing me of that.*

convulse with (something) To shake or seize with something (such

as a physical display of emotion). *The wife of the victim convulsed with sobs at his funeral. After being outside in the snow for so long, Cathy started convulsing with shivers.*

cook (one's) goose To interfere with, disrupt, or ruin something for someone. *News of my involvement in this scandal will cook my goose for sure.*

cook out **1.** verb To cook food outside, as on a grill. *We should cook out on such a beautiful night.* **2.** verb To remove something from something else by applying heat. In this usage, a noun or pronoun can be used between "cook" and "out." *Take that pan off the stove before you cook all the juices out of the meat.* **3.** noun A barbecue. When used as a noun, the phrase is typically written as one word. *Are you going to the Smiths' Memorial Day cookout?*

cook (something) to perfection To cook something to an ideal state. *Wow, this is delicious—you really cooked this chicken to perfection!*

cook the accounts To falsify financial records for a company or organization. *My partner had been cooking the accounts for years, but because I was the CEO, I got the blame for our company's collapse.*

cook the books To falsify financial records for a company or organization. *My partner had been cooking the books for years, but because I was the CEO, I got the blame for our company's collapse.*

cook up **1.** Literally, to prepare food by cooking it. A noun or pronoun can be used between "cook" and "up." *Are you hungry? I can cook something up for you.* **2.** To devise something. In this usage, the phrase often has a negative connotation. A noun or pronoun can be used between "cook" and "up." *What ridiculous scheme has Sam cooked up now?* **3.** To plan to do something with someone. A noun or pronoun can be used between "cook" and "up." *Have you been able to cook anything up with the boss yet? We really need to meet about this issue soon.*

cooked See [be cooked](#).

cooked to a turn See [be cooked to a turn](#).

cooked up Forced, artificial, or contrived. The phrase is hyphenated when used before a noun. *The dog ate your homework, huh? Now there's cooked-up excuse!*

cookie cutter **1.** noun A tool used to cut dough into shapes for cookies. *I used a heart-shaped cookie cutter for these Valentine's cookies—aren't they adorable?* **2.** adjective Identical to other things. In this usage, the phrase is typically hyphenated. *I want a unique house, not one of those cookie-cutter boxes that looks like every other one on the block.*

cooking with gas slang Having success in a particular activity. *Once we dislodged that piece, we were really cooking with gas on this repair. That's a great idea—now you're cooking with gas!*

cool as a cucumber See [\(as\) cool as a cucumber](#).

cool customer Someone who remains even-tempered, especially in stressful situations. *Brad is such a cool customer. Nothing ever seems to bother him.*

cool down **1.** verb Literally, to become cooler in temperature. *The brownies just came out of the oven and need to cool down before we can eat them. When it's hot out, the cat tries to cool down by sitting directly in front of the air conditioner.* **2.** verb To cause something to become cooler in temperature. In this usage, a noun or pronoun can be used between "cool" and "down." *A: "Why is there an ice cube in your soup?" B: "I'm trying to cool it down!" Make sure you cool down the broccoli in ice water after you boil it.* **3.** verb To calm down, typically from anger. *Don't talk to your mother like that! Go to your room and cool down! I'm sorry for my outburst—I just need some time to cool down.* **4.** verb To cause someone to become calmer. In this usage, a noun or pronoun can be used between "cool" and "down." *If you insist on talking to your mother that way, I think a punishment is the only thing that will cool you down. That break seemed to cool down James—he's no longer yelling at the staff.* **5.** verb To become less intensely passionate. *I think they just broke up because things had cooled down between them.* **6.** verb To slow down in preparation for the end of an exercise routine or vigorous activity. *Near the end of class, the instructor has us cool down by riding our bikes at a slower pace.* **7.** noun The slower part of an exercise routine or vigorous activity that precedes its ending. In this usage, the phrase is often written as one word. *Is it time for the cooldown yet? I can barely breathe!*

cool head The ability to remain calm and rational during stressful situations. *The successful outcome of the hostage situation was due to the*

police officer's cool head.

cool it To calm down or stop. This phrase can be used as an imperative exclamation or as a verb phrase in the middle of a sentence. *Cool it! I want you two to stop fighting this instant! My muscles have been really sore, so I'm going to cool it with the weight lifting for a while.*

cool off **1.** verb Literally, to become cooler in temperature. *The brownies just came out of the oven and need to cool off before we can eat them. When it's hot out, the cat tries to cool off by sitting directly in front of the air conditioner.* **2.** verb To cause something to become cooler in temperature. In this usage, a noun or pronoun can be used between "cool" and "off." A: "Why is there an ice cube in your soup?" B: "I'm trying to cool it off!" *Make sure you cool off the broccoli in ice water after you boil it.* **3.** verb To calm down, typically from anger. *Don't talk to your mother like that! Go to your room and cool off! I'm sorry for my outburst—I just need some time to cool off.* **4.** verb To cause someone to become calmer. In this usage, a noun or pronoun can be used between "cool" and "off." *If you insist on talking to your mother that way, I think a punishment is the only thing that will cool you off. That break seemed to cool him off—he's no longer yelling at the staff.* **5.** verb To become less passionate. *I think they just broke up because things had cooled off between them.* **6.** verb To become less successful. *After a great start and a 10-game winning streak, that team has really cooled off—it's doubtful they'll make the playoffs now. Unfortunately, the initial popularity has cooled off, and sales are way down.* **7.** verb, slang To kill someone. *Ray cooled off the informant, just as the boss told him to.*

cool (one's) heels To wait, sometimes so that one becomes calmer or more composed. *You need to cool your heels for a minute and stop yelling at the staff—they didn't do anything wrong. We were excited, but we had to cool our heels when the release date for the new game got pushed back.*

cool (one's) jets **1.** To calm oneself down; to become less agitated. *I was really angry, so I had to just take a second and cool my jets before I did anything rash. Cool your jets back there, we'll be home in a few minutes.* **2.** To stifle or control one's eagerness, enthusiasm, or hastiness. *The young senator has massive support in his home state, but he'd better cool his jets if he thinks the rest of the country will consider him presidential material. I know you want to get this project over and done with, but cool your jets and do the work carefully.*

cool out 1. To become calmer. *Don't talk to your mother like that! Go to your room and cool out! I'm sorry for my outburst—I just need some time to cool out.* **2.** To cause someone to become calmer. In this usage, a noun or pronoun can be used between "cool" and "out." *If you insist on talking to your mother that way, I think a punishment is the only thing that will cool you out. That break seemed to cool him out—he's no longer yelling at the staff.*

cool reception An unenthusiastic, disdainful, or unfriendly welcome. *My wife met me with a rather cool reception when I came home at 3 AM.*

cool, calm, and collected Calm and composed. *I was petrified to take the stage, but Alice was cool, calm, and collected, Practicing meditation has helped me to be cool, calm, and collected in times of trouble.*

cooled out slang Calm and composed. *Because Alice loves performing, she's always cooled out before taking the stage.*

cooler heads will prevail Calm people, thoughts, or actions will triumph in the end. *Please, everyone, calm down! I think that cooler heads will prevail in this fight against the school board.*

cooling-off period 1. A period of time during a dispute wherein the parties involved do not communicate with one another as a means of reducing hostility and/or reconsidering their positions before taking further action. *I think we both need a cooling-off period before one of us says something that we don't mean.* **2.** The time allowed after a purchase or the signing of a contract in which the buyer/signer may return the product or back out of the agreement without penalty or fee. *I'm glad I had that cooling-off period after buying that sports car—there's no way I can actually afford it!* **3.** The period of time for which waste from nuclear fuel must be allowed to cool in water before being safely reprocessed or sent for permanent storage. *If waste is not allowed its full cooling-off period, it could contaminate the environment and poison people.*

coon eye(s) 1. Discoloration in the area surrounding the eye(s) due to an accumulation of blood, as caused by periorbital ecchymosis (i.e., "black eye(s)"). A colloquial shortening of "raccoon eyes," likened to the black patches around the eyes of a raccoon. *He had a pretty bad coon eye after the bully punched him in the face. I had coon eyes for several days after my car accident.* **2.** A discoloration immediately around—and especially under—the eye(s) due to the smearing of dark-colored makeup. A colloquial shortening

of "raccoon eyes," likened to the black patches around the eyes of a raccoon. *She wouldn't have such a problem with coon eyes if she didn't wear so much makeup to begin with! Whenever I cry, it causes my makeup to run and give me coon eyes.* **3.** A discoloration immediately around—and especially under—the eye(s) due to prolonged fatigue or lack of sleep. A colloquial shortening of "raccoon eyes," likened to the black patches around the eyes of a raccoon. *I must not sleep very soundly because I always have these coon eyes when I wake up.*

a coon's age An exceptionally long period of time. Based on the folk belief that raccoons (shortened colloquially to "coons") had a longer-than-average lifespan. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *It will take a coon's age to get all this work finished! I haven't been on a vacation in a coon's age.*

coop up To restrict someone or something to a particular, usually small, space for a length of time. A noun or pronoun can be used between "coop" and "up." *Just let the dogs run in the yard—they've been cooped up all day. After that snowstorm cooped us up for days, we were thrilled to leave the house again.*

cooperate with (someone or something) To work together with someone or something, usually to complete a particular task or goal. *Getting my toddler to cooperate with me is often an impossible task. We are in no way blaming you for what happened, but you still have to cooperate with the police investigation.*

coordinate with (someone or something) **1.** To arrange something with someone. A noun or pronoun can be used between "coordinate" and "with." *If you want to meet, coordinate it with my assistant—he knows my schedule better than I do.* **2.** To be in harmony with something. A noun or pronoun can be used between "coordinate" and "with." *The pattern of your tie doesn't coordinate with your shirt at all—go change!*

cop a feel slang To touch someone in a sexual manner surreptitiously and without consent. *My date slapped me when I tried to cop a feel.*

cop a packet To be seriously injured. This phrase originated in the military. *I got sent home after copping a packet during my tour of duty.*

cop a plea **1.** To plead guilty to a lesser charge in order to avoid a trial or a more severe punishment. *If you don't want to go to jail, I think your best option here is to cop a plea.* **2.** To give an unsatisfactory explanation for one's

actions. *He copped a plea about not having the instructions for the project, but I know he was in class the day I gave them out.*

cop a squat slang To sit down. *You guys got a great spot for the fireworks—can I cop a squat here with you?*

cop an attitude slang To act irritably. *Don't cop an attitude with me, young lady, or I'll take away your allowance! All of a sudden, John copped an attitude—I guess he was unhappy with the change in plans.*

cop it sweet informal To experience unexpected good fortune. Primarily heard in Australia. *I didn't study for the test but copped it sweet when a power outage closed school for the day.*

cop on 1. noun (sometimes hyphenated) Common sense or basic logic. Primarily heard in Ireland. *It seems like no one in government has any cop on these days.* 2. verb To wise up; to employ common sense or logic; to understand the situation. Primarily heard in Ireland. *You really need to cop on to what's expected of you as an adult. We all copped on that we had overstayed our welcome.*

cop onto (something) slang To learn or understand something. *Thanks for explaining that concept to me—I think I'm copping onto it now.*

cop out 1. verb To avoid something, often sneakily or due to cowardice. *Don't cop out of this by not coming to the disciplinary meeting—you need to take responsibility for your actions!* 2. verb To break one's commitment to someone or something. *I said I'd go to the birthday party, but I didn't have anything to wear and copped out at the last minute. Unfortunately, I wasn't surprised when Steve tried to cop out.* 3. verb To plead guilty to a lesser charge in order to avoid a trial or a more severe punishment. *If you don't want to go to jail, I think your best option here is to cop out.* 4. noun An unsatisfactory answer, excuse, or reason for something. When used as a noun, the phrase is typically hyphenated or written as one word. *The Beatles are your favorite band? Geez, what a cop-out—everybody likes the Beatles! You need to take responsibility here, so don't give me some lame copout about why you can't go to the disciplinary meeting.*

cop (something) from (someone or something) To surreptitiously take something from someone or something. *Did Lizzie really cop a fancy lipstick from the department store?*

cope with (someone or something) To endure something, usually something unpleasant or undesirable. *We need to increase the budget this year—our teachers have coped with a lack of funds for long enough. I can't cope with all of this uncertainty—I need to hear back from the colleges I applied to!*

coping skill Something that one does in order to mitigate psychological or emotional stress. *What coping skills do you use to get through tough times? Constant exercise might not be the healthiest coping skill.*

copious free time A hypothetical amount of time set aside to complete or undertake some task, which is insinuated sarcastically as never going to take place. *Sure, I'll do that for you in my copious free time—right after I pick up the kids from school, get the groceries, clean the house, and cook dinner!*

copper-bottomed Very safe or stable, especially financially. *This is a copper-bottomed offer to distribute your invention, so I think you should take it.*

coprophagous grin A smug, self-satisfied, or overly pleased smile, especially one that (intentionally or unintentionally) irritates others. A humorous literalization of the phrase "shit-eating grin" (where coprophagia, or coprophagy, means the ingestion of feces). *She's been walking around with that coprophagous grin on her face ever since she found out she got into Harvard.*

copulate with (one) To have sexual intercourse with one. *Our health teacher warned us against copulating with just anyone.*

copy down To write something exactly as it is said or written in another place or source. A noun or pronoun can be used between "copy" and "down" or after "down." *Did you copy down the instructions the boss gave for this project? Be sure to copy your homework down—it's written on the blackboard.*

copy out (by hand) To write something by hand (as opposed to typing). A noun or pronoun can be used between "copy" and "out." *My grandmother used to copy out all of her recipes by hand on index cards.*

copy (something) out of (something) To write something exactly as it appeared in another source. *My grandmother used to copy all of her recipes out of cookbooks and onto index cards.*

cordon bleu **1.** noun One who has earned the highest distinction in one's field, especially a chef. *After studying with master chefs in France, Betty became a cordon bleu herself.* **2.** adjective Of the highest distinction in one's field. *After studying with master chefs in France, Betty became a cordon bleu chef herself.* **3.** adjective Of food that has been prepared to the highest standard. *At a five-star restaurant like that, you're guaranteed to get a cordon bleu dish.* **4.** adjective Stuffed with ham and cheese and then fried, as in the dish chicken cordon bleu. *You don't need to make me a fancy dish like chicken cordon bleu—I'm fine with chicken nuggets!*

cordon off To restrict access to a particular area by using a rope, tape, or other means. A noun or pronoun can be used between "cordon" and "off" or after "off." *That section of the restaurant has been cordoned off for a private party.*

cork high and bottle deep Very drunk. *Do you remember last night at the bar at all? You were cork high and bottle deep!*

cork up **1.** Literally, to insert a cork into something, such as the opening of a bottle. A noun or pronoun can be used between "cork" and "up." *There's still some wine in the bottle, so should we cork it up?* **2.** To become quiet. Typically used as an imperative. In this usage, the phrase is often "cork it up." *Cork it up, kids—all the screaming is giving me a headache!*

corner the market **1.** To sell or produce something so successfully as to overshadow all others in the same field. *That company is so popular right now that they've really cornered the market on video games.* **2.** To buy most of a particular item or stock so that one can control its price. *If you think he bought all that stock to corner the market, you should report him—that kind of activity is illegal.*

corner the market on (something) To sell or produce something so successfully as to overshadow all others in the same field. *That company is so popular right now that they've really cornered the market on video games.*

corporate ladder The hierarchy of authority and earning power within a large business or corporation, likened to the rungs of a ladder. Usually used with some variable verb or phrase referring to ascension. *Although you're starting at an entry-level position, this company prides itself on giving employees the opportunity to climb the corporate ladder if they prove their abilities and determination. She proved early on that she had unique business*

smarts, and she's been making her way up the corporate ladder ever since.

corporate welfare bum A corporation or executive who makes money (or is thought to make money) through tax breaks or legal loopholes. Primarily heard in Canada. *These corporate welfare bums can afford to pay the taxes, but they just get their accountants to make it so they don't have to.*

corporation pop Tap water that is provided by the local city government (or corporation), likened humorously to a soft drink (pop) that is free. Primarily heard in UK. *Back when I was a kid, the only thing we had to drink was corporation pop!*

correlate with (something) To agree with or correspond to something. *Those results just don't correlate with the data from our previous experiments. Does this chart correlate with the information given in the report?*

correspond to (something) To match or correlate to something. *Does this character in the book correspond to one in the movie, or did they eliminate him completely?*

correspond with (someone or something) 1. To match or correlate to something. *Does this character in the book correspond with one in the movie, or did they eliminate him completely?* 2. To communicate with one in a series of messages, typically written ones. *When I was a kid, I used to correspond with my sister by writing her letters while she was away at summer camp.*

Cosby sweater The kind of boldly-patterned sweater that Bill Cosby was known for wearing on *The Cosby Show*. *Why are you wearing that hideous Cosby sweater? Take that off before my friends get here!*

cost a bomb informal To be very expensive. *A fancy car like that costs a bomb, so I definitely can't afford it!*

cost a pretty penny To be very expensive. The person spending the money can be stated between "cost" and "a." *A fancy car like that costs a pretty penny, so I definitely can't afford it! Wow, a house in that gated community must have cost Alex a pretty penny.*

cost an arm and a leg slang To cost lot of money. *College tuitions cost an arm and leg nowadays. I'm sick of paying rent in this town because it costs an arm and a leg!*

cost (one) dear To bring one trouble; to result in very negative consequences. *The crimes of his youth cost him dear when he started applying for jobs.*

cost out To determine the total cost of something by adding smaller costs together. *When we cost out all the steps of our home renovation project, we knew that it was going to exceed the amount we had budgeted.*

cost (someone) dearly To cause dire, harmful, or problematic consequences for someone, especially regarding a foolish action or a mistake. *Drinking all night before his final exams is going to cost him dearly. That late penalty could cost them dearly, as it now puts their opponents within range to tie the game.*

cost the earth To be exorbitant or burdensome in expense. A: "Your new car looks pretty slick!" B: "I should hope so, it cost the earth!" *All these new taxes and service charges are going to cost the earth.*

cost the earth To be exorbitantly expensive. *Would you look at that new car John is driving? It must have cost the earth!*

cottage industry **1.** A small-scale industry carried out by people in their own homes. *When my grandmother was a girl, she was part of a cottage industry that made textiles, along with the rest of her family.* **2.** A small (and often loosely organized) network or business. *It looks like you guys have a nice little cottage industry raking leaves.* **3.** An area of study pursued by a few passionate people. *I understand that not everyone is interested in tracing minute details in modernist texts, but it's a cottage industry for a few people in the Master's program, like myself!*

cotton on To begin to understand something; to grasp fully; to catch on. Primarily heard in UK. *It took me a few moments to cotton on, but I soon realized that they were talking about me.*

cotton (on)to (someone or something) **1.** To like someone or something; to view someone or something favorably. *It takes me a while to cotton to new people—I have to get to know them first. After we explained our plan again, the rest of the group seemed to cotton onto it.* **2.** To begin to understand something. *Thanks for explaining that concept to me—I think I'm cottoning onto it now.*

cotton-picking An intensifier used to express one's anger or frustration.

Oh, he's just a cotton-picking fool—don't listen to a word he says!

cotton up to (one) To pursue preferential treatment from one, often through flattery. *Since I'm deciding who gets the promotion, Crystal has been cottoning up to me by buying me coffee all week.*

couch potato Someone who often engages in sedentary activities, usually understood as frequently watching television. *Lisa wants to date a man who loves to travel and explore, not a couch potato who watches television all the time.*

couch (something) in (something) To convey something very deliberately by saying it in a particular way or with particular wording. *That professor always manages to couch her criticism in kind words, so I'm never too upset by her negative feedback.*

cougar A woman who pursues a younger man for a romantic relationship or a sexual encounter. *Mom, that guy is way too young for you! Don't be a cougar!*

cough (one's) head off To cough intensely, as from an illness. *Natalie has still been coughing her head off, so I don't think the antibiotic you gave her has helped.*

cough out To speak while coughing. A noun or pronoun can be used between "cough" and "out" or after "out." *Although she tried to cough out her presentation, she ultimately had to stop and take some cough syrup.*

cough up 1. To expel something through coughing. A noun or pronoun can be used between "cough" and "up" or after "up." *While I was sick, I found myself constantly coughing up phlegm. The child was able to cough up the bit of food he was choking on, thank goodness.* **2.** To vomit. A noun or pronoun can be used between "cough" and "up" or after "up." *When I had food poisoning, I felt like I coughed up everything I'd ever eaten in my life.* **3.** slang To divulge something. A noun or pronoun can be used between "cough" and "up" or after "up." *I'm sure he'll cough up the name of his accomplice once we send in our toughest investigator.* **4.** slang To give something to someone, often after a period of evasion. A noun or pronoun can be used between "cough" and "up" or after "up." *Joey's thugs cornered me and made me cough up the money I owed them. There wasn't even that much pressure on him, and he totally coughed up the basketball!* **5.** slang To surrender the lead in a game or competition. A noun or pronoun can be used between "cough" and "up" or

after "up." *With their shaky defense, I wouldn't be surprised if they coughed up this 10-point lead.*

could be better An unhappy or morose response to a question about one's well-being (such as "How are you?"). A: "How are you?" B: "Eh, *could be better—work has been so busy lately.*"

could be worse A somewhat positive response to a question about one's well-being (such as "How are you?"). A: "How are you?" B: "Not too bad—*things could be worse.*"

could care less Does not care about something at all. The phrase is a colloquial version of "could not care less." *Fine, I could care less what you do! Good riddance! You're going out with my ex-boyfriend? Great. I could care less.*

could (do something) in (one's) sleep Is able to do something with very little or no difficulty, or complete or accomplish something in a relaxed, carefree, or effortless manner. *It took me a little while to get used to this job, but now I could do it in my sleep! You should ask Johnny for help—he could do this level of math in his sleep.*

could (do something) standing on (one's) head Is able to do something with very little or no difficulty, or complete or accomplish something in a relaxed, carefree, or effortless manner. *It took me a little while to get used to this job, but now I could do it standing on my head! You should ask Johnny for help—he could do this level of math standing on his head.*

could (do something) with one arm tied behind (one's) back Is or would be able to do something easily. *I'm a professional musician, so that song is hardly a challenge—I could play it with one arm tied behind my back!*

could (do something) with (one's) eyes closed Is able to do something with very little or no difficulty, or complete or accomplish something in a relaxed, carefree, or effortless manner. *It took me a little while to get used to this job, but now I could do it with my eyes closed! You should ask Johnny for help—he could do this level of math with his eyes closed.*

could do with (something) One would benefit from something (which is usually stated after "with"). *In this heat, I could do with a cold glass of water right now. You could do with some new shoes—those ones are*

looking awfully beat-up.

could fight a circle-saw (and it a runnin') Is very interested in fighting someone or something. *With his hot temper, he always seems as if he could fight a circle-saw.*

could have fooled me See [\(you\) could have fooled me](#).

could hear a pin drop Could hear nothing at all because it was completely quiet and still. *After the boss's outburst, the meeting room was so quiet you could hear a pin drop. Waiting to see what happened next in the play, everyone in the audience stayed so quiet you could hear a pin drop.*

could hear the grass grow See [you could hear the grass grow\(ing\)](#).

could I be excused See [Can I be excused?](#)

could I call you See [Can I call you?](#)

could I come in See [Can I come in?](#)

could I get by please See [Can I get by, please?](#)

could I have a lift See [Can I have a lift?](#)

could I have call you See [Can I have \(one\) call you?](#)

could I help you See [Can I help you?](#)

could I join you See [Can I join you?](#)

could I leave a message See [Can I leave a message?](#)

could I see you again See [Can I see you again?](#)

could I see you in my office See [Can I see you in my office?](#)

could I speak to See [Can I speak to \(one\)?](#)

could I take a message See [Can I take a message?](#)

could I take your order See [Can I take your order?](#)

could I tell her who's calling See [Can I tell \(one\) who's calling?](#)

could I use your powder room See [Can I use your powder room?](#)

could knock me down with a feather See [knock \(someone\) down with a feather](#).

could knock me over with a feather See [knock \(someone\) over](#)



[with a feather](#).

could not be bothered See [can't be bothered](#).

could not win for losing See [\(one\) can't win for losing](#).

(someone) could sell an icebox to an Eskimo Someone is an extremely smooth, charming, or persuasive salesperson, such that they could sell something to those who have no need or use for it. (The phrase should be used with caution, as the term "Eskimo" is considered by some to be offensive or derogatory. It alludes to the various indigenous peoples of the traditionally cold, snowy northern circumpolar regions of the globe, who thus would have no reason to buy an icebox.) *I can't believe you were able to sell an extra 200 units to the hospital. You could sell an icebox to an Eskimo!*

(someone) could sell ice to Eskimos Someone is an extremely smooth, charming, or persuasive salesperson, such that they could sell something to people who have no need or use for it. (The phrase alludes to the various indigenous peoples of the traditionally cold, snowy northern circumpolar regions of the globe, who thus would have no shortage of (and no need to buy) ice. It should be used with caution, though, as the term "Eskimo" is considered by some to be offensive or derogatory.) *I can't believe you were able to sell an extra 200 units to the hospital. You could sell ice to Eskimos!*

(someone) could sell sawdust to a lumber mill Someone is an extremely smooth, charming, or persuasive salesperson, such that they could sell something to those who have no need or use for it. *I can't believe you were able to sell an extra 200 units to the hospital. You could sell sawdust to a lumber mill!*

could standing on head See [could \(do something\) standing on \(one's\) head](#).

could talk under water informal Is always very talkative. Primarily heard in Australia. *Good luck getting a word in if you invite Carrie—that girl could talk under water!*

could we continue this later See [Can we continue this later?](#).

could with eyes closed See [could \(do something\) with \(one's\) eyes closed](#).

could with one arm tied behind back See [could \(do something\)](#)

[with one arm tied behind \(one's\) back.](#)

could you excuse us please See [Can you excuse us, please?](#)

could you hold See [Can you hold?](#)

could you keep a secret See [Can you keep a secret?](#)

coulda, woulda, shoulda An informal phrase used to dismiss someone's regrets or worries about a past experience. *I wish I had given myself an extra day off before going back to work after my vacation, but coulda, woulda, shoulda.* A: "Should I have said more during that presentation?" B: "Eh, coulda, woulda, shoulda. It's over now, so there's nothing more you can do."

couldn't act (one's) way out of a paper bag Is a very poor actor. *That movie is just awful—the lead couldn't act his way out of a paper bag.*

couldn't ask for more Is very happy or content; doesn't have any further requests to improve something because it is exactly as desired. *I'm just thrilled with my new job—I really couldn't ask for more.*

couldn't be better (One's well-being or the state of something) is perfect, exactly as desired, or better than expected. A: "How are you?" B: "Oh, couldn't be better! My job is great, and I just bought a house!" Oh, the project couldn't be better—we're actually ahead of schedule.

couldn't be happier A phrase said when one feels very content. *I got involved with Georgina over two years ago, and we both couldn't be happier!*

couldn't be helped See [\(it\) couldn't be helped.](#)

couldn't believe (one's) eyes Was totally shocked or surprised. *I couldn't believe my eyes when I came home and found the kids playing catch with my vase. I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw that my parents had bought me a new car!*

couldn't care less Does not care about something at all. *Fine, I couldn't care less what you do! Good riddance! You're going out with my ex-boyfriend? Great. I couldn't care less.*

couldn't care two pence See [not care twopence.](#)

couldn't carry a note in a bucket Totally without musical talent, especially in singing. *I think it's lovely that George wants to be in his church*

choir, but that boy couldn't carry a note in a bucket!

couldn't carry a tune in a bucket Totally without musical talent, especially in singing. *I think it's lovely that George wants to be in his church choir, but that boy couldn't carry a tune in a bucket!*

couldn't catch a cold slang A jeer directed at an athlete who struggles with catching the ball. It is a pun in which the phrase "catch a cold" refers to becoming ill with the common cold (something that happens involuntarily). *That bum in the outfield couldn't catch a cold—it's only the first inning, and he's already dropped two pop-ups!*

couldn't find (one's) way out of a paper bag Particularly dim-witted, unintelligent, or incompetent; unable to do something basic, simple, or straightforward. A: *"How's the new intern working out?"* B: *"He's a nice kid, but he couldn't find his way out of a paper bag!"* *Jeff's new boyfriend sure says some dumb things. The dude probably couldn't find his way out of a paper bag.*

couldn't get elected dogcatcher So unpopular or unqualified as to be unable to be elected to even the lowliest role. A hyperbolic phrase, especially since animal control officers are appointed, not elected. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *After making off-color remarks about several demographics of voters, the would-be mayor couldn't even get elected dogcatcher.*

couldn't give a tuppence See [not give \(a\) tuppence](#).

couldn't give two pence See [not give twopence](#).

couldn't happen to a nicer (person) Of an outcome, completely deserved by the person or people in question. Sometimes used sarcastically when referring to a negative event happening to an unpleasant person. *Dawn and her partner are expecting their first child this summer. They're so excited, and it couldn't happen to a nicer couple. I hear that jerk Tony is heading into bankruptcy—couldn't have happened to a nicer guy.*

couldn't have asked for more Is very happy or content; doesn't have any further requests to improve something because it is exactly as desired. *My new team is really fantastic—I honestly couldn't have asked for more.*

couldn't have happened to a nicer person See [couldn't happen](#)

[to a nicer \(person\).](#)

couldn't help it Said in regards to something that one has done because it felt irresistible or was unavoidable. *Well, as soon as he said not to push the button, I just had to push the button—I couldn't help it!* A: "Did you burn the bread?" B: "Ugh, yes, but I couldn't help it—the baby woke up from her nap at an inopportune moment."

couldn't hit a bull in the ass with a bass fiddle rude slang Has poor aim or a lack of coordination. *Don't give that guy a weapon—he couldn't hit a bull in the ass with a bass fiddle.*

couldn't lie straight in bed informal Is unscrupulous or deceptive. Primarily heard in Australia. *I don't trust Paul at all—that guy couldn't lie straight in bed.*

couldn't matter a tuppence See [not matter tuppence](#).

couldn't matter two pence See [not matter twopence](#).

couldn't organize a piss-up in a brewery rude slang Is unable to arrange things successfully. (A "piss-up" is a social gathering at which people drink an excessive amount of alcohol—something that would be easy to do in a brewery.) Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *No wonder Marie's event was a disaster—she couldn't organize a piss-up in a brewery!*

couldn't pour water out of a boot Is extremely stupid. This jocular phrase implies that the person so described couldn't perform the simplest of tasks. The full phrase is "couldn't pour water out of a boot if there was instructions on the heel." *I'm not surprised that Zack took the train home and left his car in the parking garage at work—he couldn't pour water out of a boot! That fool couldn't pour water out of a boot if there was instructions on the heel! Dolt!*

couldn't punch her way out of a paper bag See [can't punch \(one's\) way out of a paper bag](#).

couldn't punch (one's) way out of a paper bag Is extremely weak, ineffectual, or incompetent. *You want to fight me? You couldn't punch your way out of a paper bag! Don't assign that project to her, she couldn't punch her way out of a paper bag!*

couldn't say boo to a fly See [not say boo to a fly](#).

couldn't win for losing See [\(one\) can't win for losing](#).

could've fooled me See [\(you\) could have fooled me](#).

council pop Tap water that is provided by the local city government (or corporation), likened humorously to a soft drink (pop) that is free. Primarily heard in UK. *Back when I was a kid, the only thing we had to drink was council pop!*

councils of war never fight Those who are supposed to make important decisions often struggle to do so. *I'm not surprised that the board still hasn't approved this change, even with all of their recent meetings—councils of war never fight, after all.*

counsel (someone) about (something) To advise one on a particular topic or issue. *Since you used to handle this project, can you counsel Joanne about it?*

counsel (someone) against (something) To advise one against taking some action. *As his defense lawyer, you need to counsel your client against making incriminating statements like that.*

count against (one) **1.** To view one negatively because of something they have done. In this usage, a noun or pronoun is usually used between "count" and "against." *Aunt Jane was pretty cold to me today—I think she still counts my criticism of her driving against me.* **2.** To be a detriment or liability to one. *Her youthful exuberance counted against her when she spoke out of turn at the meeting. Your prior infractions will certainly count against you during your sentencing.*

count down **1.** verb To count backwards from any number to zero in preparation for something (which typically happens when the countdown reaches zero). *Everyone counted down the seconds and then shouted, "Happy New Year!"* **2.** verb By extension, to wait for something impatiently. *At this point, I'm counting down the days to my due date because I'm so sick of being pregnant!* **3.** noun The act of counting backwards from any number to zero in preparation for something (which typically happens when the countdown reaches zero). When used as a noun, the phrase is usually written as one word. *At the end of the countdown, everyone shouted, "Happy New Year!"*

count for (something) To have value. This phrase is often used in the negative to convey the opposite. *If I fail the test after weeks of studying, all of*

that effort will count for nothing. I at least sent her a text. That's got to count for something!

count from (something) To start counting from a particular number. *You start counting from zero while I hide, and then when you get to 100, you come find me—that's how the game works.*

count heads To count the number of people in a group to ensure that everyone is present. *Everyone, take your seats on the bus so that I can count heads before we leave the museum.*

count off 1. To count in turn, as when dividing a group of people into smaller groups. A noun or pronoun can be used between "count" and "off." *OK, kids, count off one through five so that we can make five groups.* **2.** To count the number of people or things in a group to ensure that everyone or everything is present. A noun or pronoun can be used between "count" and "off." *Kids, take your seats on the bus so that I can count off and make sure everyone is here.* **3.** To count out loud so that everyone in a group starts something (such as a song or dance) at the same time. A noun or pronoun can be used between "count" and "off." *Before launching into their routine, the cheerleaders counted off, "Five, six, seven, eight!"* **4.** To subtract from something, such as a score. A noun or pronoun can be used between "count" and "off." *I had to count off five points for presentation because your project was a glue-covered mess.* **5.** To divide a group of things into smaller groups. A noun or pronoun can be used between "count" and "off." *I counted off the batch of cookies so that each of the neighbors would get the same amount.*

count (one's) blessings To reflect on the good things in one's life and be grateful for them. *I know you're disappointed that you didn't come in first, but so many other incredible things have happened to you this year. Count your blessings, my darling. I try to count my blessings every day—it's a great antidote to sadness!*

count out 1. To exclude someone from something, often at their own request. A noun or pronoun can be used between "count" and "out." *I don't think this ridiculous plan will work, so count me out.* **2.** To dismiss something or someone. A noun or pronoun can be used between "count" and "out." *After our dreadful start to the season, a lot of pundits counted us out. Don't count out our dream of buying this home just yet—we still have time to make a counteroffer.* **3.** To enumerate something one piece or part at a time. A noun

or pronoun can be used between "count" and "out." *The cashier counted out my change and handed it to me.* **4.** To count audibly to determine if a boxer has been knocked out (is not able to get up before the end of the countdown is reached). A noun or pronoun can be used between "count" and "out." *After the boxer collapsed to the mat, the referee counted him out and ended the bout.*

count sheep **1.** To perform any repetitive or monotonous thought exercise as a means of calming the mind to try to fall asleep (such as the traditional sleep aid of counting imaginary sheep). *Whenever I go to bed with a racing mind, I make myself count sheep until I drift off to sleep.* **2.** By extension, to be kept awake at night or experience insomnia. Usually used in the continuous form. *After I lost my job, I was up counting sheep all night, trying to figure out how I'd make ends meet.*

count (someone or something) among (something) To include someone or something in a particular group or category. *I certainly count my daughter among my life's greatest blessings. Yes, we are counting this infraction among the other demerits you've gotten this year.*

count (someone or something) as (something) To see or interpret someone or something in a particular way. *I count my daughter as my greatest blessing in life. You should count this as a major accomplishment—freshmen hardly ever get published in the literary magazine.*

count (someone or something) in To include someone or something in something, especially as participants are being recruited. Often used as an imperative. *Of course I want to go to the amusement park with you guys—count me in! Did you count Cathy in? She said that she'll make something for the potluck as well. Count this old tray in with the other things to be sold at the yard sale.*

count the cost To realize the negative impact that something has had; to assess the consequences. *I ignored my foot injury because I didn't think it was serious, but I'm definitely counting the cost now that I need surgery.*

count to ten To take a moment to calm down, especially when angry, before doing anything rash or hasty. Used as an imperative, it can but doesn't necessarily mean to literally count to the number ten. *I know your boss said some unfair things about you, but just go count to ten so you don't end up saying something that gets you fired.*

count up To tally the total amount of something. *Count up all the people in this room so we know how many trays of hors d'oeuvres to bring out.*

count up to (some number) 1. To count to a particular number. *You count up to 30 while I hide, and then you come find me—that's how the game works.* 2. To reach or equal a total amount. *Unfortunately, the amount of money I owe on my student loans counts up to quite a lot.*

count (up)on (someone or something) 1. To rely on someone or something. *I can always count on my sister to cheer me up after a tough day.* 2. To expect or anticipate something. *I hope you weren't counting on a Christmas bonus because I don't think we're getting them this year.*

count with (one) To be significant to one. *Thank you so much for your kind words—they really count with me.*

count your chickens before they hatch To celebrate, plan, or begin to take advantage of a potential positive future outcome before it has happened or been accomplished. Often issued as a warning and preceded by "don't." *You're preparing your acceptance speech before even being nominated? Don't count your chickens before they hatch. Why are you begging to drive my car to school tomorrow when you still need to take your license test? Don't count your chickens before they hatch, babe!*

count your chickens before they're hatched To celebrate, plan, or begin to take advantage of a potential positive future outcome before it has happened or been accomplished. Often issued as a warning and preceded by "don't." *You're preparing your acceptance speech before even being nominated? Don't count your chickens before they're hatched. Why are you begging to drive my car to school tomorrow when you still need to take your license test? Don't count your chickens before they're hatched, babe!*

counter with (something) 1. To respond to something with something or in a particular way. A noun or pronoun can be used between "counter" and "with." *Amanda can always counter a joke with a witty retort of her own. I was annoyed by that comment, so I countered with a scowl.* 2. To refute someone or something. A noun or pronoun can be used between "counter" and "with." *When the suspect countered with an alibi, we had to release him.*

country bumpkin Someone from a rural area who is therefore not

versed in city life or its social norms. *Cousin Celia is such a country bumpkin. Last time, she took her shoes off in the middle of a restaurant! Can you dress a little nicer? You look like a country bumpkin in those overalls!*

country cousin Someone unknowledgeable, unsophisticated, or naïve about the niceties and complexities of an urban environment, especially in a humorous or quaint capacity. *I always try to lend a hand to the poor country cousins who invariably stand bewildered by the skyscrapers and the incredible noise of traffic. I thought I was savvy enough to live in New York City, but I soon felt like the country cousin.*

a country mile A long distance, especially when one expects it to be shorter. *We've driven so far, and I still don't see the silo anywhere. Maybe the farmer was referring to a country mile when he said it was 'just a mile away.'*

coup de grâce An action or event that brings a swift end to suffering or a worsening situation. The phrase is French for "blow of mercy." *The samurai delivered a merciful coup de grâce to his mortally wounded enemy. The large class action lawsuit was the coup de grâce that caused the failing company to finally go out of business.*

a couple of (people or things) Two or more people or things. The phrase is intentionally vague in number. *It's not going to be a big party—I just invited over a couple of people from school. I just need a couple of minutes to talk to you about your upcoming schedule, sir.*

couple (something) (on)to (something) To connect or fasten two things together. *We still need to couple the trailer to the truck before we can leave. I coupled the latch onto the peg, so it should stay secure.*

couple (something) together To connect or fasten two things together. *We still need to couple the trailer and the truck together before we can leave.*

couple up To form a pair with someone else. The phrase is often but not always used to describe romantic relationships. *When the teacher told us that we could work with a classmate on the assignment, I immediately coupled up with my best friend. I feel lonely because all of my friends are coupled up and dating right now.*

couple with 1. To connect or fasten two things together. A noun or pronoun can be used between "couple" and "with." *We still need to couple the*

trailer with the truck before we can leave. **2.** To form a pair with someone else. A noun or pronoun can be used between "couple" and "with." *When the teacher told us that we could work with a classmate on the assignment, I immediately coupled with my best friend.* **3.** euphemism To have sexual intercourse with someone. A noun or pronoun can be used between "couple" and "with." *My roommate hasn't been home any night this week—I wonder who he's coupling with.*

courage of (one's) convictions Strong faith or confidence in one's beliefs. Often used in the phrase "have the courage of one's convictions." *I need to have the courage of my convictions any time I'm around my parents—they always try to dissuade me from pursuing a career as a screenwriter. I'm always impressed with Stella—nothing can shake the courage of her convictions in her crusade for social justice.*

course of action A plan and the series of actions that will follow. *Our options are limited, but we have to decide on a course of action instead of doing nothing.*

course of nature The natural, normal, or ordinary sequence or unfolding of things. *The disease has spread so far that there's nothing to do now but let it follow the course of nature. Times of hardship and times of plenty are part of the course of nature for any independent business.*

the course of true love never did run smooth Lovers will inevitably face problems or challenges. The phrase comes from Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. A: "I can't believe my boyfriend is going to school 3,000 miles away." B: "Well, the course of true love never did run smooth."

course through (something) To travel through something. The phrase is often used to describe the movement of liquids. *As soon as I stepped on the stage, I could feel the adrenaline coursing through my veins.*

covenant of salt **1.** archaic An agreement or union between two or more parties meant to be binding and long-lasting. An allusion to such a covenant mentioned in the Bible (especially in II Chronicles 13:15), which is itself a reference to salt's function as a preservative. *There is an interminable covenant of salt between the stock market and the whole of the US economy.* **2.** A traditional ceremony of marriage, in which each person exchanges a pinch of salt into a single receptacle, symbolizing an eternal and binding

union. *Though the meaning was perhaps lost on our younger guests, the covenant of salt at our wedding was a simple but meaningful symbol of our devotion to a new life together.*

cover a lot of ground **1.** To travel a long distance. The phrase often refers to a portion of a longer journey. *Even though we covered a lot of ground on the first day of our road trip, we still have many miles to go.* **2.** To review a large amount of information or discuss many topics. *We need to cover a lot of ground in American History before the exam date.*

cover a multitude of sins To conceal things that are unattractive or problematic. *I need to wear a girdle to cover a multitude of sins. New drywall will cover a multitude of sins in the kitchen.*

cover all bases To be well-prepared for every possible outcome. *We need to cover all bases here—check every office and make sure it's been evacuated. I know I don't have the best grades, so I covered all bases by applying to 15 colleges.*

cover all the bases To account for or provide a way to address every possible outcome, scenario, contingency, etc. *We need to cover all the bases here—the investigation should explore every avenue. I covered all the bases by applying to 15 colleges.*

cover for (someone or something) **1.** To hide one's wrongdoings from someone else. In this usage, the phrase can also be written as "cover up for." *If I sneak out and go to the party tonight, will you cover for me? Just tell mom I went to bed early or something.* **2.** To do something in place of someone else. *I'm working today because I'm covering for Joanna, who's on vacation.* **3.** To provide insurance against a problem or scenario. In this usage, a noun or pronoun can be used between "cover" and "for." *Does our homeowner's insurance cover the house for flood damage?*

cover girl A young, attractive woman whose image is prominently displayed or featured on the cover of a magazine. *Did you see Cynthia's new girlfriend? She looks like a cover girl!*

cover (one's) ass rude slang To act in order to avoid blame or responsibility for something or prevent oneself from experiencing negative consequences. *I immediately covered my ass by saying that I wasn't home when the puppy got out. Politicians don't care about the outcome of the vote, they just care about covering their asses.*

cover (one's) back To act in order to avoid blame or responsibility for something or prevent oneself from experiencing negative consequences. *I immediately covered my back by saying that I wasn't home when the puppy got out.*

cover (one's) bases To ensure one's safety or success by dealing with every potentially problematic aspect of a situation or activity. A reference to baseball, in which the defensive players must make sure all bases (and baserunners who may occupy them) are accounted for. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *We have to be sure to cover our bases before the trial begins so that we aren't surprised by anything the prosecution throws our way.*

cover (one's) feet A Biblical euphemism for defecation. (While positioned in that act, one's robe would cover one's feet.) A: "Where is Joe?" B: "Oh, he's in the restroom, probably covering his feet, if you know what I mean."

cover (one's) tracks (up) 1. Literally, to conceal one's footprints, typically to avoid being followed. *Those hounds can track us across rivers, so covering our tracks won't do any good.* 2. To conceal the evidence of one's (usually nefarious) actions. *We need to cover our tracks before someone traces the bank robbery back to us. I destroyed those incriminating documents to cover my tracks up.*

cover (someone or something) against (something) 1. To protect someone or something. *Be sure to cover the flowers against the thunderstorm that's coming.* 2. To grant one insurance for a particular problem or scenario. *Does our homeowner's insurance cover us against flood damage?*

cover (someone or something) in (something) 1. To place something on someone. *I covered my daughter in a thick blanket before leaving her hospital room.* 2. To coat something in something. *We need to cover this whole wall in the gray paint.* 3. To become coated in something. In this usage, "cover" is often used in the past tense without a noun or pronoun between "cover" and "in." *After hours of gardening, Eva was covered in dirt. I was quickly covered in blood after the ball hit me in the face.*

cover the field To be thorough and comprehensive in what is presented or dealt with. *This thesis will attempt to cover the field of English Law from 1950 to the present.*

cover (the) ground **1.** To move across an area at an acceptable speed. *I think we can count on that racehorse to cover the ground.* **2.** To complete something in a particular manner or review a certain amount of information or discuss a certain number of topics. *It is a lot of work, but I'm confident that Bill will cover the ground well. We need to cover a lot of ground in American History before the exam date.*

cover the territory **1.** To travel to, deal with, or be responsible for a large, specific area. *When I was a reporter, I had to cover the territory of the entire northern part of the state.* **2.** To be thorough and comprehensive in what is presented or dealt with. *This thesis will attempt to cover the territory of English Law from 1950 to the present.*

cover the waterfront To be thorough and comprehensive in what is presented or dealt with. *This thesis will attempt to cover the waterfront of English Law from 1950 to the present.*

cover up **1.** verb To place a covering on someone or something, as for protection. A noun or pronoun can be used between "cover" and "up." *Let me just cover up these leftovers so you can take them with you. I'm so fair-skinned that I have to cover myself up before spending time in the sun.* **2.** To clothe oneself. *I'll answer the door in a moment, I just need to cover up first.* **3.** verb To conceal the evidence of one's (usually nefarious) actions. A noun or pronoun can be used between "cover" and "up." *I just know that the CEO is covering something up—why else would those documents suddenly go missing? The administration is clearly trying to cover up the scandal.* **4.** noun The act of concealing the evidence of nefarious actions. When used as a noun, the phrase is typically hyphenated or written as one word. *Their cover-up unraveled when the CEO's secretary confessed to his wrongdoing. The administration is clearly engaging in a coverup to hide the scandal.* **5.** noun An article of clothing worn over other clothing, such as a bathing suit. When used as a noun, the phrase is typically hyphenated. *Once it got breezy on the beach, I put my cover-up back on.*

cover your ass with paper To protect oneself by leaving a paper trail or by maintaining proper, comprehensive documentation. *In business, you had better get used to covering your ass with paper, so that if anything goes wrong, you can always refer back to written proof of the conversation that led to it.*

cow chip slang A piece of cow feces. *Watch out for cow chips when walking through that field.*

cow college 1. A college or university whose education focuses on agriculture. *I always loved working on our farm growing up, so even though I could have gone to business or law school, I always knew I'd be heading to a cow college.* 2. Any small, rural college or university, especially one that is relatively unknown or not well regarded. *I'm just getting my first two years out of the way at this cow college before applying to a proper university.*

cow juice slang Milk. *Can I get a glass of cow juice to go with these cookies?*

cow paste slang Butter. *Do you want some cow paste to put on your bread?*

cow (someone) into (something) To pressure or shame someone into doing something. *You can say whatever you want—you're not cowing me into stealing for you.*

cowards die many times before their death(s) People who constantly fear death feel the stress associated with it many times before actually dying. This phrase comes from Shakespeare's play *Julius Caesar*. *It's really true that cowards die many times before their death—what would be a simple task for someone else causes me great anxiety.*

cowboy up To act tough and determined, like a stereotypical cowboy. *Come on, dude, cowboy up! We can totally make that jump on our bikes!*

cower (away) from (someone or something) To move away from someone or something, usually out of fear. *I cowered from the snake and prayed that it wouldn't see me.*

cower down To crouch or otherwise make oneself smaller, usually out of fear. *When I heard that loud bang, I immediately cowered down behind the door.*

cowgirl position A sex position in which the woman is on top of the man, with both partners facing each other. *The Kama Sutra is totally blowing my mind! All I knew before was the cowgirl position!*

the cowl does not make the monk One's appearance or behavior in public does not indicate one's true character. A "cowl" is the hooded robe



worn by a monk. *My aunt goes to church every week, but she is actually a miserable, malicious person. I guess it's true that the cowl does not make the monk.*

cozy up **1.** Literally, to snuggle with someone. *I left the room when my sister and her boyfriend started cozying up to each other. The puppies cozied up to their mother.* **2.** To become friendly with someone, usually in an attempt to obtain something. *Since I'm deciding who gets the promotion, Crystal has been cozying up to me by buying me coffee all week.*

crab mentality A negative, selfish mentality characterized by a preference for others not to get ahead of or do better than oneself. It alludes to a phenomenon of a group of crabs in a pot, in which an escaping crab is pulled back down by the others so that none escape in the end. *She dreamt of going to college and beginning a better life, but her parents' and friends' crab mentality constantly discouraged her from leaving the sordid life in which they were entrenched.*

crack a book Open a book. A set phrase that is often used in the negative. *I really need to study for that test on Monday because I haven't cracked a book all weekend.*

crack a bottle To open a bottle (of alcohol) with the intention of drinking. *We all cracked a couple bottles to celebrate the end of the semester. I like to crack a bottle or two when I get home from work.*

crack a bottle open To open a bottle of something, usually an alcoholic drink. *We cracked a bottle open to celebrate finishing of our first year of grad school.*

crack a crib obsolete To burglarize, especially a home. *Many of the men in this area, though displaying a most convincing friendly attitude to one's face, are all too eager for the chance to crack a crib or two in the dark of the night.*

crack a fat vulgar slang To have or get an erection of the penis. Primarily heard in Australia. *Many pubescent boys are teased for involuntarily "cracking a fat" in public as their bodies change in unfamiliar and sometimes uncomfortable ways.*

crack a joke To say something funny; to tell a joke. *The teacher scolded me for cracking a joke in the middle of class.*

crack a smile To smile. *I got the baby to crack a smile by clapping and singing.*

crack down **1.** verb To address or control something more strictly than in the past. *After years of leniency, the school is finally cracking down on plagiarism.* **2.** noun A period of stricter control of something. When used as a noun, the phrase is usually written as one word. *After years of leniency, there's finally been a crackdown on plagiarism at the school.*

crack of doom **1.** The Christian Day of Judgment, when God assigns an eternal fate to all individual humans; a sound or signal heralding that day. *You may have been acquitted of your crimes by a court of law, but you will have to face the punishment for them at the crack of doom. The sky blackened and lightning flashed violently across the sky, with thunder booming like a crack of doom.* **2.** By extension, the apocalypse or end of the world, or a signal thereof. *Many feared that the Cold War could at any time escalate to nuclear warfare, bringing about the crack of doom.*

crack on To do or (especially) continue doing something fervently, determinedly, or with great haste. *Crack on with that report, Tom, we need it by this afternoon. After a moment of insight into how I would end the story, I decided to crack on with my novel until the break of morning.*

crack open **1.** To open something. A noun or pronoun can be used between "crack" and "open." *It's too hot in here—can we crack open a window? We cracked open a bottle of wine to celebrate finishing our first year of grad school.* **2.** To break open. A noun or pronoun can be used between "crack" and "open." *The earthquake cracked the highway wide open.* **3.** To expose something scandalous or deceptive. A noun or pronoun can be used between "crack" and "open." *That company's stock price plummeted after the media cracked open the CEO's embezzlement scandal. An anonymous tip to the police is what cracked the theft ring wide open.*

crack some suds slang To drink beer. *Let's go to the bar and crack some suds.*

crack the door (open) To open a door slightly. *It's so hot in here—can we at least crack the door open?*

crack the whip To push or urge someone (usually one's subordinate) to work harder, likened to literally cracking a whip to control or urge on an

animal. *The boss is nervous that we'll lose this account, so he's really started cracking the whip on us.*

crack through (something) **1.** Literally, to pierce, pass, or enter into or through something. *The howling wind cracks through the walls at night. Rebel forces have cracked through the military's barricade and have now overrun the parliament building.* **2.** Figuratively, to surmount some difficulty or restriction so as to enter into some place or situation. *After four years in the law firm, Meredith finally cracked through the glass ceiling and was made a partner.*

crack under the strain To submit to the stress of a particular situation; to stop functioning due to the pressure. *If you keep pushing your employees so hard, they'll eventually crack under the strain.*

crack up **1.** verb To laugh a lot. *We all cracked up at Josh's joke.* **2.** verb To cause someone to laugh a lot. In this usage, a noun or pronoun can be used between "crack" and "up." *Josh's joke cracked us all up. That comedian just cracks me up.* **3.** verb To experience a mental or emotional breakdown. *All those days of sleep deprivation finally caused me to crack up. She's terrified to leave the house all of a sudden—I think she's cracking up.* **4.** verb To destroy something. *He drove into a tree and cracked up his car.* **5.** verb To be in an accident. *I cracked up after losing control of my car.* **6.** noun An accident. When used as a noun, the phrase is typically hyphenated. *I was in a crack-up when I lost control of my car and hydroplaned.*

cracked up to be Reputed or said to be. Typically used in the phrase "isn't all it's cracked up to be." *I'm so impressed with my new car—a luxury car really is all it's cracked up to be! Honestly, the movie isn't what it's cracked up to be. Maybe I'm just not the right audience for it.*

cradle-robber A jocular term for someone who is romantically involved with a much younger person. *I wouldn't have pegged Jeff as a cradle-robber, but I just saw him around town with a girl who looks like she's barely out of high school.*

cradle-snatcher A jocular term for someone who is romantically involved with a much younger person. *Dating sites seem to be filled with nothing but cradle-snatchers looking for women who are 20 years younger than them.*

cradle-to-grave (used as a modifier before a noun) Lasting the full

spectrum of life, existence, or a given process; that is, from the first point to the very last. Derived from the phrase "from the cradle to the grave" (or "from cradle to grave"). *Our cradle-to-grave assessment of material processing ensures that our products remain environmentally sustainable at all levels of development. This cradle-to-grave study will monitor the effects of the drug from patients' infancy until their death, allowing for a comprehensive assessment of its benefits and potential side effects.*

crafty devil A devious, cunning, and/or mischievous person. ("Devil" here is not intended to indicate an evil or malevolent person, but rather to emphasize "crafty.") *Tabloid reporters are such crafty devils, spinning people's personal problems into sensationalist stories. He's a crafty devil in business, cleverly negotiating deals with and between companies that would normally be in fierce competition with one another.*

cram for (something) To study for a test shortly before it is to happen. *You might have gotten a higher grade if you didn't cram for that exam at the last minute.*

cram into (something) To shove something into something else (which often cannot contain or accommodate it). A noun or pronoun can be used between "cram" and "into." *I tried to cram a jacket into my suitcase, but it just wouldn't fit. We were thrilled to reach our destination after being crammed into a tiny car with each other for hours.*

cram with (someone or something) To fill something with more than it can reasonably hold or accommodate. A noun or pronoun can be used between "cram" and "with." *Because this room is just totally crammed with people, we're moving everyone into the auditorium. I had crammed my suitcase with so much stuff that I couldn't get it to close.*

cramp (one's) style To inhibit or interfere with what one wants to do. *Ugh, having a test on Monday is really cramping my style. I just want to party all weekend! My parents coming to stay with me this weekend is totally going to cramp my style. When am I supposed to get anything done?*

crank in/into (something) To factor in or integrate as a necessary element of something. *Your bonuses and potential overtime pay are not cranked into your gross salary calculations. We'll have to crank in potential environmental impacts when planning the new factory.*

crank out To do or complete something quickly (and perhaps with a loss

of quality as a result). A noun or pronoun can be used between "crank" and "out." *With the deadline looming, the staff was able to crank out the layout in just a few hours, thank goodness. I write a novel every few years, but that author seems to crank one out every few months!*

crank up **1.** Literally, to turn a crank on something so that it starts working. A noun or pronoun can be used between "crank" and "up." *Annabelle was thrilled when I cranked up the music box for her.* **2.** To prompt or cause someone to do something. A noun or pronoun can be used between "crank" and "up." *I know I'm supposed to be researching right now, but I've had a really hard time cranking myself up to do it.* **3.** To intensify. A noun or pronoun can be used between "crank" and "up." *If we don't crank up our efforts, we'll never meet our goal for the fundraiser.* **4.** To start. A noun or pronoun can be used between "crank" and "up." *You need to crank up this project now, in order to finish it by the deadline.* **5.** To raise the volume of something. A noun or pronoun can be used between "crank" and "up." *Hey, that's a great song—crank up the radio!*

crap around **1.** To behave foolishly or idly waste time. *The employees were crapping around the office until the boss showed up. Quit crapping around and pay attention in class!* **2.** To interfere, meddle, or trifle with something or someone. (Usually followed by "with.") *You need to learn not to crap around with other people's belongings. I'm sick and tired of the government crapping around with us.*

crap (one's) pants **1.** Literally, to defecate into one's pants or underwear. *I can't believe that I got so drunk last night that I crapped my pants.* **2.** To be extremely nervous, excited, or frightened. *I was crapping my pants when the boss called me into his office. I almost crapped my pants when I saw my favorite singer in my local café.*

crap out **1.** To lose on a roll of dice while playing craps (a gambling game). *I had hoped to win some money tonight, but I crapped out pretty quickly.* **2.** rude slang Of a machine, to malfunction or break altogether. *I'm afraid the blender is crapping out. It stopped working again today. She didn't come to the party because her car crapped out on the way here.* **3.** rude slang To break one's commitment to someone or something. *He said that he would go to the birthday party with us but then crapped out at the last minute.* **4.** rude slang To die. *I felt so sick when I had food poisoning that I thought I was going to crap out.*

the crap out of vulgar slang To a huge or great degree; very much. *I swear, if that punk looks at us like that again, I'm going to go over there and beat the crap out of him! Don't sneak up on me like that, you scared the crap out of me!*

crap up (something) **1.** To ruin, bungle, or spoil something. *I really crapped up that project at work—I'm going to get fired for sure!* **2.** To overrun or obstruct a thing or place, as with clutter, garbage, or undesirable things. *Would you stop crapping up our apartment with all your silly figurines?*

crap where you eat See [don't crap where you eat](#).

crash and burn **1.** Literally, to crash violently. *Her car crashed and burned, but she survived the accident.* **2.** To fail at something completely and dramatically. *I really hope this business venture doesn't crash and burn—I'll be broke if it does. My attempt to make a speech before the whole student body really crashed and burned when I got on stage and forgot everything I was supposed to say.* **3.** In sports, to experience a significant accident or crash and thus have to withdraw from a competition. *Alex isn't competing today because she crashed and burned on her practice run last night.*

crash around To make a lot of noise while doing something. *Dad woke us all up when he came home late and promptly crashed around the dark living room. You can always count on Patty to crash around in the kitchen while she's cooking. Pots and pans have never sounded louder!*

a crash course A quick yet thorough tutorial on some topic or process. *I got a crash course in answering the phones before the receptionist went on vacation.*

crash dive **1.** noun A sudden descent, typically in an emergency situation. The phrase is usually applied to submarines and airplanes. *Engine two is out, prepare for a crash dive!* **2.** verb To make such a descent. *My brain could barely comprehend that our lives were in danger before the plane started to crash dive.*

crash down **1.** Literally, to fall down or collapse, often noisily. *When the tree crashed down in the woods, it woke us all up.* **2.** By extension, to result in disaster or lose all stability amidst drastic problems. *When I lied on my resume to get my dream job, I really hoped it wouldn't all come crashing*

down around me—but, of course, it did. I've felt like my life is crashing down around me ever since my husband's sudden death.

crash into (someone or something) To collide with someone or something, often violently. *Another driver ignored a red light and crashed into us in the middle of the intersection. He didn't see the dining room table and crashed right into it.*

crash out To escape from some place. *That criminal did crash out, but he was caught only a mile from the prison.*

crash pad A place where free accommodation is provided on a temporary basis. *Because of our spare bedroom, our house has become something of a crash pad for visiting friends and family.*

crash the gate To attend an event, such as a concert, sports match, or party, without being invited or paying to get in. *That's way too much money to see them in concert, let's just crash the gate and see them on the sly! There's always a few who crash the gate at my party and end up causing trouble.*

crash the party To attend a party without being invited. *Come on, let's go crash the neighbors' party—I'm sure they won't mind us showing up. There's always someone who crashes the party and ends up causing trouble.*

crash through (something) To physically break through some thing or barrier, often violently. *The driver crashed through the guardrail and ended up in oncoming traffic.*

crash to the floor To fall to the floor, usually noisily. *The picture frame fell off the wall and crashed to the floor.*

crash together Of two or more things, to strike each other violently or noisily. A noun or pronoun can be used between "crash" and "together." *Our cars crashed together in the middle of the intersection when the other driver ran a red light. My job in the percussion section of the marching band is to crash the symbols together.*

crash with (someone) slang To sleep at someone else's residence. *Since it's such a long drive, I'm just going to crash with my friend tonight and then head home tomorrow.*

crater face derogatory slang Someone with very bad acne or severe scarring therefrom. (Sometimes hyphenated.) *I was a bit of a crater face in*

high school, but thankfully my face cleared up in college. Wow, a crater-face like you will never get a date to the dance!

crave to (do something) To want or long to do something. *After all this rain, the kids are craving to play outside.*

crawl across (something) **1.** Of a person, to move across an area on one's hands and knees. *When I turned back around, the baby was already crawling across the room!* **2.** Of an insect, to walk across an area. *When I saw the bee crawling across the windowsill, I bolted out of the room.*

crawl (all) over each other Of a group or population of people, to be in fierce or eager competition with one another such that the individual's well-being, success, or survival becomes secondary to that of others. *It's sad, really, how people crawl all over each other just to earn a little bit more money. Whenever a major disaster occurs, people crawl over each other to secure food and shelter for themselves.*

crawl back to (one) To return to someone in a dejected or humbled fashion. *Maybe if you went crawling back to your boss, you could get your job back.*

crawl into (one's) shell To retreat into one's mind or otherwise isolate oneself so as to avoid undesirable thoughts, situations, or interactions with people. *After getting mugged, I crawled into my shell and didn't speak to anyone for nearly a week. I'm not good around large groups of people; I usually just crawl into my shell and wait until I can be alone. Don't crawl into your shell because you don't want an argument—talk to me and let's discuss the problem!*

crawl in(to) (some place or thing) **1.** To enter an area or thing on one's hands and knees. *I can't fit in that tiny space so can you crawl in and get that box? The kids crawled into the tunnel and then went down the slide.* **2.** To get into one's bed. *After moving boxes all day, I couldn't wait to crawl into bed and get some sleep.* **3.** To quickly put on an article of clothing. *Adam crawled into his pants and ran out the door as soon as he heard the fire alarm.*

crawl out To exit a place or thing on one's hands and knees. *The baby will definitely crawl out of the room if you don't put the baby gate up. The kids crawled out of the tunnel and then came running back to us.*



crawl over (something) To climb over something on one's hands and knees. *The baby crawled over the toys on the floor as if they weren't even there.*

crawling with (something) Having something in abundance; full of something. *Ugh, the mall is crawling with teenagers tonight—I feel so old. We had to call an exterminator when we learned that our walls were crawling with termites.*

cray slang A shortened form of "crazy," meaning the same. *Oh, she's cray—you can't trust a word she says. I thought his reaction to your tiny mistake was cray—screaming was definitely not necessary.*

cray cray slang A reduplication of a shortened form of "crazy," meaning the same. *Oh, she's cray cray—you can't trust a word she says. I thought his reaction to your tiny mistake was cray cray—screaming was definitely not necessary.*

crazy about (someone or something) Very enthusiastically fond of someone or something. *Teri is just crazy about her new boyfriend and won't stop talking about him. Ever since she started taking lessons as a kid, Amy has been crazy about tennis. I'm not crazy about that place, so can we go somewhere else for dinner?*

crazy as a betsy bug Insane. *Don't leave me alone with Uncle Stu, he's crazy as a betsy bug!*

crazy as a loon Insane. Often used jocularly. *Don't leave me alone with Uncle Stu, he's crazy as a loon!*

crazy in the head Insane or dumb. *Don't leave me alone with Uncle Stu, he's crazy in the head!*

crazy like a fox Very clever, cunning, or shrewd while appearing foolish or mad. *People thought I was crazy when I told them my idea for massive social networking site—crazy like a fox, more like it! Our boss is crazy like a fox; her daredevil schemes always sound like they'll bankrupt us, but they invariably bring in a huge profit.*

a creaking door hangs longest Sick people often outlive healthy people. *Oh, I wouldn't worry about Uncle Stu—he's been sick for years, and a creaking door hangs longest.*

cream in (one's) jeans **1.** To ejaculate in one's pants. *I bet you cream in your jeans just reading Playboy!* **2.** By extension, to become overly excited about something. *Dude, I know you're hungry, but don't cream in your jeans, it's just a candy bar.*

the cream of the crop The best of a particular group. *We need to draft this player—he's definitely the cream of the crop. These delicious strawberries are the cream of the crop.*

cream (one's) jeans vulgar slang To be or become sexually aroused, or to be so overcome by excitement or delight as to resemble that state. *I creamed my jeans when he came onto the stage with his shirt off. I'm creaming my jeans at the thought of going to Paris this summer.*

crease up To become creased or wrinkled, as of clothing. *After sitting for so long in my suit, the pants are starting to crease up.*

create a scene To create a loud, typically angry disturbance or display in public, such that it draws attention to those involved. *Robert created a scene in the store when they refused to refund him for the broken television. My parents always create a scene with their fighting wherever we go.*

create a stink To be very vocal in one's displeasure about something; to make a scene. *My mom created a stink when the store refused to accept her return without a receipt.*

create an uproar To create a noisy or chaotic situation; to make a scene. *The judge had to bang her gavel to quiet the gallery after a spectator created an uproar by yelling obscenities.*

creature comforts Things that one needs in order to feel happy and comfortable. *I have a hard time abandoning my creature comforts to go hiking and camping. At a minimum, I need running water!*

creature feature A horror film in which the central focus is on one or more monsters. *I miss the creature features of the '50s and '60s—they were so campy and fun, unlike the dull CGI films of today.*

creature of habit One who prefers the comfort and reliability of routine and habitual behavior. *My brother is far too much a creature of habit to be up for something like backpacking across Europe. I know we're told to shuck our routines and live spontaneously, but I'm a creature of habit—it's just easier when you know exactly how each day will pan out.*

credibility gap The discrepancy between the lofty promises that a person makes and the resulting action or situation. *The politician suffered a credibility gap regarding his claims about the economy's improvement because his constituents were still unable to find work.*

credit for (something) Praise, admiration, or acknowledgement for some task, achievement, or accomplishment. *Even though Jenny did all the hard work on the project, Mary was the one who got credit for it. You have to give John credit for the humility he shows regarding his financial success.*

credit (someone or something) with (something) 1. To apply a payment to a financial account belonging to someone or something. *I think you credited the wrong account with my most recent payment.* 2. To give someone praise, admiration, or acknowledgement for some task, achievement, or accomplishment. *I have to credit my trainer with getting me back in shape for this season.*

credit to (someone or something) 1. verb To apply a payment to a financial account belonging to someone or something. *Now, which account should I credit this payment to?* 2. verb To give someone praise, admiration, or acknowledgement for some task, achievement, or accomplishment. *Jenny did all the hard parts of the project, so we need to credit the work to her.* 3. noun A valuable member of something. *Anyone who's not a credit to this committee will be removed from it.*

credit where credit is due Acknowledgement of someone's work or contribution to something. Often used in the phrase "give credit where credit is due." *Come on, give credit where credit is due! I came up with that idea, and you know it! We may not get along very well with Mitch, but we have to give credit where credit is due—he worked hard on that project.*

creep across (something) To move slowly, and often stealthily, across a particular area or surface. *The robber crept across the lawn and then opened a window to get into the house. When I saw the bee creeping across the windowsill, I bolted out of the room. The sunlight crept across my face and woke me up.*

creep along (something) To move slowly, and often stealthily, across a particular area or surface. *The robber crept along the walkway and then opened a window to get into the house. When I saw the bee creeping along the windowsill, I bolted out of the room.*

creep away To move slowly, and often stealthily, away from someone or something. *I froze when I saw the bee on the windowsill, but luckily, it crept away. I crept away after stealing the cookies off the counter.*

creep by To move slowly, as of time. *Time feels like it's just creeping by in that class because it's so boring.*

creep in To enter some thing or place slowly and/or stealthily. *I may have allowed my personal feelings to creep in when I gave that job to my brother. Luckily, mom didn't hear us last night when we crept in after curfew.*

creep into To enter some place stealthily. *I'll watch the door while you creep into the lab and steal the poison. That possum must have crept into the basement while the door was open.*

creep out 1. To exit slowly and often stealthily. *The cat crept out from under the bush to see if the dog was gone.* **2.** slang To make someone feel uneasy. In this usage, a noun or pronoun is commonly used between "creep" and "out." *I'm OK with most bugs, but centipedes just creep me out, man. That guy in the corner was really creeping us out, so we decided to leave.*

creep over (someone or something) To move slowly, and often stealthily, across a particular area or surface. *The sunlight crept over my face and woke me up. When I saw the bee creeping over my textbook, I leapt from my seat.*

creep under (something) To move slowly, and often stealthily, under something. *The cat crept under the bush and stayed there until the dog was gone.*

creep up 1. To approach someone or something slowly and often stealthily. *I crept up behind my brother and startled him.* **2.** To encroach (upon one or something) gradually over time. *It wasn't until I sat down that I realized how much exhaustion had crept up on me. The weeds have been really creeping up on the edge of the yard over the last few years.*

crème de la crème Of a person or a thing, the very best of a similar group or type. Literally translated from French as "cream of the cream." *This car is the crème de la crème of luxury vehicles. Janet is the crème de la crème of photographers.*

crib note 1. Information about or the solutions to questions of a test or exam written on a piece of paper or other document, which may be used for

cheating, studying, or by someone grading said exam. Usually pluralized. *Jim was caught using crib notes during his test and failed the course as a result. My friend gave me a great set of crib notes to use while studying for my final exam.* **2.** Complex or difficult information summarized on a document so as to allow for easy reference and/or understanding. Usually pluralized. *I made some crib notes of everyday Japanese phrases so I would know how to say at least a few things while in Tokyo next week!*

crib sheet **1.** A piece of paper or other document containing information about or the solutions to questions of a test or exam, which may be used for cheating, studying, or by someone grading said exam. *Jim was caught using a crib sheet during his test and failed the course as a result. My friend gave me a great crib sheet to use while studying for my final exam.* **2.** Any document on which complex or difficult information is summarized so as to allow for easy reference and/or understanding. *I made a crib sheet of everyday Japanese phrases so I would know how to say at least a few things while in Tokyo next week!*

crib (something) from (someone) To copy something from someone; to plagiarize. *I only got 100 on that test because I cribbed the answers from my neighbor—I hope no one finds out!*

a crick in (one's) back A sudden pain or stiffness in one's back, as from a cramp or spasm. *Dad got a crick in his back while trying to move that big box.*

a crick in (one's) neck A sudden pain or stiffness in one's neck, as from a cramp or spasm. *I got a crick in my neck when I whipped my head around to see what was running through our yard.*

cries barley See [cry barley](#).

cries for the moon See [cry for the moon](#).

cries foul See [cry foul](#).

cries in beer See [cry in \(one's\) beer](#).

cries on her shoulder See [cry on \(one's\) shoulder](#).

cries over spilt milk See [cry over spilt milk](#).

cries stinking fish See [cry stinking fish](#).

crime doesn't pay Ultimately, crime does not benefit the criminal, and

only results in negative consequences. *The billboards are designed as reminders that even minor fraud convictions carry serious consequences—crime doesn't pay.*

cringe away from (someone or something) To move away from someone or something, usually out of fear. *I cringed away from the snake and prayed that it wouldn't see me.*

cringe before (someone or something) To shrink away from someone or something, usually out of fear. *I cringed before my dad when he caught me sneaking in after curfew.*

crinkle up 1. To crease or wrinkle. *Kathryn crinkled up her nose when she heard what I was making for dinner. Please don't put that document in the bag without a folder—you'll crinkle it up.* **2.** To become creased or wrinkled. *I've been sitting for so long in my suit that the pants are crinkling up.*

criss-cross applesauce A childish alliterative rhyme for (being) cross-legged while sitting. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *OK, kids, everyone sit criss-cross applesauce and face the front of class!*

criticize (one) for (something) To voice disapproval of one for a particular action. *We have to be on time today because they always criticize us for being late. I was criticized for that mistake even though it wasn't my fault.*

a crock An obvious lie. *The accusation that Peter stole the money from the register is such a crock! He's the most trustworthy and honest man I've ever met.*

crock up To damage or hurt someone or something. A noun or pronoun can be used between "crock" and "up." *Our fence is crocked up because our neighbor ran into it with his tractor.*

crocodile tears A false, insincere, or hypocritical display of sadness or remorse. Derived from an ancient anecdote that a crocodile will weep to lure in its victims, or that it weeps as it eats them. *The prime minister's crocodile tears belie the government's involvement with the massacre of its citizens. Jessica shed crocodile tears over the expulsion of her rival, Jacob.*

crooked as a barrel of fish hooks See [\(as\) crooked as a barrel of fish hooks](#).

crop out 1. To adjust the borders of a photograph so that someone or something is removed from it. In this usage, a noun or pronoun can be used between "crop" and "out." *I think the picture will look better if you crop out those trashcans in the background. Wow, I look terrible in that photo. Please crop me out!* **2.** To become exposed or reach the surface, as of a physical object. *Look at this layer of rock that has cropped out!* **3.** By extension, to become overt or noticeable, as of an emotion or concept. *I knew my fears would crop out before I could actually jump from the plane.*

crop up To suddenly occur or become noticeable. *I knew my fears would crop up before I could actually jump from the plane. Problems always seem to crop up when we're about to go away on vacation.*

cross a/that bridge before (one) comes to it To be very concerned or make a decision about something that has not happened yet. *Thanks to my anxiety, I often to cross a bridge before I come to it. A: "What if I don't get the job?" B: "They haven't called you yet either way, so don't cross that bridge before you come to it."*

cross as a bear See [\(as\) cross as a bear](#).

cross as a bear with a sore head See [\(as\) cross as a bear with a sore head](#).

cross as two sticks Angry or irritated. Primarily heard in UK. *I'd stay away from Bill if I were you—he's cross as two sticks today. I was in a good mood when I woke up this morning, but now I feel cross as two sticks after getting stuck in traffic.*

cross from (some place) to (some place) To travel from one point to another. *These two buildings are so far apart that I practically have to cross from one end of campus to the other! They have to cross from the island to the mainland and back just to get groceries.*

cross my heart (and hope to die) A vow that one is being truthful. *Billy's the one who broke the cookie jar—cross my heart and hope to die!*

cross off 1. To draw a line through someone's name on a list (possibly to denote their presence, absence, or their completion of something). A noun or pronoun can be used between "cross" and "off." *I crossed off all the kids that were on-time today. Hey, cross me off—I already brought in my donation. 2.* To mark something as completed, as on a list. A noun or pronoun can be used

between "cross" and "off." *I mowed the lawn today, so I can finally cross that off my to-do list. You'll finally be able to cross off hang gliding on your bucket list!*

cross (one's) bows To annoy or irritate. *Boy, you are really crossing my bows today. Why can't you just do what I ask without arguing about it?*

cross (one's) fingers To hope that something will happen. The actual gesture, which does not have to accompany the phrase, involves crossing one's middle finger over the index finger as a superstition believed to bring good luck or ward off bad luck. *I'm crossing my fingers that I get a bike for my birthday!*

cross (one's) mind To be thought of by one. *Take time to form your response to the interviewer—don't just blurt out the first thing that crosses your mind. I haven't thought of my high school English teacher in years, so I'm not sure why she crossed my mind today.*

cross (one's) palm To pay someone, often as a bribe. *Well, if you cross my palm, I might remember a few details about the people you're asking about. I crossed her palm to make sure she won't come after us.*

cross (one's) path To come into contact with someone or something, often surprisingly or unexpectedly. *You won't believe who crossed my path today—Milly, who I haven't seen in years! Is it really bad luck if a black cat crosses your path?*

cross out To draw a line through or otherwise obscure something so as to designate its removal or need to be disregarded. A noun or pronoun can be used between "cross" and "out." A: *"Why is Amy's name crossed out?"* B: *"Because she's not coming on the field trip anymore." I crossed out all of the words that need to be deleted in the next draft.*

cross over **1.** verb To pass over something, as from an elevated position. *Can we use the bridge to cross over the creek? I don't want to get wet.* **2.** verb To move from one place to another, as by crossing some sort of border, barrier, or stretch of land; to cross. *Thousands of refugees are expected to cross over the border in the coming months. We have to cross over an entire desert before we reach an outpost.* **3.** verb To become successful in a separate but related field or genre. *Don't expect to reach George Clooney's level of success—few television actors are able to cross over to movies so seamlessly. The pop star actually began her career as a country singer before she*

crossed over. **4.** verb To cause someone to become successful in a separate but related field or genre. In this usage, a noun or pronoun can be used between "cross" and "over." *A successful TV show could cross you over into movies one day.* **5.** verb To change one's affiliation with something; to join a different side or party. *She used to be a devout Catholic, so I'm surprised to hear that she's now crossed over to Judaism. I didn't realize that Uncle Roger was once a Democrat, since he crossed over to the Republican Party so long ago.* **6.** verb, euphemism To die. *It's been a year since my grandfather crossed over, and I still miss him just as much. We'll all cross over to the other side one day, so you better make the best of life while you can.* **7.** noun A creative work, such as a television episode or story, that incorporates characters from a different (often related) show or story. In this usage, the phrase is usually written as one word. *I can't wait for the crossover of Supergirl and The Flash!* **8.** noun A vehicle that combines the features of a car and a sport utility vehicle (SUV). It is typically bigger than a traditional car and smaller than a traditional SUV. In this usage, the phrase is usually hyphenated or written as one word. *After having this tiny car for so long, I think I want a crossover next.* **9.** noun In basketball, a move in which the player dribbles the ball one way before quickly changing direction in order to pass by the defender. In this usage, the phrase is usually written as one word. *He's known for his lightning quick crossover, which has left some defenders tumbling on the floor.* **10.** noun In ice skating, a move accomplished by alternating the skating foot by crossing one over the other to gain momentum or change direction. Used for varying purposes in both figure skating and ice hockey. In this usage, the phrase is usually written as one word. *You'd better learn how to do a proper crossover if you want to bring your skating to the next level.* **11.** adjective Describing someone that is successful in two separate but related fields or genres. When used as an adjective, the phrase is usually written as one word. *Don't expect to reach George Clooney's level of success—few television actors are able to become a crossover star so quickly.* **12.** adjective Describing something that blends two distinct but related things, as to appeal to a wide audience. When used as an adjective, the phrase is usually written as one word. *A TV show that's also a musical is a crossover dream—think of the audience we'll capture! I can't wait for the crossover episode of Supergirl and The Flash!*

cross over into (some place) To move from one place into another, as by crossing some sort of border or barrier. *Our driving goal today is to*

cross over into Nebraska before nightfall.

cross paths with (one) To encounter one, often surprisingly or unexpectedly. *Can you believe that I crossed paths with Milly today? I haven't seen her in years!*

cross purpose A goal or purpose that conflicts with someone else's. Often used in the phrase "at cross purposes." *It sounds like you two are at cross purposes right now, so take a few minutes and reach an agreement about what you hope to achieve.*

cross (somebody has) to carry A difficult responsibility or burden that someone must handle on their own. *I really don't want to take out student loans, but it's the cross I have to carry in order to further my education.*

cross that bridge later To deal with a problem, issue, or situation at another point in time. It is recommended especially when the issue is not problematic at the moment. *A: "Users might not like having their personal data given to advertisers." B: "We'll cross that bridge later, let's just get the website up and running for now."*

cross the aisle **1.** Of politicians, to unite or cooperate—especially through voting—with an opposing political party or members thereof, so as to achieve some political goal or purpose. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *With just enough Republicans crossing the aisle, the Democrats were able to pass the bill through both the Senate and the House of Representatives. If reform of any kind is going to come about in this lifetime, it will take some strong-willed individuals willing to cross the aisle.* **2.** Of parliamentary members, to leave one's current political party and join another, such that one's legislative seat is physically moved to the new party's location in parliament. Primarily heard in UK, Australia, Canada, New Zealand. *Following the prime minister's controversial tax bill, several members of his party crossed the aisle to the Labour Party.*

cross the floor **1.** Of parliamentary members, to vote against the common trend of one's political party (i.e., vote "against party lines"). Primarily heard in UK, Australia, New Zealand. *Though it is largely opposed by the Conservative Party, enough PMs have crossed the floor on this issue that it looks like it might succeed.* **2.** Of parliamentary members, to leave one's current political party and join another, such that one's legislative seat is physically moved to the new party's location in parliament. Primarily heard in

UK, Australia, Canada, New Zealand. *Following the prime minister's controversial tax bill, several members of his party crossed the floor to the Labor Party.*

cross the Great Divide To die. *I'm really scared that mom is going to cross the Great Divide any day now. The doctors are saying that it's only a matter of time.*

cross to bear A difficult responsibility or burden that someone must handle on their own. *When Nancy's husband passed away, she was left with quite a cross to bear having to raise four children on her own.*

cross your fingers An imperative to literally cross one's middle finger over the index finger as a superstition believed to bring good luck or ward off bad luck, or to simply wish for good luck or the success of something. *OK, I'm going to turn on the machine for the first time. Here goes—cross your fingers, everyone!*

crow over (something) To brag or boast about something, likened to the squawking of a rooster. *You know, no one likes it when you go around crowing over your successes in business.*

a crow to pluck An issue to discuss—typically one that is a source of annoyance for the speaker. *Hey, I have a crow to pluck with you! Why didn't you put gas in my car after you borrowed it?*

crowd pleaser Something that many people like. *I hope you'll bring your famous spinach dip to the party—it's such a crowd pleaser! We need to work on a fun cover song for this upcoming gig, something that's a real crowd pleaser!*

crowd-puller Something or someone that is popular and attracts a large audience. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *The critics are saying that this film is going to be a real crowd-puller, so we should buy our tickets before they sell out!*

crown jewel 1. A precious jewel that is part of or featured on a monarch's or sovereign's regalia. *Just one crown jewel from the Queen's regalia is worth enough money to buy a small country. 2.* An asset or possession prized as being the best of a group of similar things. *This vintage 1965 Corvette Stingray is the crown jewel of my car collection. The works of Shakespeare are the crown jewels of English drama.*

crown jewels 1. The precious jewels, and the regalia or which they are featured, of a monarch or sovereign, as worn or used on a state occasion. *One of the greatest mysteries of 20th-century Ireland was the case of the Irish Crown Jewels, which were stolen from Dublin Castle in 1907 and never recovered.* 2. slang A man's genitals, especially the testicles. *When she heard he had an affair, she kicked him right in the crown jewels.*

crown of thorns Something that causes one pain and suffering. Alludes to the crown of thorns that Jesus was made to wear before his crucifixion. Its usage is similar to the phrase "cross to bear." *I can't stand to see how sick she has become. This illness is a real crown of thorns. This class is my crown of thorns. No matter how much I study, I just keep getting awful grades.*

crowning achievement The most important, significant, or greatest accomplishment or moment of one's career or life. *The author's oeuvre spans five novels, four plays, and six books of poetry, but this, her final novel, is by far her crowning achievement. I may have had success in business and led a somewhat romantic life, but my crowning achievement was by far the day I became a father.*

crow's feet Wrinkles at the corner of the eyes, likened to the long forked toes on a crow's foot. *Some people dread getting wrinkles, but I rather like my crow's feet—I think they give me a wise appearance.*

crunch (the) numbers To compile, calculate, and/or analyze a large amount of numerical data, especially as relates to finance. *We've been crunching the numbers for hours, and I just don't see how we'll be able to afford another child! This new computer crunches numbers faster than any of us could even dream of!*

crunch time A critical period of time characterized by a heightened pressure to succeed, usually at or near the end of a given situation or undertaking. *Okay, we've got two minutes to tie the game—it's crunch time, guys!*

crush it To succeed at something in a particularly impressive way. Often used in the past tense. *Her presentation for the CEO went really well. She totally crushed it! That band always crushes it, so I'm not surprised their halftime performance was spectacular.*

crushing blow A major defeat or setback that is devastating to the goals

of a person, group, or organization. *The team's loss last Sunday was a crushing blow to their chances for a championship. Failing that test was a crushing blow to my hopes for an honors degree.*

the crux of the matter The focal, central, or most important element of a topic, problem, or issue. *Over the course of this trial, the prosecution intends to get to the crux of the matter regarding this company's shady financial dealings.*

cry-baby A person who cries or complains a lot, especially for little reason. *James whines and complains whenever he doesn't get his own way. He's such a cry-baby!*

cry barley To call for a truce, typically in a children's game. *Don't cry barley now, you wuss! Let's keep playing Red Rover!*

a cry for help A conspicuous action, often characterized by aberrant behavior, that masks a conscious or subconscious need for help or attention. *This young man's crime was not malevolently motivated; it was a cry for help that he did not know how to communicate.*

cry for the moon To make an impractical or unreasonable request, especially one that is unlikely to happen. *Oh, you want a later curfew, huh? Well, you're crying for the moon—11 o'clock is late enough!*

cry foul To protest against something that has happened. A: *"How could you go through my things without asking?"* B: *"Oh, don't cry foul—I was just looking for my sweater and I found it. It's not a big deal."* *Dad cried foul when I forgot to put gas in his car after borrowing it.*

cry havoc To sound a warning or alarm of impending chaos, danger, or disaster. "Havoc" was originally a military order in the Middle Ages for soldiers to pillage and cause destruction; it features most famously in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*: "Cry 'Havoc,' and let slip the dogs of war." *The governor cried havoc as the protest became increasingly violent. With the hurricane approaching the city, officials cried havoc and urged citizens to seek shelter.*

cry in (one's) beer To feel sorry for oneself. To bemoan one's fate or life. *Don't cry in your beer, man. I know you're bummed about Amanda, but if she broke up with you, she's not the one.*

cry on (one's) shoulder To bemoan one's problems to someone else.

We need to try to cheer Ben up—he's been crying on my shoulder all week. Can I please cry on your shoulder for a little bit? I just found out I failed my Bio exam.

cry on (someone's) shoulder To tell one's troubles and woes to a sympathetic person. *After the breakup, he cried on my shoulder all night long.*

cry over spilt milk To be upset over something that cannot be fixed, often something minor. *Please calm down, you're just crying over spilt milk. We already submitted the report, so we can't fix it now.* A: "Why is Hannah so upset?" B: "Oh, she's just crying over spilt milk. She just fell down and ripped her stockings—she'll be fine."

cry (someone) a river Said sarcastically to someone whose whining, complaints, or tears fall on unsympathetic ears. Most often said as "cry me a river." *You can cry me a river, but you're still not going to that party tonight!* A: "It's so unfair, I work so hard, but I only get a raise every two years!" B: "Oh, cry me a river, I haven't gotten a raise since I first started working!"

cry stinking fish To undermine one's own efforts. To put oneself down. Primarily heard in UK. A: "And I'm awful at doing reports." B: "Come on, buddy, don't cry stinking fish! You're so talented and have so much to offer the company—don't put yourself down!"

cry the blues 1. Literally, to sing blues music or in that style. *There was this old man crying the blues at the bar last night; it was a really moving bit of music.* 2. By extension, to complain, whine, or express grief, especially as a means of gaining sympathy from others. *Many people will cry the blues over trivial inconveniences, while millions of others silently suffer real hardships every day.*

cry uncle To admit defeat and/or plead for mercy, especially in an informal physical contest of some kind. *The brothers often play fought, but it was invariably the younger of the two who had to cry uncle by the end.*

crying towel 1. A figurative towel used to wipe away someone's tears; used sarcastically to imply that the person's woes or complaints are uncalled for or exaggerated. *Oh, you have to pay a bit more in taxes because you're now making \$100,000 more per year? Shall I get out a crying towel for you?* 2. A person who listens to and/or offers sympathy for someone's troubles, complaints, or grief. *I'm getting a little tired of being Charlie's crying towel*

every time he breaks up with some new boyfriend.

crystal ball 1. A glass or crystal orb used by fortune tellers and mystics in popular culture to see into the future. *The soothsayer, peering into her crystal ball, foretold that I would come to possess a great fortune by the year's end.*

2. By extension, any figurative means of predicting future events. *She must have some kind of crystal ball for the economy, because every business decision she's made has been timed perfectly to market fluctuations. Well, Mike, what does your crystal ball say about the team's chances in the playoffs?*

crystal clear 1. Of a thing or image, strikingly clear or clean. (Sometimes hyphenated when used as a modifier before a noun.) *The picture on this new high-definition TV is crystal clear! The crystal-clear skies at the top of the mountain afforded a spectacular view of the whole state down below.*

2. Of information or communication, very easy to understand; not vague or ambiguous. (Sometimes hyphenated when used as a modifier before a noun.)

A: "You have to drop this package off by 5 PM sharp, or it won't get delivered. Is that clear?" B: "Crystal clear." A good lecturer provides crystal-clear lessons in class, but a great one makes them engaging.

crystal dick Male impotence due to drug use (typically crystal methamphetamine). *If you keep doing meth, you better be prepared for crystal dick.*

cuckoo in the nest Someone in a group who is seen as different and ostracized by their peers. *Since Sam always got good grades and never got in trouble, he was seen by his unruly peers as a cuckoo in the nest.*

cudgel (one's) brains To try very hard to comprehend, solve, think of, or remember something. *I was up all night cudgeling my brains for a way to pay off all my debts. She cudgeled her brains to remember the man's name.*

cuff Jonas 1. obsolete To knock one's knees together while walking or running (i.e., be "knock-kneed"). *An unfortunate development in the boy's legs meant he cuffed Jonas as he ran.*

2. obsolete To slap one's hands against one's sides or under one's armpits as a means of staying warm in cold weather. *In wintertime, one can often see the homeless cuffing Jonas outside shelters and soup kitchens.*

cull the herd 1. Literally, to separate or remove (and usually kill) inferior animals out of a herd so as to reduce numbers or remove undesirable traits

from the group as a whole. *We had to quickly cull the herd when it came to light that some cows might be carrying an infectious disease.* **2.** By extension, to separate or remove people from a larger group. *With so many people applying for a limited number of jobs, employers have had to cull the herd by introducing much stricter criteria and a more elaborate application for hiring. Universities have long used standardized test results as a means of culling the herd of applicants they receive each year.*

culpable homicide A term for manslaughter that is used in several countries, including Scotland and South Africa. *The police are holding him on charges of culpable homicide for his involvement in the fatal crash.*

cultural desert Any place that is characterized by having a distinct lack of complexity, vibrancy, vitality, or interest in intellectual and artistic activity. *After living in New York City for seven years, this little town is something of a cultural desert by comparison. Once considered a cultural desert, the country is now teeming with new museums, extravagant theater productions, and a truly vibrant and eclectic music scene.*

culture hero A person, either real or mythical, who embodies or is seen as the foundation of the cultural values or achievements of a society, group of people, or period of time. *Karl Marx became both a villain to those opposed to Communist ideology and a culture hero for those who embraced the ideals of Socialism. Mythical figures such as Cúchulainn and historical figures like Brian Boru have long been held as culture heroes in Ireland.*

culture shock A sudden feeling of confusion or surprise when confronted by an unfamiliar situation or cultural environment. *It is often a huge culture shock for American women traveling to the Middle East when they are expected to wear head scarves and be accompanied by a man at all times.*

culture vulture Someone who has an avid interest in the arts. *Helen is quite the culture vulture. She attends the theater at least once a month.*

cum grano salis Latinization of "with a grain of salt," almost always preceded by "take" (as with the English equivalent), meaning to regard with a degree of skepticism or without being taken literally. *All of the jubilation over the new president should, as ever, be taken cum grano salis, as no single person will be able to fix the entire country's problems. Jeff's stories tend to be rather exaggerated, so you should usually take them cum grano salis.*

cup of joe A cup of coffee. Though the true origin is unknown, "joe" as a synonym for coffee is theorized to either be a shortening of "jamoke" (a combination of Java and Mocha, two major suppliers of coffee beans), or as a reference to it being the drink of the ordinary man (i.e., the "average joe"). Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *I can't even function in the morning until I've had my first cup of joe.*

cupboard is bare 1. Literally, there is no or very little food in the house. Often pluralized. *I wish I had something to offer you to eat, but we haven't done our grocery shopping this week, and I'm afraid the cupboards are bare.* 2. By extension, resources—especially money—are very tight or nonexistent. Often pluralized. *The government has promised to help alleviate the strain on those out of work, but I don't know how it will accomplish that when its own cupboards are bare. The school district's cupboard is bare after federal funding was cut by 20%.*

cuppa A cup of tea (when used without another kind of drink). Primarily heard in UK. *How are you, Barney? Care for a cuppa?*

cuppa joe A cup of coffee (where "cuppa" is a colloquial contraction of "cup of"). Though the true origin is unknown, "joe" as a synonym for coffee is theorized to either be a shortening of "jamoke" (a combination of Java and Mocha, two major suppliers of coffee beans), or as a reference to it being the drink of the ordinary man (i.e., the "average joe"). Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *I can't even function in the morning until I've had my first cuppa joe.*

cupping An Eastern medicine technique in which the mouths of empty glass cups are pressed against the skin to draw blood to the surface and increase blood flow. *Since drugs have not helped my mother's illness, she has recently begun cupping.*

curate's egg Something that is partly good and partly bad. Taken from a British cartoon about a curate, or priest, who was given a bad egg but focused on the egg's good characteristics as he did not want to offend the person who gave it to him. Primarily heard in UK. *Our vacation was a bit of a curate's egg; the first few days were sunny, but the rest of the week was ruined by the heavy rain and flooding.*

curb appeal The external attractiveness of a building or property, such as can be viewed from the street (i.e., the curb). *We were suckered into buying*

the house because of its incredible curb appeal, but once we moved in, we realized just how run-down it was inside.

curb-crawler A person who drives around looking to solicit prostitutes. Primarily heard in US. *Don't go into that neighborhood after dark—it's known for prostitutes and curb-crawlers.*

curdle (one's) blood To terrify someone. *That horror movie curdled my blood so badly that I spent the next week sleeping in my parents' bedroom!*

curl (one's) hair To shock or terrify someone. *That horror movie sure curled my hair—I could not sleep for a week! Geez, don't sneak up on me like that, you're gonna curl my hair!*

curl (one's) lip To sneer at something. *When I heard what was for dinner, I curled my lip in disgust. Don't you curl your lip at me! I did nothing wrong here!*

curse a blue streak To use profane language with great rapidity and intensity. *My dad cursed a blue streak after he found out I'd put a dent in his car.*

curse (someone or something) under (one's) breath To say threatening, consternated, or disgruntled remarks (toward someone or something) in a very soft or indistinct voice, such that no one else can hear or understand them clearly. *"You'll get what's coming to you one of these days," Janet cursed under her breath. Steven stormed off to his room, cursing his parents under his breath. My dad spent nearly an hour trying to fix the engine on the side of the road, cursing the broken-down truck under his breath the whole time.*

curse (someone) under (one's) breath To murmur something in such a soft, quiet voice that others cannot hear it distinctly. (Said especially of rude, unpleasant, complaining, or impertinent remarks.) *I could hear Bill cursing the boss under his breath as he walked back to his desk after his annual review. If you curse under your breath around me again, I'll tan your hide so quick it will smart for a week!*

curse the day (one) was born 1. Of oneself, to regret having ever existed, as due to some extreme suffering one is or will be experiencing. *Basic training in the military is so hard that you'll often find yourself cursing*

the day you were born. She was so embarrassed by the event that she cursed the day she was born. **2.** To detest someone to such a degree as to wish they had never existed. *You're just a horrible, selfish pig, and I curse the day you were born!*

curses, like chickens, come home to roost One's previous actions will eventually have consequences or cause problems. *Aw man, I knew not handing in my homework would be a problem eventually. Curses, like chickens, come home to roost, after all. I'd be careful before making any rash decisions—you know that curses, like chickens, come home to roost.*

curtain lectures A wife's reprimands to her husband, conducted in private. *Honey, you know I hate to give you curtain lectures, but can you please call when you're going to be late, so that our dinner isn't cold?*

curtain raiser 1. A short play or skit that precedes the main performance. *I have always wanted to be a stage actor, but I've only been cast in a few tiny curtain raisers so far, playing to mostly empty theaters.* **2.** By extension, any event or performance that precedes the main attraction. *Some local singer performed a few songs as a curtain raiser, but no one really paid him much attention until he finally announced the band was about to come on stage. The curtain-raiser match between the two university teams proved far more exciting than the professional football match that everyone had paid to see.*

cushy job A job that is easy, stress free, and/or very well paid. *Since I got this cushy job managing a toy store, I've gotten to sit around playing with toys all day. Since Sarah got that cushy job with the bank, she has been driving a sports car and is buying a second home!*

Custer's last stand Colonel George Custer's decisive defeat by the Sioux at the Battle of Little Bighorn in 1876. *Modern historians approach Custer's last stand much differently than those of the early 20th century.*

cut a dash To have a striking, attractive, and elegant appearance (in one's style of clothes). Primarily heard in UK. *Louise really cut a dash in her new dress at her sister's wedding. Some people find it strange to get so dressed up for everyday events, but I believe one should always try to cut a dash whenever possible.*

cut a dido To play a mischievous trick. The name possibly refers to Queen Dido, founder of Carthage, who asked the natives for as much land as

could be covered by a bull's hide. She then cut the hide into thin strips to gain more land. *Billy cut a dido today when he pulled my chair out from under me when I went to sit down.*

cut a path 1. To forge or create a pathway or trail, as between people, plant life, across land, etc. *The concert was so packed we could barely move, but Jim is so big that he cut a path for us straight to the front of the stage. The falling star cut a path across the darkened sky.* **2.** To leave a place. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *It's about time to be heading home; what do you say we cut a path on out of here?*

a cut above Noticeably superior to others within the same category. *With his vast experience and charming personality, it was clear to see that Gary was a cut above the rest of the candidates who interviewed for the sales position.*

a cut above average Considered not the best but a little above average. *The quality of this dress isn't the finest that I've seen, but it is a cut above average.*

a cut above the rest Better in quality than most others. *This new restaurant is a cut above the rest.*

cut adrift To abandon or set free. Likened to a boat having its mooring cut so that it drifts freely in the water. *I think it's about time that we cut adrift the extremists of the party.*

cut and thrust 1. A fencing technique that uses both the point and edge of the blade. *Look at that cut and thrust! She's doing such a great job in this match!* **2.** A lively debate or argument; an enthusiastic exchange of ideas. *I don't mind a cut and thrust with Amy—she always has a unique perspective, even if we clash sometimes. The cut and thrust of a debate sure gives me an adrenaline rush!*

cut bait 1. To give up on something. Taken from the phrase "fish or cut bait," meaning to either work productively or else stand aside. *After three years of hating medical school, Sean decided it was time to cut bait and try something different.* **2.** Literally, to cut fish into small pieces to be used as bait. *These days, bait is mostly processed in a factory, but I still like to cut bait myself when I'm out fishing.*

a cut below Of lower quality than or inferior to someone or something



else, especially that of the expected norm. *This waiter is really a cut below what I would expect from this restaurant.*

cut each other's throats Of a group or population of people, to be engaged in ferocious, pernicious competition with one another. *It's a symptom of the society we live in that we're all trained to cut each other's throats just to earn a little bit more money. The majority of the economy is dominated by a few megacorporations, while all the smaller businesses are cutting each other's throats for what little market share is left over.*

cut from the same cloth Very similar in characteristics or behaviors. *I hate the snow, but my kids just love it—they are definitely cut from the same cloth. Julia and her mother are cut from the same cloth, as they are both so kind and sweet.*

cut from whole cloth Completely fictional or utterly false; totally made up. A reference to tailors who would falsely advertise garments being "cut out of whole cloth," when in reality, they were pieced together from different cuts. *To be honest, I don't believe a word he says—it sounds like it's cut from whole cloth to me.*

cut ice with (someone) To be very impressive, influential, or satisfactory to a person or group of people. Often used in the negative. *We've found that the approach most likely to cut ice with people is one of honesty and transparency. The party's stance on taxation no longer cuts ice with voters.*

cut it close To do or complete something very near to its limit, especially of time. *We'll be cutting it close, but we should get there just before the movie starts.*

cut of (one's) jib A person's general appearance, manner, mien, style, demeanor, or personality. A reference to the jib sails of a boat (which denoted a ship's allegiance, and therefore potential hostility), it is usually used in the phrase "like the cut of one's jib." *I like the cut of your jib—you've got a brazenness in business that's pretty rare these days. I'm not sure why I don't get along with Sarah. I just don't like the cut of her jib.*

cut off from the (outside) world 1. Literally, completely separated from people outside of a given group or space. *Prison inmates, especially those in solitary confinement, face an extraordinary pressure on their psyche from being cut off from the outside world for so long. The tiny rural village,*

cut off from the world up in the mountains, developed a dialect and manner totally unique from the rest of the region. **2.** Figuratively, isolated from broad and/or meaningful outside engagement or interaction. *Their research, while promising, is flawed in that it is cut off from the outside world, so its effects on the greater population are only speculative at best. Art—good art, anyway—is never cut off from the world; it is totally enmeshed in the people and culture around it.*

cut-off point The limit beyond which no further action is permitted or possible. *I'm sorry to say that we've reached our cut-off point for accepting applications this year.*

cut off with a cent To be intentionally disinherited from a will by being bequeathed a single cent rather than left nothing at all. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *My father never liked that I gave up medicine to become a writer, and he cut me off with a cent when he died.*

cut off with a shilling To be intentionally disinherited from a will by being bequeathed a single shilling rather than left nothing at all. Primarily heard in UK. *My father never liked that I gave up medicine to become a writer, so he cut me off with a shilling when he died.*

cut one slang To pass gas (fart). *All right, who cut one in here?*

cut one another's throats Of a group or population of people, to be engaged in ferocious, pernicious competition with one another other. *It's a symptom of the society we live in that we're all trained to cut one another's throats just to earn a little bit more money. The majority of the economy is dominated by a few megacorporations, while all the smaller businesses are cutting one another's throats for what little market share is left over.*

cut one loose slang To pass gas (fart). *All right, who cut one loose in here?*

cut (one's) comb To humble someone who is acting arrogant. *If he brags about his straight A's one more time, I'm going to remind him how bad his grades were last year. That should cut his comb! I'm really proud of this accomplishment, so stop trying to cut my comb!*

cut (one's) eyeteeth To gain experience with something, especially at a young age (when one's teeth would be coming in). One's "eyeteeth" are the canines. *Oh, I cut my eyeteeth on those kinds of equations! Give me a*

challenging problem for a change! Jen may be young, but she cut her eyeteeth at a prestigious journal, so her perspective and expertise will be invaluable to us.

cut (one's) stick To leave hastily or abruptly. *Oh man, once I heard that dog barking, I cut my stick out of there! Did Amanda leave? Boy, she really cut her stick—she didn't even say goodbye to me!*

cut (one's) teeth To gain experience with something, especially at a young age (when one's teeth would be coming in). *Oh, I cut my teeth on those kinds of equations! Give me a challenging problem for a change! Jen may be young, but she cut her teeth at a prestigious journal, so her perspective and expertise will be invaluable to us.*

cut (one's) wisdom teeth To reach an age or state of maturity. *I think that we should hire an older, more experienced candidate, one who has already cut her wisdom teeth.*

cut out of whole cloth Completely fictional or utterly false; totally made up. A reference to tailors who would falsely advertise garments being "cut out of whole cloth," when in reality, they were pieced together from different cuts. *To be honest, I don't believe a word he says—it sounds cut out of whole cloth to me.*

cut (someone) loose To end a relationship with someone, often abruptly. A: "Wait, they fired you?" B: "Yes! They just cut me loose with no explanation!" *If he keeps calling me at all hours of the night, I'm going to have to cut him loose, I mean it!*

cut (someone) to pieces 1. To violently kill, severely maim, or incapacitate someone. *The soldier was cut to pieces by the roadside bomb. The devastating disease cut her to pieces.* 2. To completely overwhelm, defeat, or decimate. *The team's star striker has been cutting their defense to pieces. The recession has cut to pieces the hopes of many young and older workers alike.*

cut (someone's) throat To bring about or be the cause of someone's ruin, downfall, or failure. *That discount supermarket is cutting our throats, there's no way we can compete with their prices! Jim set out to cut his brother's throat after finding out that he'd been swindled.*

cut the funny stuff To stop joking or fooling around and be serious.

(Said as an imperative.) *The boss told us to cut the funny stuff and get ready for the meeting. All right kids, cut the funny stuff and open your books to page 53.*

cut the Gordian knot To solve a very challenging or daunting problem decisively. The phrase likely alludes to Gordius, the king of Phrygia, who tied a knot that an oracle proclaimed would only be cut by the future ruler of Asia. Alexander the Great allegedly cut the Gordian knot in one blow. A: *"Wait, Matt already solved that impossible equation?"* B: *"Yes! I have no idea how he did it, but he sure cut the Gordian knot."*

cut the ice To do something as a means of reducing or eliminating shyness, awkward tension, or unfamiliarity. A variant of the much more common expression, "break the ice." *I was so nervous about meeting Samantha's parents for the first time, but her dad immediately told a great joke to cut the ice, and we all got on very well. Everyone was deathly silent after John went ballistic and left the meeting. I tried cutting the ice with a joke, but it didn't help.*

cut the mustard 1. slang To work or operate in a satisfactory manner. The origin of this phrase is debated. *I need a new worker from the temp agency—the one you sent over keeps mixing up orders and just isn't cutting the mustard. This toaster doesn't cut the mustard anymore. No matter what setting you choose, your toast comes out charred!* 2. slang To work or act with energy and enthusiasm, as is characteristic of the young. *That guy looks like he's 110 years old—there's no way he'll be able to cut the mustard stocking shelves all day!*

cut the umbilical cord To strike out on one's own from an overly involved or suffocating relationship, usually between a parent and child. *I love my mom, I truly do, but she used to call me five times a day! I had to cut the umbilical cord! Geez Pete, you're 40 years old! It's time to cut the umbilical cord and stop living with your parents!*

cut ties with (someone) To end or discontinue a relationship—romantic or otherwise—with someone or some group. *Mary cut all ties with her family when she moved to New York City. The government began cutting ties with the war-torn country after its human rights atrocities came to light.*

cut to the bone 1. To cut or slice something deeply. A noun can be used between "cut" and "to." *Your arm is cut to the bone—you definitely need to*

go to the emergency room! Mom asked me to cut the meat to the bone. 2. To reduce or decrease something significantly. A noun can be used between "cut" and "to." The arts program at my alma mater has been cut to the bone. Our department needs to cut our spending to the bone this quarter.

cut to the pith (of something) To focus directly on the essential or core matter(s) of a given topic or issue. *Her newest book cuts to the pith of what it means to be human. We are looking for a reporter who will cut to the pith, not fluff their articles with unnecessary details or asides.*

cut your comb See [cut \(one's\) comb](#).

cut your eyeteeth See [cut \(one's\) eyeteeth](#).

cutie pie 1. A very cute, sweet, or darling person, often a child. (Can be hyphenated if used as a modifier before a noun.) *My goodness, your baby is such a cutie pie! Where did you find such a cutie-pie dress for your little girl?*

2. A term of endearment, especially for a child or loved one. *Good morning, cutie pie! What would you like for breakfast?*

cutthroat prices Extremely low prices (i.e., those that "cut the throats" of competitors by being impossible to beat). *They gained a huge foothold in the market by offering decent mid-range smartphones at cutthroat prices.*

cutting remark A remark or comment intended to injure the feelings of others. *Savita was ecstatic over her acceptance to law school, but John's cutting remark about her ability to succeed really undermined her confidence.*

cylinder head The metal casing that fits onto a cylinder block in an internal-combustion engine. *A: "Did dad say what's wrong with the car?" B: "I don't know, something about needing to fix the cylinder head, whatever that means!"*

D

dab **1.** noun A gesture or dance move in which one nods the head while covering the face with one arm bent at the elbow and the other arm held parallel and outstretched. *Doing the dab in the end zone is so 2016.* **2.** verb To perform such a move. *Nobody dabs anymore because it got too mainstream.*

dab on them folks An imperative to celebrate, boast, or show one's superiority by performing the dab, a gesture or dance move in which one nods the head while covering the face with one arm bent at the elbow and the other arm held parallel and outstretched. *Dab on them folks out there today! Nobody's stopping you!*

daisy chain **1.** noun Literally, a series of interwoven daisies, such as may be used for a garland. *The children all wove little daisy chains to wear to the Midsummer pageant.* **2.** noun Any series of interconnected events, experiences, happenings, or things. *Our lives, which seem so enclosed unto themselves, are really complex daisy chains of the interactions we have with people from the day we are born until the day we die.* **3.** noun In commerce, a series of securities transactions between companies intended to give the appearance of heavy active trading, thus attracting investors at an inflated price. *The three CEOs were found guilty of colluding to form a daisy chain, but not before they had swindled investors out of millions.* **4.** noun slang A group of three or more people engaged in simultaneous oral sexual activity. **5.** verb Of computers or their components, to connect or link together in a series so as to form a shared network. (Sometimes hyphenated.) *Our wireless Internet had a terrible connection on the second floor, so we daisy chained a second router to the main one downstairs. When the Internet went down, I had to daisy chain several laptops to my PC to access its files for the meeting.*

damage control The efforts made to reduce, negate, or counteract damage, loss, or any other unfavorable outcome. *The IT department was on serious damage control after it became apparent that our servers had been hacked. The senator has been doing damage control ever since he let slip*

racist remarks during a television interview.

damaged goods **1.** Literally, products that have become inferior or unsellable as the result of being damaged or impaired in some way. *They sold me damaged goods and wouldn't refund my money when I went to return them!* **2.** A person who is seen as emotionally or psychologically unstable as the result of some traumatic experience. (Possibly derogatory.) *Growing up with abusive parents has left me as damaged goods.* **3.** A person whose reputation has been damaged, corrupted, or tarnished. *The young CEO became damaged goods after news of his insider trading spread—now he can't even get a job flipping burgers.* **4.** dated, derogatory A woman who is considered unmarriageable or otherwise inferior due to having engaged in sexual intercourse before or outside of marriage. *I once thought that she was the fairest, purest woman in town, but now that I know she had illicit relations with another man, she is nothing but damaged goods to me.*

Dame Partington and her mop Someone staunchly opposed to progress or reform, even when it is inevitable. The phrase is thought to have originated from stories in 19th-century England of a woman who kept trying to get water out of her flooded home during a storm before finally evacuating. *I can't believe you're still fighting against that new tax! Stop being like Dame Partington and her mop and just accept change!*

damn by association To condemn, vilify, or discredit someone or something due to an association with a particular person, group, or thing. *The multinational corporation was damned by association when it came to light that an employee of one of its subsidiaries belonged to a white supremacist organization. After the terrorist attack, many people were quick to damn by association anyone who belonged to the same faith as the terrorists.*

damn Daniel slang A complimentary exclamation. The phrase originated in a Twitter video. *Damn Daniel! You look good in that leather jacket.*

damn right An exclamation showing agreement with something that has been said. Frequently used in the expression "you're damn right." A: "I think you're the best basketball player on the team." B: "Damn right!" A: "Are you really going to confront Zach about stealing your idea?" B: "You're damn right I am!"

damn the torpedoes To press on with a task or current course of action regardless of apparent risks or dangers. Attributed to David Farragut of

the United States Navy during the American Civil War, usually paraphrased as "Damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead!" The actual order (if it ever existed) was: "Damn the torpedoes! Four bells. Captain Drayton, go ahead! Jouett, full speed!" *I don't care that it might bankrupt the company! Damn the torpedoes and get it done already!*

damn Yankee A disparaging term for someone from the northern United States. The term was originally bestowed upon dishonest peddlers from the north who tried to deceive customers in the south. *Did that damn Yankee really just insult my home? Those northerners may think they're better than us southerners, but I'm going to set him straight right now!*

damned if (one) does and damned if (one) doesn't Said when one is faced with two undesirable options. *I'm damned if I do and damned if I don't—if I confess that I broke the vase, then my parents will be mad, and if I don't, then I'll feel guilty about it.* A: "Katie found out that I also asked Colleen to prom. Should I come clean with her?" B: "Man, you are damned if you do and damned if you don't!"

damp squib Someone or something that disappoints or does not meet expectations. *The film got a lot of hype, but I thought it was a bit of a damp squib.*

dance attendance (up)on (someone) To perform assiduously and obsequiously any task required or requested by someone. *After earning his fortune, he now has servants constantly dancing attendance on him. He's always dancing attendance upon us so that we'll let him hang out with us.*

dance on the razor's edge To do something risky or dangerous. *Please, you just like him because he's the bad boy who dances on the razor's edge with his motorcycle! I like to dance on the razor's edge sometimes and do things like skydive and bungee jump.*

dance the antic hay To lead a life of hedonism. The "hay" was a lively country dance that emerged in the 16th century. *Bill doesn't even have a job! He just parties all the time, dancing the antic hay without a care in the world!*

dance to (one's) tune To go along with someone else's views or wishes. *I have no intention of making Jake's curfew later, but he is trying his hardest to get me to dance to his tune! I'm not big on animals, but Ella is, so I danced to her tune and accompanied her to the dog show.*

dangly bits Slang for genitals. *Make sure you put on a jock strap before taking the field—your dangly bits will thank you!*

a Daniel come to judgement A person who is or has been able to wisely resolve a particularly difficult problem or dispute. Coined by Shakespeare in *The Merchant of Venice*, it alludes to the Biblical character Daniel, who was renowned for having excellent faculties of judgment. Primarily heard in UK. *The newly elected prime minister has been a Daniel come to judgement, finally brokering a peace between the two warring countries.*

DAPL An abbreviation for the "Dakota Access Pipeline," an oil pipeline traveling through the Dakotas and Iowa to Illinois. The project gained notoriety for its planned use of Native American grounds in North Dakota. Primarily heard in US. *The DAPL has become a lightning rod for environmental activism.*

daring do See [derring-do](#).

dark cloud on the horizon An omen that something bad or problematic will happen in the near future. *Financial analysts believe that the sudden drop in oil prices points to a dark cloud on the horizon for the national economy.*

dark days Times of extreme misfortune or difficulty. *The company struggled on through some dark days several years ago, but it has since established itself as a dominant force in the market. With the population increasing exponentially, the environment crumbling, and world economies so unstable, I fear there are some truly dark days ahead.*

dark horse 1. Someone who unexpectedly wins a competition. *Nobody thought Cheri could win the race after breaking her leg last year, but she turned out to be a dark horse and took first place. No one thought the brash newcomer would be a threat to the established candidates, but he's turning out to be a real dark horse in this campaign.* 2. Someone who surprises others with their skills or talents. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *Angela was suddenly viewed as a dark horse when she displayed her beautiful sculptures at the art fair. Nobody knew she had such artistic talent.*

darken a church door To attend church or a service therein. *I was raised Catholic, but I haven't darkened a church door since I was 15 years*

old.

darning needle A regional term for a dragonfly. Primarily heard in US. *I hate going to the lake, what with all those darning needles and other bugs constantly flying into me!*

dart around To move quickly and erratically. *It's impossible to keep an eye on all the kids when they're darting around the park like this!*

dash off (somewhere) To quickly and suddenly leave (to some place). *I'm just going to dash off to the pub for a quick pint. She dashed off as soon as the exam was finished.*

date rape 1. noun Forced sexual intercourse perpetrated against the victim while on a date or other social outing. *The reported number of date rapes is horrific, but it pales in comparison to how many go unreported each year.* 2. verb To force sexual intercourse upon someone during the course of a date or other social outing. *The survey found that many men who date rape are meticulously conscious about how they go about it.*

date with destiny A future event, circumstance, or situation that will or could prove to be of momentous significance or importance. *Having tried unsuccessfully to appeal his verdict for four years, he now has a date with destiny in front of the US Supreme Court.*

dat's da brakes See [that's the breaks](#).

dawn of a new day A new or fresh beginning, or a turning point that achieves as much. *With their first democratically elected leader in office, many in the nation felt that it was the dawn of a new day.*

day and age The current time period. Typically used in the phrase "in this day and age." *A child can't walk home from school alone in this day and age—it's too dangerous!*

the day hell freezes over See [be the day hell freezes over](#).

day in, day out, every day without fail A phrase used to describe something that happens routinely or regularly. *Day in, day out, every day without fail, I pass that same woman walking her dog. My mom started driving us to school because we would miss the bus day in, day out, every day without fail.*

a day late and a dollar short Too late to be of any benefit. *Jake*

tried to repair his relationship with his girlfriend after forgetting her birthday, but she viewed his efforts as a day late and a dollar short.

day of doom **1.** The end of the world; judgment day. *Every year, another nut job comes on the air, talking about how we're coming close to the day of doom and that we must all repent our sins.* **2.** By extension, any moment characterized by catastrophe, disaster, or complete ruination. *The day of doom in my life was the day my daughter was killed by a drunk driver. It was a day of doom on Wall Street, as the property bubble burst and the economy plummeted to historic lows.*

day or night At any point in time; 24 hours a day. *You know you can always talk to me about your problems. Call me day or night, it doesn't matter.*

day out A trip, journey, or visit somewhere away from home for the day. *I'm really looking forward to our day out at the beach on Saturday.*

days gone by A time that has passed. A bygone era. *I might be a successful businessman now, but in days gone by, I was a slacker college student just like you!*

days of yore A time in the past or of a bygone era, especially one remembered nostalgically. Can be used ironically to mock such sentiment. *In days of yore, people had to rely on their own hands for the food on their table, not the massively processed food we get from the supermarket nowadays. Many people long for a time gone past when societal roles were clearly defined. They fail to remember, though, that in such days of yore, horrible inequality was rife.*

de-friend See [defriend](#).

dead air **1.** A period of unwanted silence during a television or radio broadcast caused by an unintended interruption or malfunction. *A technical glitch during the Super Bowl led to several ads being replaced by a blank, silent screen, dead air that may cost those companies thousands—if not millions—of dollars.* **2.** By extension, any period of awkward or uncomfortable silence. *A horrible dead air hung over the room after Jonas finished reading his poetry to the crowd.*

dead asleep In a deep, immovable sleep. *I was dead asleep after my 12-hour shift; I didn't even hear the neighbor's car alarm going off!*

dead beat adjective Totally exhausted or fatigued. (Not to be confused with "deadbeat," a lazy, feckless, and/or negligent person.) *I was dead beat after working my third 12-hour shift in a row.*

dead duck 1. A person or thing that is useless or hopeless. *That new budget bill was a dead duck before it hit the Senate. That mechanic turned out to be a dead duck. He didn't even know how to change my oil.* 2. Someone who is about to be in a great deal of trouble for something they have done. *When Mom finds out you snuck out of the house to meet your boyfriend, you're going to be a dead duck!*

dead end 1. noun A road that leads nowhere. *I knew my GPS was wrong when it told me to turn onto a road that came to a dead end.* 2. adjective Prohibitive of progress or advancement. (Sometimes hyphenated.) *Jerry decided he couldn't spend another minute working at that dead end job with no possibility for a promotion. The police received a lot of dead-end leads, but nothing that led them to the killer.*

dead horse 1. Something—especially an issue or topic—that is no longer of any use or relevance (as used in the phrase "beat/flog a dead horse"). *The President's pledge to overhaul the education system became something of a dead horse after the economy crashed. We've all moved on from that problem, so there's no use beating a dead horse.* 2. dated A seaman who incurs debt for wages paid in advance. *Countless men became dead horses on their ships, trapped paying off debts that were in themselves incurred to pay off other debts, in an endless cycle.*

dead last In last place, especially by a wide margin, as for a race or other competition. *I didn't train at all for that marathon, so I guess it's no wonder I finished dead last.*

dead letter 1. A letter that is unable to be delivered to the recipient or returned to the sender. *The post office must destroy a dead letter if it can't be delivered or returned after a certain period of time.* 2. An existing law or agreement that is no longer obeyed or enforced. *The state's Sunday law is a dead letter as many stores open and conduct business on that day.*

dead man A man who is certain to die or be killed, often used in or as a threat. *You're a dead man if you tell anyone what happened here today!*

dead man walking 1. A (male) prisoner on death row who is walking

to the place of execution. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *It's been my duty to accompany each dead man walking as he takes his last steps in this world.* **2.** By extension, any man who is in great trouble or difficulty and is certain to face punishment, especially the loss of a job. *John really screwed up that business deal; I'd say he's a dead man walking at this point. I lost all of our savings in the casino last night—I'm a dead man walking.* **3.** Any man who is near death or certain to die. *They just discovered that I've got cancer, and it's already spread to my lymph nodes—I'm a dead man walking. Don't worry about him, he's a dead man walking; we'll make sure that stool pigeon never talks.*

dead men's shoes A position or entitlement that will only be achieved by someone's death. Derived from the proverb, "It's ill waiting for dead men's shoes." *Dead men's shoes are about the only high-paying positions one can hope for in these tough economic times.*

dead 'n' buried A colloquial conjunction of "dead and buried," meaning (literally) dead and interred in the ground or (figuratively) forever gone or done away with. *With the old man dead 'n' buried, I'm the only one to look after the farm now. My love for you is dead 'n' buried, so don't come bothering me anymore.*

dead of night The middle of the night. *Why are you calling me in the dead of night? Can't this wait till morning?*

dead on target **1.** Precisely aimed, as of a shot or throw. *His shot was dead on target from nearly midfield, placed perfectly in the corner of the goal. That pitcher has been throwing dead on target all game, striking out nearly every batter.* **2.** Exactly correct or to the intended point. *I think her speech was dead on target about what this country needs to prioritize for the future.*

dead on the vine See [be dead on the vine](#).

dead ringer A person or thing that bears a strong resemblance to someone or something else. *Susie was such a dead ringer for Kate Winslet that sometimes people would ask her for her autograph.*

dead-stick landing The landing of an air or space craft without power (i.e., one whose control stick is "dead"). (Also written as "deadstick landing.") *After the storm knocked out both of the plane's engines, the pilot was forced to performed a harrowing dead-stick landing.*

dead tired Totally exhausted or fatigued. *I was dead tired after working my third 12-hour shift in a row.*

dead-tree edition A copy of a written work printed on paper (i.e., the product of "dead" trees), especially that which is also available in a digital format. *With everything available online these days, it's a wonder anyone would pay for the dead-tree edition.*

dead-tree format A copy of a written work printed on paper (i.e., the product of "dead" trees), especially that which is also available in a digital format. *With everything available online these days, it's a wonder anyone would pay for the dead-tree format.*

dead-tree press Newspapers that are printed on paper or print journalism in general. *With the ubiquity and low cost of digital publishing, the dead-tree press is becoming increasingly irrelevant. Why do you waste your money on the dead-tree press when the news is available online for free?*

dead weight **1.** The weight of someone who is sleeping, unconscious, or intentionally limp, making them more difficult to move or carry than they would be otherwise. *Jamie struggled with the dead weight of her sleeping 10-year-old son when she tried to carry him to bed.* **2.** A burden that holds someone or something else back or prevents progress; someone or something that when handled or associated with conveys only difficulty and not benefit. *You've been dead weight this entire road trip. You've just sat there without driving or paying for gas or anything! All those empty containers are dead weight. We're going to have to jettison them if we want to have enough fuel to make it back.*

deadbeat dad Slang A father who is not involved in the lives of his child(ren), physically and/or monetarily. *Don't be a deadbeat dad, Sean—go see your kids this weekend! I'm no deadbeat dad, I make all of my child support payments!*

deaf as an adder Unable to hear anything. The deafness of an adder is referred to in the Bible. A: *"I'm shouting, and he's ignoring me!"* B: *"Oh, he's deaf as an adder! Write down whatever you're trying to communicate to him." What are you, deaf as an adder? You hear me calling you for dinner, so get in here!*

deafening silence A conspicuous and striking lack of noise or sound. *Jim's proposal was met with deafening silence at the meeting. After living in the city all my life, I can't stand the deafening silence of the countryside.*

deal (one) in To include one in something. Often used in the imperative "deal me in." The phrase originated in card games, in which cards are distributed among the players by "dealing" them. *If you guys are playing poker in there, deal me in! Bobby really wants to be involved in this project, so deal him in too.*

dealbreaker A specific issue or thing that will cause an agreement, deal, or relationship to fail or be terminated. *He told me he never wanted to have kids, which is a dealbreaker for me, so we decided to end the relationship then and there. The insurgency's insistence on maintaining a political presence was a dealbreaker for the truce negotiations.*

Dear John letter A letter sent, typically from a woman to a man, to end a romantic relationship. *Mike was clearly upset when he received a Dear John letter from his girlfriend, Caroline. He thought their relationship was going well and didn't expect it to end so suddenly. Mail call was usually a happy time in the military barracks, except for the unlucky soldiers who got Dear John letters from their sweethearts back home.*

death blow **1.** A hit or impact that causes immediate death. *The warrior swiftly dealt a death blow to his adversary on the battlefield.* **2.** An event that causes the abrupt end of something. *His arrest and subsequent conviction was a death blow to his successful career as an attorney. Despite the company's recent success, the massive recall proved to be its death blow.*

death by spell check The negative outcome after one submits a written work that contains a critical error or errors, due to reliance on a word processor's imperfect spell checker function. *Many job seekers suffer death by spell check after submitting a résumé riddled with errors.*

death spiral **1.** In aviation, a dangerous downward cork-screw maneuver of a disabled or uncontrollable aircraft that often leads to a crash. Also called a "spiral dive." *The pilot, unaware of the plane's slight roll in the cloud bank, only realized he was in a death spiral when it was too late to overcome the dive.* **2.** In pairs figure skating, a maneuver in which the male partner, in a pivot position, spins the female partner with one hand in a wide circle with her body nearly parallel to the ground. *The two pulled off an amazing death*

spiral—her head looked as though it were about to touch the ice at one point!

3. In insurance (especially health insurance), a plan in which costs rapidly increase over time due to policyholders with a lower risk opting out of the policy, forcing those dependent on it to pay higher premiums, thus prompting more low-risk policy holders to opt out and further drive up costs, and so on. *I purchased my health insurance plan as a means to afford my medicine, but it turned into a death spiral when employers started offering cheaper, barebones plans that the majority of people were quick to switch to.*

4. In finance, a loan given by investors to a company in exchange for convertible bonds, which can then be converted to common stock at prices lower than the market value, causing overall share prices to fall and more bondholders to trade their stock for equity, ultimately leading to a collapse of the company's stock worth altogether. *To keep his company afloat, Tom was forced to take a loan that ultimately proved a death spiral, leading him to close the business anyway.*

5. Any situation in which a series of events or actions, especially as a consequence of one another, ultimately lead to a point of ruin, failure, or destruction. *With the recent allegations of drug abuse, corruption charges, and controversial remarks about minorities, the long-time senator now seems locked into an irreversible death spiral.*

death toll The number of deaths that have occurred after some major deadly event, such as an accident, act of violence, or natural disaster. *The death toll of the conflict between the two countries is well over 2,000 people as of this morning.*

death trap Something, usually a building, vehicle, or road, that is considered to be very dangerous. *Between the worn brake pads and the loose steering wheel, that car is a death trap. The house was in such bad condition that the contractor wouldn't allow his workers inside because he thought it was a death trap.*

death warmed over See [like death warmed over](#).

death warmed up A state or appearance of extreme ill health. (Often preceded by "look like" or "feel like.") A: "You had a lot to drink last night. How are you feeling this morning?" B: "Like death warmed up." You look like death warmed up, I think you should see a doctor!

death warmed up See [like death warmed up](#).

deathbed conversion The adoption of a particular religion when one's

death is near. A: "I didn't know Rita was Catholic." B: "She wasn't, not until her deathbed conversion." I see a lot of deathbed conversions when I work in the hospital—people seem to need religion especially as they near the end of their lives.

debris field An area in which debris, e.g., from a wreckage, demolition, explosion, etc., is scattered. *Investigators are still inspecting the debris field from the downed passenger plane for clues to its sudden crash.*

debt to nature A euphemism for death. *When I'm ready to pay my debt to nature, I hope I'm surrounded by my family.*

decimal dozen Ten. Refers to a packaging design for a carton of ten wine bottles arranged in two rows of five. Primarily heard in Australia, New Zealand. *Would you go down to the bottle shop and pick up a decimal dozen of wine for the party tonight?*

deep dive A thorough analysis, perhaps one that seems excessive or unwarranted for a particular topic. *When you get a chance, check out the magazine's deep dive on the upcoming vote. It covers every angle. Wow, they really did a deep dive on eye shadow in that article. It was 20 pages long!*

deep down At the centermost point of one's feelings or convictions. *Deep down inside, I knew that what I did was wrong. I tried to put on a brave face after the breakup, but deep down I was in agony. He acts like a jerk most of the time, but deep down I think Nate is a good guy.*

deep down inside At the centermost point of one's emotions or convictions. *Deep down inside, I knew that what I did was wrong. I tried to put on a brave face after the breakup, but deep down inside I was in agony.*

(deep) in the weeds 1. Of a restaurant worker, completely overwhelmed with diners' orders and unable to keep up with the pace. *I was all alone waiting tables during Sunday brunch, so I got in the weeds almost immediately. Even with a full staff, Friday was so busy that we were deep in the weeds for most of the night.* 2. Overwhelmed with problems, troubles, or difficulties. *We were starting to get deep in the weeds on the lead up to the software's unveiling, but we managed to make up some lost ground in the last couple of weeks. My relationship with Joanna has been in the weeds lately.* 3. Totally immersed in or preoccupied with the details or complexities (of something). *I'd like to come out tonight, but I'm deep in the weeds with my thesis.*

(deep) into the weeds **1.** Of a restaurant worker, completely overwhelmed with diners' orders and unable to keep up with the pace. *I was all alone waiting tables during Sunday brunch, so I got into the weeds almost immediately. Even with a full staff, Friday was so busy that we were deep into the weeds for most of the night.* **2.** Overwhelmed with problems, troubles, or difficulties. *We were starting to fall deep into the weeds on the lead up to the software's unveiling, but we managed to make up some lost ground in the last couple of weeks. My relationship with Joanna has been getting into the weeds lately.* **3.** Totally immersed or preoccupied with the details or complexities (of something). *I'd like to come out tonight, but I'm deep into the weeds with my thesis.*

deep sleep A sound slumber. *Good luck waking Eric when he's in a deep sleep—five alarms couldn't get that guy moving! I feel much better now that I've had a deep sleep for the first time all week!*

deep thinker A person who has remarkably intelligent or profound thoughts. *My grandfather wasn't a fighting man, he was a deep thinker; he tried to understand the cause of a problem, not attack it.*

deep water An overwhelming situation in which one has taken on more responsibility than one can handle or is facing more trouble or danger than expected. *I've been in deep water ever since I volunteered to lead this committee—it has been so much more work than I anticipated. I thought I could make some easy cash by selling drugs, but now I'm in deep water with some big-time thugs.*

deep, dark secret A piece of information that is extremely private and confidential, usually implied to be embarrassing, incriminating, or shameful. *I've carried my fear of clowns as a deep, dark secret for many years now. Many saw her as a perfect candidate, but no one could have known she had a deep, dark secret from her past.*

deer-in-headlights (Used before a noun.) Of a paralyzed manner or appearance, as due to surprise, fear, shock, or bewilderment. Likened to the tendency of deer to freeze in place in front of an oncoming vehicle. *He had this dopey deer-in-headlights look on his face when I asked him where the money had gone.*

deer in the headlights See [like a deer in \(the\) headlights](#).

deer in the headlights Someone caught in a state of paralyzing surprise, fear, or bewilderment. Likened to the tendency of deer to freeze in place in front of an oncoming vehicle. Often used in the phrase "like a deer in the headlights." *Mary turned into a deer in the headlights when she forgot her lines in the middle of the play. He froze like a deer in the headlights when I caught him taking money out of the register. When she asked me to marry her, I could only stand there like a deer in the headlights.*

Deflategate A controversy that began after the New England Patriots' were accused of having used under-inflated footballs during the 2015 AFC Championship Game, a move thought to have given them and quarterback Tom Brady an advantage by making the balls easier to grip. *A lot of New England fans are still salty about Deflategate.*

defriend To delete a friend from one's network on a social media site. *I can't believe he defriended me just because I disagreed with an article he posted.*

defuse (something) To settle, calm, or make less dangerous an extremely tense, hostile, or volatile situation. Likened to removing the fuse from or otherwise disabling a bomb. *The shouting match between the two employees was getting increasingly aggressive, so the boss was brought in to defuse the situation. A special United Nations envoy was sent to defuse the conflict between the warring sects.*

Delhi belly Diarrhea contracted while traveling abroad—especially in India—due to being unaccustomed to the local cuisine and quality of water. *It would have been a great trip if it weren't for the Delhi belly I had towards the end.*

deliver the message to Garcia To show initiative in undertaking important or requisite tasks in the face of difficulties and/or without requiring specific instructions on how to do so. It refers to the essay "Message to Garcia," published in 1899 by Elbert Hubbard, in which a lieutenant named Andrew Rowan undertakes establishing communication with Cuban rebel leader Calixto García to create an alliance in case of war with Spain. *One should always aspire to be the type of employee who will deliver the message to Garcia, for it says more about you than merely doing what you're told.*

dem are da brakes See [them's the breaks](#).

deny (one)self To deprive oneself of something. *I'm denying myself desserts right now, while I'm on this diet.*

depart from this world To die; to pass on to the afterlife. *Our role is to contribute something positive to others before we depart from this world, in whatever way possible.*

depart this life To die; to leave this life (i.e., to pass on to some form of the afterlife). *Our role is to contribute something positive to others before we depart this life, in whatever way possible.*

department of the bleeding obvious See [from the Department of the Bleeding Obvious](#).

the depths of See [in the depths of \(something\)](#).

dereliction of duty An intentional and egregious failure to perform one's required duty or uphold one's responsibility. *The coach was fired for a dereliction of duty when he failed to report the incident.*

derring-do Heroic, brave, or daring deeds or spirit, especially when referring to swordplay or other action-adventure scenarios. *The sailor, with great derring-do, leapt from the crow's nest of the ship with his sword in his teeth, pouncing on the pirate captain.*

deserving cause A cause that merits attention, aid, or action due to an inherent goodness of values or intention. *The lawyer decided to waive her fees because she felt that the young man's case was a deserving cause.*

designated driver A person who stays sober during a social gathering and is responsible for safely driving others from one location to another. *Since Kara never drinks alcohol, she always offers to be the designated driver for her friends.*

desk jockey A worker who spends the majority of their time seated at a desk. Humorously likened to the jockey of a horse. *I was breaking my back working construction for five years before I finally got a job as a desk jockey at the local bank. I feel sorry for all those desk jockeys trapped inside for eight hours a day.*

desperate measures Extreme and undesirable actions taken as a solution to a problem that cannot be resolved by ordinary means. *With his job gone and debt mounting, John was forced to take desperate measures to keep*

his home.

desperate times call for desperate measures Extreme and undesirable circumstances or situations can only be resolved by resorting to equally extreme actions. Derived from the proverb, "Desperate diseases must have desperate remedies." *I know that the austerity measures introduced by the government during the recession are unpopular, but desperate times call for desperate measures.*

desperate times require desperate measures Extreme and undesirable circumstances or situations can only be resolved by resorting to equally extreme actions. Derived from the proverb, "Desperate diseases must have desperate remedies." *I know that the austerity measures introduced by the government during the recession are unpopular, but desperate times require desperate measures.*

detached from reality Psychologically, emotionally, or intellectually separated from the outside world or from realistic, logical thought. *When my mental illness was at its worst, I became completely detached from reality. The council's plan to build an interstate through the middle of town is just nonsense, it's completely detached from reality!*

detached from the (outside) world Psychologically, emotionally, intellectually, or physically separated from the people, influence, or average thinking of the outside world. *He just keeps to himself, never talking to anyone, like he's detached from the world. He builds all of his policies from theory and what he studied in books—it's all completely detached from the outside world. The tiny rural village, totally detached from the outside world, developed a dialect and manner totally unique to the rest of the region.*

detective work The act of investigating something. It can be applied to both serious and trivial situations. *Nice detective work—I had a feeling Caitlin broke the vase, and now I know for sure. I'm doing my own detective work now, going through security footage to try to see who stole the car.*

deus ex machina 1. A god in an ancient Greek or Roman play that suddenly appears in the storyline in order to solve a problem or decide an outcome. The Latin phrase translates to "god from a machine," referring to the machinery that lowered it onto the stage. *The ancient Greek play makes use of a deus ex machina in which Apollo arrives on stage to restore order among the other characters.* 2. An ending in a performance or story that

seems too contrived to be believable to the audience. *Modern critics often pan 1980s-era television shows for the typical deus ex machina that writers often used to neatly wrap up episodes.*

devil in disguise Something or someone that appears to be good, useful, or benevolent, but that in reality proves to be the opposite. *When I first met my ex-husband, I thought he was the nicest, most generous man alive, but he turned out to be the devil in disguise. The new cancer-treating drug held great promise, but it proved a devil in disguise when the true scale of its side effects became known.*

the devil is in the detail(s) Plans, actions, or situations that seem sound must be carefully examined, because minor details can end up causing major, unforeseen problems. *Double check your code—with software, the devil is in the details.*

the devil looks after his own A phrase used to explain how good things can happen to bad people. A: *"I can't believe that jerk still got a promotion even after he plagiarized my work."* B: *"Well, the devil looks after his own."*

the devil's own luck Extremely good luck. *I can't believe I won the lottery and a radio contest in the same week—I have the devil's own luck!*

dial back To lessen something, especially in intensity. *I could barely move my arms all week—I guess it's time to dial back the workouts!*

dial down To lessen something, especially in intensity. *I could barely move my arms all week—I guess it's time to dial down the workouts!*

diamond in the rough A person or thing with exceptional qualities or characteristics that cannot be seen from the surface. *The new employee initially seemed to lack confidence, but after seeing how hard he works, we realized that he's a diamond in the rough and is really a great asset to the company.*

dick all vulgar slang Nothing, or close to nothing. *I hate coming back to my hometown, there's dick all to do around here!*

dick measuring contest vulgar slang A petty competition among individuals (usually men) who are trying to prove that they are better at something than the others. *You're all good golfers, OK? Now can we please stop this ridiculous dick measuring contest? I hate how these political*

debates always seem to turn into a dick measuring contest, with each candidate trying to outdo the others.

Dick Tracy Jocular slang for someone investigating something (often something trivial). A reference to the hard-nosed detective in the comic strip of the same name. *Hey Dick Tracy, what do you think you're doing, snooping around here?*

Dick Turpin Slang for a person who one is jokingly accusing of theft. A reference to a notorious robber in 18th-century England. *I see you rummaging around in my purse, Dick Turpin! All of my money better still be in there!*

dicky bird See [not \(hear\) a dicky bird](#).

dictated but not read Copied into text through dictation but not written or proofread by the author. (Sometimes shortened to "dictated, not read.") Used as a warning that said text requires extra attention, as it may not read exactly as intended by the author. *It always aggravates me to receive a letter marked as "dictated but not read"—if a person wants to write something to me, the least they could do is check it beforehand to make sure it's correct!*

didn't bat an eyelash See [bat an eyelash](#).

didn't bat an eyelid See [bat an eyelid](#).

didn't care two pence See [not care twopence](#).

didn't do a stroke See [not do a stroke \(of work\)](#).

didn't feel myself See [not feel oneself](#).

didn't get a wink of sleep See [not get a wink of sleep](#).

didn't give a tuppence See [not give \(a\) tuppence](#).

didn't give two pence See [not give twopence](#).

didn't have all day See [not have all day](#).

didn't have much between the ears See [not have much between the ears](#).

didn't have two nickels to rub together See [not have two nickels to rub together](#).

didn't have two pennies to rub together See [not have two](#)

[pennies to rub together.](#)

didn't know her from a bar of soap See [not know \(someone\) from a bar of soap.](#)

didn't matter a tuppence See [not matter tuppence.](#)

didn't matter two pence See [not matter twopence.](#)

didn't open her mouth See [not open \(one's\) mouth.](#)

didn't say boo See [not say boo \(to anyone\).](#)

didn't sleep a wink See [not sleep a wink.](#)

didn't take it lightly See [not take \(something\) lightly.](#)

die for want of lobster sauce To literally die or to be devastated due to a minor inconvenience or mishap. The phrase is thought to refer to a chef who committed suicide after discovering that he didn't have the ingredients to make lobster sauce for a banquet for King Louis XIV. *I know you're really upset about not getting the lead in the school play, but I think you dying for want of lobster sauce—I mean, you still got a great role!*

die in harness To die while still actively working or still of the age or physical condition to do so (i.e., before retirement). *With medicine and healthcare improving at such vast rates, far fewer people die in harness than ever before.*

die like Roland To die from hunger or thirst. The phrase refers to Roland, a legendary French hero who is thought to have survived the battle of Roncesvalles, only to die of starvation and thirst while crossing the Pyrenees in 778 CE. *Come on, man, if we don't stop for food and drinks soon, I'm going to die like Roland! A: "Can't you hear my stomach growling?" B: "All right, all right, we'll take a dinner break so you don't die like Roland!"*

die on the vine 1. Literally (of fruit), to shrivel and die before being harvested, due to neglect or lack of resources. *With the horrible drought we've had this summer, nearly all of the fruit in my orchards died on the vine. You forgot to water my tomato plant! Now they've all died on the vine!* 2. By extension, to fail prematurely or not come to fruition, as due to being ignored, neglected, impractical, or without the necessary means to succeed. *The president made sweeping promises during his campaign, but many of those have died on the vine. Many of the resources for students with learning*

disabilities have died on the vine following the school board's budget cuts.

die with (one's) boots on To die while still actively working or in the age or physical condition to do so (i.e., before retirement). *The thought of growing old depresses me. I'd rather die with my boots on.*

different ball of wax Something completely dissimilar. *It's one thing to babysit your friends' kids from time to time, but having your own children is a completely different ball of wax.*

a different kettle of fish See [be a different kettle of fish](#).

dig in (one's) heels To cling stubbornly to one's beliefs or wishes. *Please let me tell my side of the story before you dig in your heels on this, OK? Well, I told Grace she can't go, and now she's dug in her heels as if this party is the most important thing in her life.*

dig it To understand, approve of, or enjoy something. *We're going to start a true people's campaign, for the people, by the people—you dig it? Avant-garde theater isn't to everyone's taste, but I really dig it, personally.*

dig (one's) own grave To do something that has or will have negative consequences that are easily able to be foreseen. *If you don't turn in your project, you're digging your own grave. There's no way you'll get a decent grade without it! I'm afraid I'm digging my own grave by turning down the promotion.*

dig (oneself) an early grave To do things or act in a way that is likely to result in one's premature death. *You're going to dig yourself an early grave if you keep drinking as much as you do now.*

dig (someone) To like (romantically or otherwise), understand, or approve of someone. *A: "OK, you understand everything I told you?" B: "Yeah, I dig you man." I'm going to ask Cynthia out on a date tonight, I really dig her.*

dig (someone) an early grave To do things or act in a way that is likely to result in someone's premature death. *The stress of John's job is going to dig him an early grave.*

dig (someone or oneself) out of a hole To find a solution to or help recover from a particularly difficult situation, especially one created by a mistake, misfortune, or ill judgment. *The line cooks had a huge amount of orders to fill, so the manager helped them plate the food to dig them out of a*

hole. My little brother is always getting in trouble with the law, and it's always me who has to go dig him out of a hole! We made a few bad investments last year, and we've been digging ourselves out of a hole ever since.

dig (something) To understand, approve of, or enjoy something. *I really dig this music, man! I dig the way you stood up to that bully.*

dig this Check this out; have a look at this; listen to this. *We all have fingerprints, but dig this: we all have unique tongue prints too! Whoa, dig this old Cadillac! It must be worth a fortune!*

dim bulb An unintelligent or slow-witted person. *I explained this to you not once, but three times! Are you just a dim bulb, or what?*

dimber damber upright man obsolete slang The leader of a band of thieves, miscreants, or gypsies. *He walked through the town, this dimber damber upright man, quietly marking people as targets for his band of rogues who lurked in the shadows.*

dime a dozen Ubiquitous; so abundant or common as to hold little or no value. *In Los Angeles, waiters trying to become famous actors are a dime a dozen. That bird might be a rare sight where you come from, but around here they're a dime a dozen.*

dime's worth of difference A miniscule, insignificant, or indiscernible amount of difference. Often used in the negative for extra emphasis. *There isn't a dime's worth of difference between the two candidates—they're both crooks, in my opinion. You can holler all you like, it won't make a dime's worth of difference.*

diminishing returns 1. In economics, a yield rate (i.e., of profits, production, benefits, etc.) that fails to grow in proportion to the amount of investment, skill, time, or effort that is added. *The restaurant, to combat high volumes of customers, hired a large surplus of wait staff and cooks. This led to diminishing returns, however, as the overcrowded staff was far less efficient and eventually cost the restaurant more in wages than it was earning.* 2. By extension, any output or results (e.g., of a product, project, organization, etc.) that fail to increase proportionally to additional time, money, skill, or effort. *Unfortunately, the show's charm has not lasted, and the infusion of zanier plots has created diminishing returns in terms of quality.*



dine out on (something) **1.** To be invited to a social meal (especially dinner) because of something particularly interesting or entertaining that one knows or has experienced. *He dined out on the story of his affair with the movie star for several months.* **2.** To entertain other people, especially at a meal, with a particularly interesting story of something one has experienced. *I always dine out on the story of our mishaps in Bavaria—to this day, it still puts people in stitches!*

dine with Duke Humphrey To go without dinner. The phrase refers to the story of a man who, while visiting the tomb of Duke Humphrey of Gloucester, was locked in the abbey—and thus missed dinner. A: "Why are you so hungry? Didn't you eat dinner?" B: "No, I got stuck in a meeting, so I dined with Duke Humphrey!"

dip into the blue euphemism To say something obscene. *I'm sorry, I didn't mean to dip into the blue there—the whole situation just makes me so angry! Poor Bobby couldn't stop blushing after he accidentally dipped into the blue while talking to my grandparents.*

dip (one's) toe in the water To tentatively begin or get involved in a new experience. Likened to gently placing one's toe into water to test its temperature. *I'm terrified that people won't like my writing, but I've been dipping my toe in the water at a local writer's club to get a sense of it. I've always preferred to dive right into new experiences, rather than just dipping a toe in the water, but everyone is different, I suppose.*

dip (one's) toe into (something) To tentatively begin or get involved in a new experience. Likened to gently placing one's toe into water to test its temperature. *I studied graphic design in college, but I've been dipping my toe into writing fiction lately. I've always wanted to travel the world, but I've never left the US. I'll dip my toe into it this summer, though, with a short trip to Toronto.*

dip out **1.** To leave a place quickly, suddenly, and/or inconspicuously. *The lecture was so boring that I just dipped out when the professor wasn't looking.* **2.** To miss out on or choose not to participate in something. (Usually followed by "on.") Primarily heard in Australia, New Zealand. *Many students end up dipping out on government funding for third-level education because they simply don't understand the application process. I think I'll dip out on that party this evening, I'd rather just stay at home.* **3.** To fail an exam or

course at school. Primarily heard in Australia, New Zealand. *Jonathan was eager to leave school, but he dipped out in his final exams and had to repeat the year.* **4.** To exit due to a failure to advance, as from a sports tournament. *Though heavily favored to win the championship for a third straight year, the team dipped out after only the second round.*

diplomatic flu 1. A feigned claim of ill health used as a means of avoiding or absenting oneself from a political engagement of some kind. *The senator's conspicuous absence from the debate was put down to the sudden contraction of a virus, but it is likely just a diplomatic flu so that he will not be forced to address recent allegations of tax fraud.* **2.** By extension, any claim of ill health used as an excuse to avoid an unpleasant or undesirable situation. *Frustrated by her dead-end job, Janet contracted a diplomatic flu to takes some time off and reexamine her priorities.*

direct message A form of private communication on social media sites or Internet forums. It is most commonly used as a verb. *Direct message me if you have any questions. If you don't want everyone to see it, send a direct message instead of posting it.*

dirt file A list or record of one's failures, poor decisions, bad behavior, or other negative facts or rumors. *The recent drug scandal is just another item on the governor's growing dirt file.*

dirt nap A state of death or permanent cessation. *He's got a lot of nerve to talk to me like that! I think he's looking for a dirt nap! The popular television show now appears headed for a dirt nap following the exit of its lead star.*

dirty cop A corrupt or unethical police officer, such as one who accepts bribes, falsifies reports, or abuses the power of their authority for personal gain. *There are so many dirty cops in this town that the police are now more dangerous than the criminals. With a number of dirty cops on their payroll, the mafia organization has been eluding prosecution for years.*

dirty joke A joke, story, or anecdote characterized by lewd, smutty, or otherwise indecent subject matter. *My grandmother was the sweetest old lady imaginable, but she had this curious fondness for telling dirty jokes.*

dirty linen One's personal, intimate, or private matters or secrets, especially that which may be embarrassing if made public. From the expression "don't wash/air your dirty linen in public." *Those who consider running for public office must be aware that their dirty linen is likely to be*

exposed to the public. David is such a gossip, always talking about other people's dirty linen.

dirty money Money that is obtained or earned through illicit or illegal means, especially thievery, bribery, forgery, or money laundering. *He went from being dirt-poor to being a multimillionaire in just a few years, but given his shady associations, I'd say most of that is dirty money. It was only after I started doing the accountancy for the company that I realized a large amount of dirty money was being filtered through our accounts.*

dirty old man An older man who is deliberately outspoken when it comes to sexual topics, to the point of making others uncomfortable. *Bob is always making lewd comments to the younger women at work. He's such a dirty old man.*

dirty trick An action used for one's benefit that is unethical or dishonest. *Every election cycle, the competing candidates always accuse each other of dirty tricks. I really wish you had been honest with me from the start about causing damage to my car. Blaming the neighbor was a real dirty trick.*

dirty weekend A secret getaway in which two unmarried people leave town to have sex. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *When Dana and Harry both skipped work on Saturday, we knew they had gone away for a dirty weekend.*

dirty word A word, phrase, or concept considered taboo or that is no longer approved of; something that has the potential to cause the same offense that an obscenity would. *Ever since Jason won the lottery, he considers "work" to be a dirty word. When it comes to politics, "tax increases" might as well be a dirty word.*

disaster area **1.** A location where a natural disaster, such as an earthquake, flood, or storm, occurred. An area designated as such is often the recipient of government aid. *In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, the president declared New Orleans a disaster area and allotted federal funding for the rescue and cleanup efforts.* **2.** A messy or unclean space. *After only a few weeks of living on his own, Adam's apartment looked like a disaster area because he never bothered to clean up after himself.* **3.** A situation, idea, or plan that is poorly planned or organized. *The new economic plan that the senator proposed sounded like a complete disaster area.*

dishpan hands A condition of the hands in which they are red, raw, dry,

scaly, and/or painful due to sensitivity or prolonged exposure to water and cleaning materials. *I don't mind the long hours or the repetitive work of washing dishes for the restaurant, but these dishpan hands are really killing me.*

the dismal science A disparaging term for the discipline of economics, coined in 1849 by Scottish historian Thomas Carlyle as a label for the school of economists who supported the abolition of slavery. *Economists have predicted that the exponential population growth will eventually cause our entire society to collapse in on itself—I suppose that is why they are known as practitioners of the dismal science.*

dispense with (the) formalities To not engage in the niceties or etiquette normally demanded by the social situation, such as formal introductions, because more important matters are at hand. *You can dispense with the formalities, counselor—just give me an update on the situation and be on your way.*

distance (oneself) from (someone or something) To limit engagement or association (or the appearance thereof) between oneself and someone or something. *Politicians have been quick to distance themselves from the senator ever since news of her drug scandal broke. The company, trying to build up its environmentally-friendly image, has been distancing itself from its past connections to the oil industry.*

distant corner of the world A far away and extremely remote foreign location. *These events are not just the concern of some distant corner of the world; they will have an impact on each and every one of us. When I applied to study abroad, I envisaged myself living somewhere romantic like Paris or London, not this distant corner of the world.*

ditch (some place) To leave a place, especially one that is no longer of use or interest, generally in search of something better. *Come on, let's ditch this place and go back to my house.*

ditch (someone) To leave, abandon, or purposefully lose someone. *My little brother was being a real pest around me and my friends, so we decided to ditch him in the mall. I can't believe she ditched me to go hang out with her friends!*

ditch (something) To throw away or abandon something. *I was tired of carrying his bag for him, so I ditched it in a bush and went home. I had to*

ditch my car and walk into town after I ran out of gas.

dive in To begin or undertake something quickly, enthusiastically, and without trepidation. *I know you're nervous about starting school, but you just need to dive in and do your best!*

divvy up To divide and dole out portions of something. *All right, let's divvy up the cash and then go our separate ways. Who wants to divvy up the pizza?*

DM An abbreviation for "direct message," a form of private communication on social media sites or Internet forums. It is most commonly used as a verb. *I'll DM you the address. DM me if you have any questions. Send me a DM so it's not public.*

DM me A request to send one a direct message, a form of private communication on social media sites or Internet forums. *DM me if you have any questions.*

do a 180 degree turn To make a big change in some area of one's life. If one physically turns 180 degrees, one will then be facing the opposite direction. *A: "Can you believe that Sam quit his job at the firm?" B: "No, he really did a 180 degree turn on being a paralegal!"*

do a bad turn See [do \(someone\) a bad turn](#).

do a bunk To flee, leave hurriedly, or abscond, especially under illegal or suspicious circumstances. Primarily heard in UK. *We did a bunk as soon as we heard the police sirens.*

do a disappearing act To vanish from sight or flee suddenly from a place. *My kids always do a disappearing act when I tell them it's time for their chores. The three of us did a disappearing act, heading for the Mexican border so we could leave this all behind us.*

do a disappearing act To depart or go away very suddenly or without warning, especially so as to avoid doing something. *My roommate loves to throw parties here, but she always does a disappearing act the next day when everything needs to be cleaned up! Brian is nearly two weeks late finishing his sales report—that's why he's been doing a disappearing act whenever the boss is around.*

do a good turn See [do \(someone\) a good turn](#).



do a runner To flee or quickly leave a place, usually so as to get out of paying for something or to avoid trouble or the law. Primarily heard in UK. *The teenagers did a runner as soon as the cab stopped, leaving the driver to foot the bill. The young man, unintelligible with drink, did a runner when the police went up to question him.*

do a vanishing act To depart or go away very suddenly or without warning, especially so as to avoid doing or dealing with something. *My roommate loves to throw parties here, but she always does a vanishing act the next day when everything needs to be cleaned up! Brian is nearly two weeks late finishing his sales report—that's why he's been doing a vanishing act whenever the boss is around.*

do any good To improve (something) or have any beneficial effect. Often but not always used in the negative. *The new tax bill was supposed to foster more hiring power in smaller companies, but it didn't do any good in the end. We won't be able to tell if the medication did any good until your next appointment.*

Do bears crap in the woods? rude A rhetorical question meaning the answer to the previous question is emphatically and obviously "yes." *Would I like a free trip to Paris? Do bears crap in the woods?*

Do bears poop in the woods? rude A rhetorical question meaning the answer to the previous question is emphatically and obviously "yes." *Would I like a free trip to Paris? Do bears poop in the woods?*

do down town See [go downtown](#).

do it tough To be in especially difficult or desperate circumstances. Primarily heard in Australia. *Our economy is the strongest it's been in years, yet we still have thousands of families doing it tough each year with barely enough to eat.*

do it up brown To do something really well. To do a good job at something. A: *"Boy, you really do it up brown when you plan these parties."* B: *"Thank you! I think that being a party planner is my real calling in life." I did it up brown for that project because I was hoping to impress my boss.*

do it with mirrors 1. To do or perform something (especially a magic trick) by using an optical illusion. *Everyone was astounded when he appeared to levitate off the ground, but I'm pretty sure he just did it with*

mirrors. 2. To do something in a highly secretive, illusory, or inexplicable way, likened to that of a magic trick. The military operation was completely unseen, completely unnoticed by anybody, as if they did it with mirrors. The company's CEO managed to swindle his clients out of millions of dollars, doing it with mirrors so that no one would notice the disappearance of the money until it was too late.

do me a lemon! You must be joking; I can't believe this; that's nonsense. A slang phrase specific to London. Primarily heard in UK. *Do me a lemon, man! No way I'm paying for tap water. You're going to fine me for spitting on the footpath? Do me a lemon!*

do no good To not improve (something) or have no beneficial effect. *You can get mad at me if you like, but it will do no good. Unfortunately, it seems the medication did no good against your father's illness.*

do not spoil the ship for a ha'porth of tar Do not ruin something for an avoidable reason. "Ship" is thought to be a dialectical pronunciation of "sheep," and a "ha'porth" is a "halfpennyworth." Tar was used to protect sheep skin from flies (and thereby illness and death), so not having enough tar would contribute to the death of the sheep. *You know your mom is going to be offended, so please call her before the dinner party—do not spoil the ship for a ha'porth of tar.*

do one! Get out of here; go away; get lost. Chiefly Liverpool and Lancashire slang. Primarily heard in UK. *I'm sick of your prattle. Do one, mate, and leave me alone!*

do (one's) bidding To do what someone else wants or has requested, to the point of servitude. *I hate how my mother always wants me to do her bidding—I refuse to do what she wants any longer! I can always get Tom to do my bidding, which is great when I'm faced with something I don't want to do!*

do (one's) block To become extremely and uncontrollably angry; to lose one's temper. Primarily heard in Australia. *Her words just infuriated me so much that I did my block in the middle of the restaurant.*

do (one's) business To urinate or defecate, especially a house pet. *I hate standing out here in the cold, waiting for the dog to do his business.*

do (one's) damnedest To try one's hardest (to do something). *Traffic*

out here is terrible, but we'll do our damndest to get there on time. I'm doing my damndest to get an A in this class, even though I'm terrible at math.

do (one's) darndest To put forth the utmost amount of energy or effort toward some task or goal. A more polite version of "do one's damndest." *Money is a little tight at the moment, but I'll do my darndest to be there for your wedding.*

do (one's) darnedest To put forth the utmost amount of energy or effort toward some task or goal. A more polite version of "do one's damndest." *Money is a little tight at the moment, but I'll do my darnedest to be there for your wedding.*

do (one's) duty **1.** To do, undertake, or accomplish that which is expected or required from one. *I know it isn't easy facing off against the lowlifes of this town, but you're on the police force and you have to do your duty.* **2.** To urinate or defecate, especially a house pet. *I hate standing out here in the cold, waiting for the dog to do his duty.*

do (one's) homework **1.** Literally, to complete school work that has been assigned to be done at home. *You can't watch any more television until you do your homework!* **2.** To be thoroughly prepared and informed for something, such as a meeting, interview, or report. *Be sure you do your homework before heading into that meeting; there's a lot at stake, and no one's going to like it if you aren't up to speed.*

do (one's) utmost To put forth the greatest possible amount of effort or energy toward some task or goal; to try as hard as one can. *I'll do my utmost to be there for your wedding, but I don't know if I'll have enough money to buy the plane ticket. Janet did her utmost to save the family farm, but the bank foreclosed on it in the end.*

do (oneself) in **1.** To commit suicide. *Poor Jerry, he did himself in when he lost his job.* **2.** By extension, to cause oneself to fail. *Janet did herself in with her oversized ambition; now she's lost everything.*

do or die **1.** adjective (hyphenated if used as a modifier before a noun) Of or pertaining to the last chance to succeed in a given situation, such that the utmost energy and effort must be put forth to do so. *Trailing by two points with only 45 seconds remaining, the game is now do or die for the home team. I have to get an A on this essay if I'm going to pass the class, so it's a do-or-die situation now.* **2.** verb To put forth the utmost energy and effort or

else fail altogether. *This is a cutthroat business, and you must do or die if you wish to survive.*

do right by (someone) To act, speak, or behave in a way that is just or beneficial to or meets the approval of someone else. *The best employers ensure they do right by their employees first and foremost. I don't know what I'm supposed to do in this situation, I'm just trying to do right by you.*

do (someone) a bad turn To do something harmful or malicious to another person. *The lawyer did us a bad turn in the end, charging us thousands of dollars while doing very little to actually settle the case.*

do (someone) a good turn To do something that helps, aids, or benefits another person. *If you do someone a good turn, they are much more likely to help you out in the future. John did me a good turn last year, so I'd like to return the favor somehow.*

do (someone) down 1. To humiliate, denigrate, or belittle someone. *John is always doing people down as a way of making up for his own poor self esteem.* 2. To cheat, swindle, or deceive someone. Primarily heard in UK. *The huckster made a living from buying men a few too many rounds of ale, and then doing them down for whatever money they had on them. That jerk did me down, selling me a car that doesn't even work!*

do (someone) in To kill, destroy, or cause someone to fail. *I heard it was the mob that did Jerry in for a debt he owed. Janet's ambition proved too great and eventually did her and her company in.*

do (someone) out of (something) To swindle, cheat, rob, or con someone out of something. *That no-good rotten lawyer did me out of thousands of dollars from my grandfather's will!*

do (something) blindfolded To do something with very little or no difficulty, due to knowing it so well; to complete or accomplish something in a relaxed, carefree, or effortless manner since one is so familiar with it. *It took me a little while to get used to this job, but now I could do it blindfolded! You should ask Johnny for help. He could do this type of repair blindfolded.*

(do something) or get off the pot Either commit to doing something productive or step aside and stop wasting time. A variant of the vulgar phrase "shit or get off the pot," in which any verb can be substituted. *As manager of this branch, you need to start leading or get off the pot! It's*



been two weeks since my interview—I wish they would hire me or get off the pot!

do (something) standing on (one's) head To do something with very little or no difficulty; to complete or accomplish something in a relaxed, carefree, or effortless manner. *It took me a little while to get used to this job, but now I could do it standing on my head! You should ask Johnny for help—he does this level of math standing on his head.*

do (something) to death To overdo something, so that the thing in question is now regarded as boring or irritating. *I don't know, we've done roses to death—let's do something exciting and different with the floral arrangements for this dinner. I'm picking out a different song for karaoke because you've done this one to death!*

do tell An exclamation of surprised or incredulous curiosity, sometimes (but not necessarily) a literal prompt for the speaker to tell more. *You're getting a divorce? Do tell!*

do the deed **1.** To perform or undertake any given action, usually implied to be unpleasant, unsavory, or illegal. *I couldn't stand the idea of watching them put down my pet dog, so John went alone to do the deed. The mob boss waited to hear whether the assassin he'd hired had done the deed.* **2.** slang To have sexual intercourse. *Teenagers are under a huge amount of pressure from their peers to do the deed before they feel ready or really want to.*

do the hard yard See [hard yards](#).

do the hard yards To do particularly hard work or put forth a large amount of effort (toward some task), especially in sports. *You're never going to have a successful business if you aren't willing to do the hard yards yourself. Our team did the hard yards all game long, and we managed to pull out a victory in the end because of it.*

do the math **1.** Literally, to do a bit of arithmetic calculation. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *Well, let's just do the math to see if you have enough in your savings account to afford a new car.* **2.** To figure out or put together information for oneself. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *Do the math—can't you see that he's just using you to get ahead in the company?*

do the maths **1.** Literally, to do a bit of arithmetic calculation. Primarily heard in UK, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland. *Well, let's just do the maths to*

see if you have enough in your savings account to afford a new car. 2. To do figure out or put together information for oneself. Primarily heard in UK, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland. Do the maths—can't you see that he's just using you to get ahead in the company?

do the right thing To act or behave correctly, appropriately, or with the best intentions. *We are none of us perfect; I just try to do the right thing and let other people live as they wish.*

do the spadework To do the necessary preparatory work or research to successfully complete a given task or objective. Likened to working the soil with a spade when preparing to plant something. *If you are looking to start your own business, you have to be sure to do the spadework first. I was up all night doing the spadework for my first case as a lawyer.*

do the trick To do, accomplish, or fulfil exactly what is needed or sought after. *The recipe calls for pancetta, but I think this regular bacon should do the trick. The movie's plot, such as it is, won't go on to win any awards, but the gory special effects will do the trick for any fans of the horror genre. I turned it off and back on, and that did the trick.*

do themselves in See [do \(oneself\) in](#).

Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

Treat other people the way you would like to be treated yourself. Based on the words of Jesus at his Sermon on the Mount (and known widely as The Golden Rule), variations of the phrase have been a core doctrine of societal ethics throughout modern human history. *I told my son the only way to get along with people is to do unto others as you would have them do unto you.*

do us down See [do \(someone\) down](#).

do us in See [do \(someone\) in](#).

do us out of something See [do \(someone\) out of \(something\)](#).

do utmost See [do \(one's\) utmost](#).

do well by doing good To achieve social or monetary success as a result of having a charitable and/or generally benevolent disposition toward others. *You might earn money all on your own, but if you help others and create strong, communal bonds, you can do well by doing good.*

do well for (oneself) To find success financially and/or in one's career.

I can see from the sports car she's driving that Mary is doing well for herself these days.

do with mirrors See [do it with mirrors](#).

do you kiss your mother with that mouth See [you kiss your mother with that mouth?](#)

do you know Dr. Wright of Norwich A sarcastic comment made at a dinner party to urge a guest to keep passing the wine. Allegedly, the real Dr. Wright of Norwich was prone to monopolizing the wine because he was such a conversationalist. Primarily heard in UK. *Hey Michael, do you know Dr. Wright of Norwich? Let's keep the wine moving, shall we?*

(do) you read me? **1.** Of radio or other telecommunication, a question of whether the receiver can hear and understand the transmission. *Bob, you read me? What is the situation from your position? A: "Air traffic control, do you read me? We have experienced a malfunction in one of our engines." B: "Copy that, pilot. We are monitoring your position."* **2.** By extension, a question of whether the listener understands what the speaker is saying or trying to convey. *We need these delivered by 5 PM sharp, do you read me? Don't be late! I want you to pay a visit to our pal Lenny and "take care of him." Make sure he can never testify in court, you read me?*

Doctors make the worst patients. It is difficult to give people help or advice on something in which they are professionals, because they often feel as though they already know better than anyone else how to handle the situation or perform a given task. *Mary tried to convince her boss at the bank to see a credit advisor about his growing debt, but he kept insisting that he knew how to manage his money. Doctors make the worst patients.*

dodge a bullet To narrowly avoid something or some situation that turns out to be undesirable, disastrous, dangerous, or otherwise harmful. *A: "I heard that John has become a drug addict and is living out of his car. Didn't you two used to date?" B: "Yeah, but we broke up about five years ago. Looks like I dodged a bullet on that one." I really dodged the bullet when my exam was postponed to next week, as I hadn't studied for it at all!*

dodgy deal An agreement, arrangement, or business transaction that is or is suspected of being risky, dubious, dishonest, or corrupt in some way. Primarily heard in UK, Ireland. *He was ultimately fined for the dodgy deal, which saw his company reap the rewards of large-scale investments without*

any tax burden.

Does a bear crap in the woods? rude A rhetorical question meaning the answer to the previous question is emphatically and obviously "yes." *Would I like a free trip to Paris? Does a bear crap in the woods?*

Does a bear poop in the woods? rude A rhetorical question meaning the answer to the previous question is emphatically and obviously "yes." *Would I like a free trip to Paris? Does a bear poop in the woods?*

Does a bear shit in the woods? rude A rhetorical question meaning the answer to the previous question is emphatically and obviously "yes." *Would I like a free trip to Paris? Does a bear shit in the woods?*

does (exactly) what it says on the tin (Something) does precisely what it claims or is supposed to do. Primarily heard in UK, Ireland. *This budget hostel isn't glamorous but does exactly what it says on the tin: it gives you a place to sleep at a very affordable price. This no-frills antivirus software is straightforward and does what it says on the tin.*

(one) does not wash (one's) dirty linen in public One does not discuss very private, personal matters, especially those that may be embarrassing, in public or with other people. *It always makes me uncomfortable when John starts going into all his personal problems whenever our friends get together. I do not wash my dirty linen in public, and I wish he wouldn't either! Kids, please don't say anything inappropriate in front of your grandmother—she definitely believes that one does not wash one's dirty linen in public.*

does the Pope shit in the woods vulgar slang A sarcastic response to a question for which the answer is obviously "yes." A combination of the similar phrases "Does a bear shit in the woods?" and "Is the Pope Catholic?"
A: "Are we going to win this game?" B: "Does the Pope shit in the woods? We're first in the division, of course we're going to win!"

doesn't hold a candle Is not nearly as good or desirable as someone or something else. Can also be used with "can't." *The sequel wasn't bad, but it doesn't hold a candle to the original. John's fast all right, but he can't hold a candle to Louise!*

dog and pony show An elaborately organized event used mainly for promotion or to drive sales. *The car dealership had quite the dog and pony*

show this weekend in an attempt to sell their old inventory. To help draw attention to the company's new line of products, the manager took their dog and pony show on the road for a nationwide promotion.

dog-ear **1.** noun The corner of a page of a book that has been turned down to mark one's place. *I always leave a dog-ear in my textbooks to indicate an important page when I'm studying.* **2.** verb To fold over the corner of a page of a book to mark one's place. *I really hate it when people dog-ear their books. It ruins the look of the page!*

dog in the hunt See [have a dog in the hunt](#).

dog in the manger Someone who insists on possessing something they do not want or need out of spite to prevent someone else from having it. *The toddler, like a dog in the manger, refused to give her older sister the notebook she needed to complete her school assignment.*

dog it **1.** To be lazy; to loaf or shirk duty; to fail to put forth the effort necessary to achieve or accomplish something. *Jim became totally disheartened after losing his job and has been dogging it around the house for the past month. I hate my job, so I just dog it in the office until it's time to go home. I once had dreams of going to med school, but I dogged it during my last two years in college and can't get in anywhere now.* **2.** To renege on, back out of, hastily leave, or flee from something. *I'm afraid the company dogged it from the deal at the last minute. We dogged it out of there once we heard the sirens blaring.*

dog my cats **1.** An exclamation of surprise or incredulity. *Well, dog my cats! I never thought I'd see you around these parts again!* **2.** A mild, inoffensive oath. *Dog my cats if I know what we're supposed to be working on here.*

dogfood **1.** To use the product(s) one's company produces or develops as a means of demonstrating or validating its quality, capabilities, or superiority to other brands. Used primarily in reference to software industries, the phrase is thought to have originated with advertisements for Alpo dog food in the 1980s, in which actor Lorne Green promoted the product by pointing out that he fed it to his own dogs. *The company sent out a memo to all of its employees telling them to dogfood their new operating system to demonstrate its speed and ease of use to the public. The company has a strict policy of dogfooding their website's own messenger system rather than traditional*

email, much to the consternation of some employees. **2.** By extension, to use software one's company is developing—usually in its beta form—so as to test it for flaws and ensure its ease of use by end users before it is released. *We didn't have time to dogfood the new operating system before its release, so I'm worried it may still have a lot of glitches that haven't been accounted for yet.*

doggy bag A paper or plastic container (not necessarily a bag) used to package the leftovers of a diner's meal at a restaurant so that they may take it home to eat later. *The servings here are so huge that I always have to ask for a doggy bag at the end of the night!*

a dog's age An exceptionally long period of time. *It's been a dog's age since I worked one of these machines, but I'll give it a shot!*

the dogs bark, but the caravan goes on Dissenting views from the lower classes are often ignored in favor of progress. *City Hall probably won't even notice our protest against tearing down that historical building. The dogs bark, but the caravan goes on.*

dog's chance A very slim chance. Used to describe something that is unlikely to happen. *Considering you only studied for 10 minutes, you have a dog's chance of passing this test! I get really nervous when I present something to the boss, so I think I only have a dog's chance of impressing her today.*

dog's dinner See [make a dog's dinner \(of something\)](#).

dog's years An especially long length of time. *It's been dog's years since I worked on of these machines, but I'll give it a shot!*

domino effect A phenomenon in which an initial event causes a series of other related events to occur, much like the sequence seen in toppling dominos; a chain reaction. *The convenience store's decision to stop selling tobacco products caused a domino effect throughout the industry, leading other chains to quickly follow suit. When I took one book out of the bookcase, it caused a domino effect, causing all of the others to topple over.*

domino theory 1. The political theory that, if one country or area adopts communism, then the surrounding ones will as well. *The domino theory was a major concern as the Soviet Union expanded its power after World War II.*

2. By extension, the idea that an event in one country will result in similar

events in the surrounding countries. *The string of revolutions that occurred in neighboring countries during the Arab Spring was a great example of domino theory in action.*

Don Juan A man who has a reputation for seducing many women. *If you're going to date Mark, be careful. I heard he's a bit of a Don Juan.*

done a disappearing act See [do a disappearing act](#).

done a vanishing act See [do a vanishing act](#).

done and done Totally, unequivocally finished or finalized. *Just one more piece to the puzzle, and... there! Done and done!*

done deal Something that has been decided or finalized. *Once we sign those papers, the sale of the house will be a done deal. I had no idea I'd have to make more payments to receive the merchandise—I thought it was a done deal!*

done down the drain See [go down the drain](#).

done (something) to death See [do \(something\) to death](#).

done (something) to death See [do the hard yards](#).

done to a turn See [be done to a turn](#).

donkey's ears An exceptionally long period of time. The phrase likely originated as rhyming slang, where "ears" rhymes with "years" and alludes to the length of a donkey's ears. Throughout time, it became more popularized as "donkey's years." *I haven't seen Jim in donkey's ears! How's he doing these days? It's been donkey's ears since we last got together like this.*

don't bite the hand that feeds (you) Do not scorn or treat ill those on whom one depends or derives benefit, for to do so is to risk losing those benefits altogether. *You might not agree with your parents' rules, but don't bite the hand that feeds you, because you owe everything you have to them. In politics, you learn quickly not to bite the hand that feeds, because benefactors can just as quickly crush your political future.*

Don't call us, we'll call you. cliché Do not be in further contact with us regarding your application/submission/inquiry/etc., we will contact you if we wish to proceed further (generally meaning that no such contact is to be expected). *Thank you for your interesting submission to our fiction department. We'll think it over for now—don't call us, we'll call you.*

don't call us, we'll call you A phrase said when one person is not interested in the other, in a situation like a job interview or an audition. It is more often used humorously. *I thought I had a good shot at this job until the recruiter said, "Don't call us, we'll call you" after the interview. Katie and I met some more losers online tonight, and we were just like, "Don't call us, we'll call you!"*

don't care a hang See [not care a hang \(about something\)](#).

don't care two pence See [not care twopence](#).

don't care two pins See [not care two pins \(about something\)](#).

Don't change horses at midstream. **1. Proverb** Do not try to choose or back a different political figure for an election after the decision has already been made or the position filled. *Many people are dissatisfied with the senator's performance but will likely carry his party's support through to the next election—don't change horses in midstream, as the saying goes.* **2. Proverb** By extension, do not make major changes to a situation or course of action that is already underway. *I'm really not confident in the strength of my essay, but I guess I just have to see this one through at this point. Like they say, don't change horses at midstream.*

Don't change horses in the middle of the river. **1. Proverb** Do not try to choose or back a different political figure for an election after the decision has already been made or the position filled. *Many people are dissatisfied with the senator's performance but will likely carry his party's support through to the next election—don't change horses in the middle of the river, as the saying goes.* **2. Proverb** By extension, do not make major changes to a situation or course of action that is already underway. *I'm really not confident in the strength of my essay, but I guess I just have to see this one through at this point. Like they say, don't change horses in the middle of the river.*

Don't change horses in the middle of the stream. **1. Proverb** Do not try to choose or back a different political figure for an election after the decision has already been made or the position filled. *Many people are dissatisfied with the senator's performance but will likely carry his party's support through to the next election—don't change horses in the middle of the stream, as the saying goes.* **2. Proverb** By extension, do not make major changes to a situation or course of action that is already

underway. *I'm really not confident in the strength of my essay, but I guess I just have to see this one through at this point. Like they say, don't change horses in the middle of the stream.*

don't count your chickens before they're hatched Don't make plans based on future events that might not happen. *When my mom heard that I was preparing my campaign before even being nominated, she warned me, "Don't count your chickens before they're hatched." Why are you begging to drive my car to school tomorrow when you still need to take your license test in the morning? Don't count your chickens before they're hatched, babe!*

don't crap where you eat Do not engage in troublesome or dubious behavior at one's home, place of business, or any location where one frequents, for it invites undesired consequences. (A more offensive term is often used instead of "crap.") *I warned him—I told him, "Don't crap where you eat." But he still insisted on having an affair with his secretary, and now, the scandal is ruining both his professional life and his home life.*

Don't cross that bridge till you come to it. Do not needlessly worry yourself over concerns, problems, or difficulties that lie in the future. *I'm not sure why you're so concerned about how to write a thesis for your degree—it's over a year away, so don't cross that bridge until you come to it! I know you're worried about the mortgage payment in January, but don't cross that bridge till you come to it.*

don't cry over spilled milk Don't be upset over something that cannot be fixed, often something minor. *Don't cry over spilled milk—we already submitted the report, so we can't fix it now. Oh, honey, you just fell down and ripped your stockings. You'll be fine, don't cry over spilled milk.*

don't cut off your nose to spite your face Don't use self-destructive means to try to solve a problem or fix a situation. *I know you're mad at your dad, but don't cut off your nose to spite your face—running away is only going to make your life harder.*

don't drop the soap! vulgar Mocking pseudo-advice given to a man who might be or is about to be sent to prison, referring to prison rape that may occur if one bends over to retrieve dropped soap in the shower, thus exposing himself. *You were sentenced to five years for selling drugs? Tough luck, man, don't drop the soap!*

don't feel myself See [not feel oneself](#).

don't get me started An exclamation of weariness or despair regarding a topic that has just been introduced and about which the speaker feels very strongly and (usually) has a negative opinion of. A: "So, what do you think of the new tax law that Congress just passed?" B: "Oh, don't get me started! If the government had its way, we'd be taxed for the privilege to breathe!"

don't give a hang See [not give a hang \(about something\)](#).

don't give a rat's arse See [not give a rat's arse \(about something\)](#).

don't give a shite See [not give a shite \(about something\)](#).

don't give a tuppence See [not give \(a\) tuppence](#).

don't give me that line Don't tell me that lie; don't try to pass that off as the truth; don't tell me that familiar story. *I want to know why you're so late coming home. And don't give me that line about wanting to catch up with friends!*

don't give me that story Don't tell me that lie; don't try to pass that off as the truth; don't tell me that familiar story. *I want to know why you're so late coming home. And don't give me that story about wanting to catch up with friends!*

don't give two pence See [not give twopence](#).

don't give two pins See [not give two pins \(about something\)](#).

don't give up the ship Don't surrender; don't stop working toward a particular goal. The phrase originated in the US Navy. *I know you're frustrated, but don't give up the ship now and drop out just three semesters away from graduation!*

don't give up your day job Don't leave your current employment in the hopes that something better or more exciting will come along, because the odds of that happening are slim. Often said when someone has unrealistic expectations for the future. *Whenever I see a singer who can't stay in tune, I just want to say, "Don't give up your day job!"*

don't go there Don't get into that topic of conversation; I don't want to talk about that. Used humorously, the phrase usually implies that the speaker has a potentially scandalous, sensitive, or otherwise complicated association

with the topic. Steve: "I heard you once had a crazy party with a bunch of the Hollywood A-listers—what was that like?" John: "Don't go there, Steve, that was a crazy night best left to the imagination!" A: "So, do you ever hear from your ex-husband?" B: "Don't even go there. That divorce trial still gives me a headache!"

don't hand me that line Don't tell me that lie; don't try to pass that off as the truth; don't tell me that familiar story. *I want to know why you're so late coming home. And don't hand me that line about wanting to catch up with friends!*

don't hand me that story Don't tell me that lie; don't try to pass that off as the truth; don't tell me that familiar story. *I want to know why you're so late coming home. And don't hand me that story about wanting to catch up with friends!*

don't have a penny to my name See [not have a penny to \(one's\) name](#).

don't have all day See [not have all day](#).

don't have her heart on it See [not have \(one's\) heart in \(something\)](#).

don't have much between the ears See [not have much between the ears](#).

don't have two nickels to rub together See [not have two nickels to rub together](#).

don't have two pennies to rub together See [not have two pennies to rub together](#).

don't judge a book by its cover Don't base your opinion of something (or someone) on the way it (or one) looks. *This report may look dull, but don't judge a book by its cover—I will have you riveted by the facts and figures in no time! I know she's a little frumpy, but don't judge a book by its cover, man!*

don't kill the messenger Don't get angry at or punish someone who is simply delivering bad or undesirable news as they are not responsible for it. A: "What do you mean I'm being sued by my ex-wife? I'll knock your lights out!" B: "Hey man, I'm just doing my job. Don't kill the messenger!"

don't knock yourself out Don't expend too much energy or try too

hard (doing something), as it isn't worth the trouble. *You can clean the house if you want, but don't knock yourself out—the kids will just make a mess of it again anyway.*

don't know her from a bar of soap See [not know \(someone\) from a bar of soap](#).

don't let perfect be the enemy of good See [let \(the\) perfect be the enemy of \(the\) good](#).

don't let the bedbugs bite cliché Sleep soundly and well. Part of the sing-song rhyme "good night, sleep tight, don't let the bedbugs bite," usually said to a child. *I'll see you in the morning, love. Don't let the bedbugs bite!*

don't let the door hit you on the way out Leave here quickly and directly; don't linger on your way out the door. Used sarcastically to express one's desire to see someone leave. *I couldn't be happier that you're leaving the firm, you were a nuisance here anyway. Don't let the door hit you on the way out!*

don't let the door hit your ass on the way out Leave here quickly and directly; don't linger on your way out the door. A ruder version of "don't let the door hit you on the way out," used sarcastically to express one's desire to see someone leave. *I couldn't be happier that you're leaving the firm, you were a nuisance here anyway. Don't let the door hit your ass on the way out!*

Don't let the fox guard the henhouse. Don't assign the duty of protecting or controlling valuable information or resources to someone who is likely to exploit that opportunity. *You're going to put your ex-convict brother-in-law in charge of your business? I can't tell you how to run your company, but don't let the fox guard the henhouse.*

don't look a gift horse in the mouth If you receive a gift, do so graciously, without voicing criticisms. The saying is attributed to St. Jerome and refers to the practice of looking at a horse's teeth to determine its age. *I know Aunt Jean isn't your favorite person, but she gave you that beautiful sweater as a present, so don't look a gift horse in the mouth!* A: "But I don't want this ancient car!" B: "Don't look a gift horse in the mouth, OK? You're so lucky to get a car for free!"

don't look at me 1. An exclamation of innocence from a general



accusation or implication of wrongdoing, with the emphasis placed on "me."
Jane: "All right, which one of you kids broke the vase in the living room?"
Tom: "Don't look at me! I've been playing outside all day!" 2. An interjectory response when one is unwilling, unable, or reluctant to perform some task, with the emphasis placed on "me." A: *"Would anyone be able to check my computer for a virus?"* B: *"Don't look at me, I don't know the first thing about computers!"* A: *"We need someone to go through all the files on the server and delete everything from before the year 2000."* B: *"Well, don't look at me! I've got a project deadline looming, and I can't spare the time."*

don't matter a tuppence See [not matter tuppence](#).

don't matter two pence See [not matter twopence](#).

don't mind (someone) Don't interrupt what you are doing on account of someone; pay no attention to someone or their words, actions, or behaviors. *Don't mind me, I'm just looking for one of my books. Ah, don't mind them! They're just jealous of your success.*

don't monkey around with me Do not try to trick me or tell me a lie; do not try to make a fool out of me; don't try to manipulate my emotions. *Listen, pal, don't monkey around with me! Either pay your debts on time or we'll have to repossess your home. Don't monkey around with me—did I win the award or not?*

don't open her mouth See [not open \(one's\) mouth](#).

don't patronize me Don't condescend to me; don't talk to me as if I were stupid. A: *"Sir, you just need to put your card in the reader there, and then type in your PIN number when it prompts you to."* B: *"Don't patronize me, I know how to use one of these!"*

don't play (around) with me Do not try to trick me or tell me a lie; do not try to make a fool out of me; don't try to manipulate my emotions. *Listen, pal, don't play around with me! Either pay your debts on time or we'll have to repossess your home. Don't play with me—did I win the award or not?*

don't put all your eggs in one basket Don't focus all of your attention on one thing or in one area, in case that situation changes or goes awry. *I know you love Harvard, but don't put all your eggs in one basket—make sure to apply to several other schools too. Don't put all your eggs in*

one basket with your investments. Make sure you diversify your portfolio.

don't put stock in See [not put stock in \(something\)](#).

don't reveal her colors See [reveal \(one's\) \(true\) colors](#).

don't reveal her stripes See [reveal \(one's\) \(true\) stripes](#).

don't see the point See [see the point \(of something\)](#).

don't see the point in See [see the point in \(doing\) \(something\)](#).

don't shit where you eat vulgar slang Do not engage in troublesome or dubious behavior at one's home, place of business, or any location where one frequents, for it invites undesired consequences. *I told him, "Don't shit where you eat." But he still insisted on having an affair with his secretary, and now the scandal is ruining both his personal and professional life.*

don't shoot the messenger Don't get angry at or punish someone who is simply delivering bad or undesirable news as they are not responsible for it. A: "What do you mean I'm being sued by my ex-wife? I'll knock your lights out!" B: "Hey man, I'm just doing my job. Don't shoot the messenger!"

Don't swap horses at midstream. 1. Proverb Do not try to choose or back a different political figure for an election after the decision has already been made or the position filled. *Many people are dissatisfied with the senator's performance but will likely carry his party's support through to the next election—don't swap horses at midstream, as the saying goes. 2.* Proverb By extension, do not make major changes to a situation or course of action that is already underway. *I'm really not confident in the strength of my essay, but I guess I just have to see this one through at this point. Like they say, don't swap horses at midstream.*

Don't swap horses in the middle of the river. 1. Proverb Do not try to choose or back a different political figure for an election after the decision has already been made or the position filled. *Many people are dissatisfied with the senator's performance but will likely carry his party's support through to the next election—don't swap horses in the middle of the river, as the saying goes. 2.* Proverb By extension, do not make major changes to a situation or course of action that is already underway. *I'm really not confident in the strength of my essay, but I guess I just have to see this one through at this point. Like they say, don't swap horses in the middle of the river.*

Don't swap horses in the middle of the stream. 1. *Proverb* Do not try to choose or back a different political figure for an election after the decision has already been made or the position filled. *Many people are dissatisfied with the senator's performance but will likely carry his party's support through to the next election—don't swap horses in the middle of the stream, as the saying goes.* 2. *Proverb* By extension, do not make major changes to a situation or course of action that is already underway. *I'm really not confident in the strength of my essay, but I guess I just have to see this one through at this point. Like they say, don't swap horses in the middle of the stream.*

don't take stock in See [not take stock in \(something\)](#).

don't teach your grandmother to suck eggs An older person is wiser and more experienced and worldly than a young person may think—thus, the older person does not need to be taught. *I may be 70, but I've been using a computer since before you were born! Don't teach your grandmother to suck eggs, sonny!*

don't that beat all! An exclamation of disbelief, as at some surprising, shocking, or amazing occurrence. *Well, don't that beat all! I wasn't expecting to have you here for Christmas!*

don't utter a word See [not utter a word](#).

(someone's) door is always open Someone is always available to be of guidance, support, aid, or assistance whenever needed. Said especially by an employer or teacher to an employee or pupil. *I know you've been going through some tough times lately, so if you ever need someone to talk to, I want you to know that my door is always open. Mrs. Spencer is a great teacher, and her door is always open if we ever have any questions or fall behind.*

doormat Someone who meekly submits to mistreatment or humiliation by others. *Jim had been a doormat his whole life until he went to that motivational speaker five years ago; now, he's one of the most respected men in the business.*

dope out (something) To solve or figure out; to calculate or infer from available information. *We doped out a way of keeping the business open without having to fire anybody. I didn't read the required chapter before*

class, but I was able to dope out what was going on from the professor's lecture.

dope sheet **1.** A racing publication that provides detailed information of racehorses and their jockeys to prospective gamblers. Also known as a "scratch sheet." *I quit gambling five years ago, but I still like to look over the dope sheets at the race tracks just to feel a bit of that rush again.* **2.** A document summarizing important details and background information regarding a specific person, activity, situation, or any other subject. *The sergeant handed out the suspect's dope sheet at the meeting this morning, so each officer had a good idea who they were looking for. The journalist always created a dope sheet for herself about any story she was planning to cover.* **3.** A set of running instructions provided by an animator to photographers and editors as to how a particular animation should be filmed. Also known as an "exposure sheet." *The animator's dope sheet was so convoluted and complex that we really had no idea what way he wanted the animation to appear on screen.*

doped to the gills Thoroughly intoxicated by drugs, especially those prescribed by a doctor, to the point of incoherence or senselessness. *I was doped to the gills for about two weeks after my surgery. I'm off the painkillers now, but I still feel pretty out of it.*

do's and don'ts The general rules and regulations of a given activity, operation, or situation. *Before you begin your first day working for us, there are a few important do's and don'ts that I need to familiarize you with. Tom doesn't understand the basic do's and don'ts of social etiquette.*

dose are da breaks See [those are the breaks](#).

a dose of (one's) own medicine The same unpleasant experience or treatment that one has given to others. *Doug is a bully—of course he won't like it when his victims fight back and give him a dose of his own medicine. This team likes to play rough, so let's go out there and give them a dose of their own medicine!*

a dose of (one's) own medicine An experience of the same harmful or unpleasant thing that one has inflicted on others; an attack in the same manner in which one attacks others. *John has gossiped about everyone in our group, so we gave him a dose of his own medicine by spreading rumors about him. The coup gave the dictatorship a dose of its own medicine, subjecting*

the dictator and his entourage to torture and confinement in deplorable conditions.

doss about To waste time; to shirk one's work or responsibility by doing something unproductive. Primarily heard in UK. *There's no way we'll get this project finished on time if everyone keeps dossing about like this! I should have been working on my paper all weekend long, but instead, I just dossed about playing videogames.*

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dot (one's) I's and cross (one's) t's To do something carefully and make sure that every last minor detail is completed. *Please make sure to dot your i's and cross your t's when signing this contract. I made sure to dot my i's and cross my t's when installing the circuit breaker—you can never be too careful with electrical work.*

double bill **1.** noun A program of two feature-length films shown one after the other, or (by extension) any program featuring two primary events back-to-back. *They are showing the original film and its sequel in a fantastic double bill this Friday! Both the governor and state senator will speak as part of a double bill at the fundraising gala later this evening.* **2.** verb (often hyphenated) To play a film as part of a double feature (i.e., shown immediately before or after another). *They're going to double-bill the sequel alongside the original film this Friday.* **3.** verb To charge separate accounts for the same cost. *The lawyer was disbarred for double-billing his clients and the state for dozens of cases during his career.*

double bind A no-win situation. *When both of Sally's jobs scheduled her to work on the same day, she was put in a double bind. She needed both incomes and could not afford to lose either position.*

double booked **1.** Committed to two things that are scheduled to happen at the same time. *Oh man, it looks like I'm double booked today—I somehow scheduled myself for two meetings at 3 PM.* **2.** Reserved for two people at the same time. *Can you believe the hotel double booked our room? Where are we supposed to sleep now?*

double cross **1.** noun An act of duplicitous betrayal or swindling, especially of a friend, ally, or colleague. Originally a sporting term in which a "cross" referred to an event that had been fixed by the participants to fail; a "double cross" happened when one participant secretly backed out of that arrangement and went on to win the event. *Double crosses happen all the time in politics, with politicians making promises to each other behind closed doors and reneging upon them down the road. Jonathan's double cross ended up costing our company millions of dollars of wasted research and development.* **2.** verb To betray or cheat someone in a duplicitous manner, especially by going back on a previously agreed upon arrangement. *We've been double-crossed, fellas, so keep your eyes open for the cops. John and I spent years developing the product together, but he double-crossed me once it was finished and got a patent for it under his name alone.*

double crosser A person who has betrayed or swindled friends, allies, colleagues, or associates, or intends to do so. *I'll make sure that dirty double crosser never works in this town again, if it's the last thing I do.*

double down **1.** In blackjack, to double one's wager after seeing one's initial hand of cards, with only one more card allowed to be drawn afterward. *Having already lost a massive sum, he decided to double down an already huge bet to try to win back some of his money.* **2.** By extension, to significantly increase or strengthen effort, investment, or resolve toward some goal, strategy, or action so as to maximize the potential yield as a result. *The president made clear that he intends to double down the government's involvement in the war overseas. With the market booming, many companies are doubling down their development in mobile apps and games.*

double edged sword Something that can be both positive and negative. *Intelligence is a double edged sword. Things may come easy to you, but people will always expect more. This meeting is a double-edged sword—it's a great chance to get the firm wider exposure, but we're just not prepared enough for it.*

double-edged sword Something that can be both beneficial and problematic. *Going back to school was a double-edged sword for Pam. On the one hand, it would widen her career prospects, but, on the other hand, she would be in a lot of debt when she graduated.*

double entendre A word or phrase that can have two interpretations,

one of which is usually humorous, insulting, or sexual in nature. *The old man kept working double entendres into conversation, hoping to make the young ladies laugh, but instead he just made them uncomfortable.*

double in brass To perform multiple roles or duties; to serve in two capacities at a given time. Originally a reference to a musician in an ensemble who plays more than one instrument, especially among brass players. *During the financial crisis, after many of our staff had been laid off, we were all expected to double in brass to maintain the company's level of productivity.*

double or nothing A wager that can be used in any sort of competition, wherein the winner would receive twice the prize or nothing. Hyphenated when used as an adjective. *Come on, one more match, double or nothing! If you win, you don't have to pay. I beat my brother at billiards for the second time in our double-or-nothing game. Now he owes me \$100 instead of \$50!*

double standard **1.** Any set of values or principles that are applied differently and unequally to two or more similar people, groups, or situations. *The prime minister was accused of engaging in a double standard regarding his foreign policy, supporting extremism in countries long regarded as allies while decrying the same kind of extremism elsewhere.* **2.** An unwritten provision granting more sexual freedom to men than to women. *The double standard that young men are encouraged to be sexually active while young women may be ostracized for it is still a hugely pervasive problem for many young people growing up today.*

a double taker Something or someone that causes one to do a double take, i.e., look twice due to surprise or disbelief. *His new sports car was a real double taker, and everyone gaped at it as he drove by. He was a double taker in his new tuxedo, grabbing the attention of both men and women alike.*

double tap **1.** noun The firing of a semi-automatic gun twice in rapid succession into the same target zone, especially the head of a victim. *The assassin's signature kill was a single shot to the chest and a double tap to the head of his targets.* **2.** noun The act of touching or pressing lightly with the fingers twice in rapid succession, as on a touch-sensitive screen or device. *Just give the application's icon a quick double tap for it to open.* **3.** verb To fire a semi-automatic gun twice in rapid succession into the same target zone, especially the head of a victim. *Always be sure to double tap your target to ensure they will not be getting up again.* **4.** verb To tap a touch-sensitive

screen or device twice in rapid succession. *You just have to double tap the icon on the screen for the application to open.*

double-tongued Duplicitous, hypocritical, or deceitful, especially in speech; claiming one set of beliefs or intentions but acting according to another. *The double-tongued insurance salesmen promised them that the new plan would reduce their premiums and costs significantly, knowing all the while that hidden charges and fees would make the plan more expensive overall.*

double whammy A situation in which two negative things happen at the same time or in rapid succession. *Jack suffered a double whammy when his car broke down the same day he lost his job.*

doublespeak Deliberately evasive, confusing, contradictory, and/or ambiguous language used to mislead or deceive the listener. Likely adapted from George Orwell's term "doublethink," from his 1949 novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, meaning the ability to simultaneously hold two opposing thoughts or beliefs as being correct in one's mind. *Like any successful politician, she was quite adept at doublespeak whenever confronted with bad publicity.*

doubting Thomas A skeptic. A reference to the New Testament story about the Apostle Thomas, who refused to believe that Jesus had risen from the dead until he saw him in person. *Lisa's husband was a real doubting Thomas when she told him she'd won the lottery. He demanded to check the ticket himself.*

douche vulgar slang A contemptible, vile, or reprehensible person. *That frat boy keeps trying to hit on my little sister. What a douche.*

douchebag vulgar slang A contemptible, vile, or reprehensible person. *That frat boy keeps trying to hit on my little sister. What a douchebag.*

douchebaggery vulgar slang Contemptible, vile, or reprehensible behavior. A play on the word "douchebag" (a person who exhibits this behavior). *Someone stole my lunch out of the fridge again today! I'm so sick of this douchebaggery.*

down and out Destitute or otherwise devoid of any resources. Primarily heard in US. *Many of these homeless people have been down and out for years, with no prospects of finding work or permanent shelter.*

down-and-outer A person who is destitute or otherwise devoid of any resources. *Sarah started a non-profit organization dedicated to help the down-and-outers in her city.*

a down-and-outer A person who is completely without money, means, support, and/or prospects; an indigent person. *His crippling drug addiction left him a down-and-outer, begging for change on the sidewalk.*

down-at-heel Having a worn out, shabby, or cheap appearance, as due to poverty or overuse. *A lot of so-called hipsters try to affect a down-at-heel look, a sort of "shabby-chic" appearance out of second-hand clothing. John has been looking increasingly down-at-heel ever since he lost his job last year.*

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down cold Learned, mastered, or understood perfectly, to the point of requiring little or no focus to do, recall, or accomplish. *Make sure you practice these equations until you have them down cold. I always get my routine down cold so there won't be any room for error during the performance.*

down cold See [have \(something\) down cold](#).

down for the count 1. Having been, or very near to being, defeated, ruined, or overcome. Likened to a boxer who has been knocked to the mat and cannot stand before the referee counts to 10, thus losing the match. *Their company is so debt-ridden that I think it's safe to say they're down for the count at this stage. With the final votes tallied, the senator's hopes for re-*

election are down for the count. 2. Unconscious or in a deep, insensible sleep. Likened to a boxer who has been knocked out. I didn't even hear you come in last night, I was so tired that I was down for the count as soon as my head hit the pillow. On his 21st birthday, Mike's friends gave him so much to drink that he was down for the count by 10 PM.

down in the doldrums **1.** Depressed or in low spirits; lethargic, sluggish, or lacking energy. *I've been down in the doldrums ever since my grandfather died last month. I haven't really felt like going out and seeing friends lately. I'm just down in the doldrums a bit, I suppose. 2.* In a state of stagnation; lacking activity or progress. *The economy, down in the doldrums for the past several years, finally began to pick up over the last two months. The company has been down in the doldrums ever since they replaced their CEO.*

down in the mouth Visibly sad or depressed. *Molly's been moping around all week, and I have no idea why she's so down in the mouth. Rob has been down in the mouth ever since Gloria broke up with him.*

down on See [be down on \(someone or something\)](#).

down on (one's) uppers Having no money; broke. The phrase was originally used to describe people who were so poor that they had worn their shoes down to the uppers (the part of the shoe above the sole). *I am down on my uppers this week, so can we go out for drinks next week, after I get paid?*

down (one's) alley Something that one would be very interested in. A variant of the more common phrase "up (one's) alley." *Lou loves baseball, so you should definitely invite him to a game—it would be right down his alley. I love science, so studying medicine is down my alley.*

down pat Learned, mastered, or understood perfectly, to the point of requiring little or no focus to do, recall, or accomplish. *Make sure you practice these equations until you have them down pat. I always get my routine down pat so there won't be any room for error during the performance.*

down the pan Completely and irreversibly wasted, lost, or destroyed. Primarily heard in UK. *In an instant, we saw all our hopes for our business go down the pan. All those years of research down the pan. I guess it's back to the drawing board.*

down the road, not across the street Mocking and depreciatory advice for someone considering or attempting suicide by self-laceration, meaning it is more effective to cut along the radial artery of the arm than across the wrist.

down the track At an unspecified future point in time; down the line. *If, down the track, you find you still aren't understanding the course, feel free to contact me and we'll go over the material one-on-one.*

down the tube(s) Awry; in a state of deterioration or failure. *You got a C average? Boy, your grades have really gone down the tubes this semester. We had big plans for our trip, but the terrible weather made it all go down the tube.*

down to a fine art Learned, mastered, or understood perfectly, to the point of requiring little or no focus to do, recall, or accomplish. *Make sure you practice these equations until you have them down to a fine art. I always get my routine down to a fine art so there won't be any room for error during the performance.*

down to bedrock Focused on the most important aspects of a particular situation. Often used in the phrase "get down to bedrock." *Let's get down to bedrock so that everyone has a good grasp on the project overall before we split up to do our separate parts.*

down to brass tacks Focused on the most important aspects of a particular situation. Often used in the phrase "get down to brass tacks." *Let's get down to brass tacks so that everyone has a good grasp on the project overall before we split up to do our separate parts. Don't get overwhelmed with this case, just get down to brass tacks.*

down to do See [be down to \(do something\)](#).

down to fuck vulgar slang Willing to have sex. *You need to find out if she's down to fuck. My date is down to fuck, so I'll see you in the morning!*

down to her See [be down to \(someone\)](#).

down to something See [be down to \(something\)](#).

down to the short strokes In the last or final stages of something; nearly finished (with) or nearing completion of something. *Now that we finally got the server online and the app stable, we're coming down to the*

short strokes of making it available to users. We'll be down to the short strokes once the moving van arrives with the last of our stuff from the old house.

down to the short strokes In the final stages or nearing completion of a long or arduous task, situation, or process. *I firmly believe that, on the whole, we are down to the short strokes of this economic downturn. The school board is coming down to the short strokes of its budget plan for this year.*

down under In or to Australia (or New Zealand). Primarily heard in US, UK, South Africa. *She was born down under, but she's established a hugely successful career here in the US. We've decided to travel down under this summer!*

down with See [be down with \(something\)](#).

down with his apple-cart obsolete slang Knock him down; throw him to the ground. (Apple-cart being an antiquated slang term for a person's body.) *I tell you, lads, down with his apple-cart and take what you can from his pockets!*

down your alley See [down \(one's\) alley](#).

Downing Street The address of the residence of the prime minister of the United Kingdom, used by extension to refer to the prime minister or the current UK government. *Swift condemnation of the attack has come from Downing Street, the White House, and the Kremlin.*

doxxing Publishing someone's personal information (including but not limited to their address, phone number, and social security number) online as an act of vengeance. *More and more people are finding themselves victims of doxxing, in which the personal details of their lives are exposed to the world.*

a drag A person, thing, or task that is tedious or boring. *I don't know who invited this guy to the party. He is such a drag! I know cleaning out the garage is a drag, but it has to be done.*

drag king A woman who wears the clothing and assumes the demeanor of a male, especially as part of an exaggerated performance piece. *The mother of two performs with a drag king troupe on the weekends, much to the bemusement of some of her more conservative friends.*

drag (one's) ass 1. To deliberately work or perform slowly, sluggishly,

or reluctantly; to idle rather than perform one's work or duties. *Stop dragging your ass on that assignment, I need it finished by 3 o'clock. I'm so bored with work that I find myself dragging ass every day in the office.* **2.** To leave or depart from a place. *You'd better drag your ass outta here before I get even more upset. It's the cops, we'd better drag ass!*

drag (one's) name through the mud To disparage someone publicly, especially to the detriment of their reputation. *I'm trying to maintain a fair and respectable campaign, and Brad totally dragged my name through the mud! Don't drag my name through the mud—you're the one who messed up the budget!*

drag (one's) tail **1.** To deliberately work or perform slowly, sluggishly, or reluctantly; to idle rather than perform one's work or duties. *Stop dragging your tail on that assignment, I need it finished by 3 o'clock. I'm so bored with work that I find myself dragging tail every day in the office.* **2.** To leave or depart from a place. *You'd better drag your tail outta here before I get even more upset. It's the cops, we'd better drag tail!*

drag queen A man who wears the clothing and assumes the demeanor of a woman, often as part of an exaggerated performance piece. *A well-known drag queen around the state, he has become an increasingly vocal advocate for gay rights across the country.*

drag (someone) into (something) **1.** To force, impel, involve, or convince someone to participate in an undesirable situation or action. *I can't believe you dragged me into this cockamamie scheme of yours. I can't go this weekend, my boss is dragging me into some team-building workshop on Saturday. Oh no, don't drag me into your fight with your girlfriend, I want nothing to do with it.* **2.** To involve or bring up someone in a conversation that they are not (or doesn't desire to be) involved in. *Don't drag the kids into this; this is about your drinking problem, and nothing else.*

drag (someone) kicking and screaming To force someone to go somewhere or do something against their will, especially when they protest against it vehemently and/or at great length. *I really thought Mike would be perfect for that job, but I had to drag him kicking and screaming into an interview for it. Every summer we drag our kids kicking and screaming to their grandparents' house in the countryside. The prime minister dragged the country kicking and screaming into the 21st century.*

dragged into something kicking and screaming See [be dragged kicking and screaming](#).

dragon lady derogatory slang (sometimes capitalized) A woman who is or is seen to be ruthlessly powerful, domineering, or manipulative. Named for the villainess in the comic strip *Terry and the Pirates* (1934–46), who was known for such traits. *Outside of work, we call her the Dragon Lady for the way she bullies anyone and everyone who is lower than her on the corporate ladder. My uncle is married to a real dragon lady—all she does is yell at him and boss him around.*

drain the main vein vulgar slang Of a male, to urinate (where "main vein" is slang for the penis). *Will you order us another round of drinks? I'm just going to go drain the main vein real quick.*

drama queen A person (usually a woman, though not always) who is given to exaggerated, disproportionate emotional reactions to relatively minor events or situations. *Since I was an only child, my mother tended to be a bit of a drama queen about anything happening in my life. Ah, don't be such a drama queen, Tom, they're not going to fire you for a simple mistake like that.*

drastic times call for drastic measures Extreme and undesirable circumstances or situations can only be resolved by resorting to equally extreme actions. Derived from the proverb, "Desperate diseases must have desperate remedies." *I know that the austerity measures introduced by the government during the recession are unpopular, but drastic times call for drastic measures.*

drastic times require drastic measures Extreme and undesirable circumstances or situations can only be resolved by resorting to equally extreme actions. Derived from the proverb, "desperate diseases must have desperate remedies." *I know that the austerity measures introduced by the government during the recession are unpopular, but drastic times require drastic measures.*

draw a bead on (someone or something) **1.** To aim at someone or something with the sights on a firearm. *I managed to draw a bead on the enemy sniper, but had to wait until I received the order to fire.* **2.** By extension, to focus one's attention on someone or something so as to deal with or attack him, her, or it. *The candidate drew a bead on his opponent's*

poor political record in the UN during the debate. The president has pledged to draw a bead on the growing problem of adolescent obesity. **3.** To thoroughly understand, appreciate, or comprehend someone or something. *The team just has to draw a bead on the severity of the cyber attack before we can implement any meaningful fixes. I couldn't get my head around him at first, but I'm finally starting to draw a bead on my sister's boyfriend.*

draw a line To set a (figurative) boundary, indicating what one is not willing or able to do. *I'm prepared to do some cosmetic fixes on our new home, but I draw a line at major renovation. Aunt Peggy was fine with us setting her up on a date, but she drew a line at letting us create an online dating profile.*

draw an inference To come to or infer a conclusion from or regarding the information with which one is presented. *If we look at the data across all demographics in the country, we can draw an inference as to the effect this policy has had. I invite the public to draw an inference from the televised debates as to who is truly better able to lead the country.*

draw in (one's) horns To act more cautiously than one did before. *I just got this quarter's budget report, and we definitely need to draw in our horns and spend less going forward.*

draw in the reins **1.** Literally, to pull in the reins of a bridled animal, especially a horse, to slow it down or bring it to a stop. *Mary drew in the reins as she approached town, bringing her horse to a saunter.* **2.** By extension, to slow something down or bring it to a stop. *During the economic boom, our company was making as many risky investments as we could find. Luckily, our CEO had the sense to draw in the reins on such recklessness before the economy crashed.*

draw lots To decide something by picking an item, often a slip of paper, at random. *Let's draw lots to decide who will go first—it's the only fair way to do it.*

draw near to To get close to someone or something, either literally or figuratively. *You need to draw near to your family in this time of tragedy. Come on, son, draw near to the wall so you can see exactly where to put in the nail.*

draw (one's) last breath To die; to fail or cease to be. *After our parents drew their last breath, my four siblings and I had to decide what to*

do with their property. You may be in charge now, but after you've drawn your last breath, it will be me in charge. Many fear that the computing giant may be drawing its last breath.

draw (one)self up **1.** To stand up straight, as tall as one can. *I know you feel self-conscious about being so much taller than everyone else, but please, try to draw yourself up for the group photo.* **2.** To stand up straight in a show of indignation. *After Andrew made those rude comments about me, I drew myself up and stormed out of the office.*

draw stumps **1.** In cricket, to call an end of gameplay for the day, as by removing the stumps (part of the wicket) from the ground. *As the umpire draws stumps for the day, India has beaten England by 133 runs.* **2.** By extension, to cease doing something or bring something to an end. *In spite of the biting scandal, the footballer said he would not be drawing stumps on his international career. This has gotten horribly boring, let's draw stumps and go home.*

draw the curtain on (something) **1.** To cease doing something; to bring something to an end. *No one is coming to the party; let's just draw a curtain on it and go home. The senator, now 83, draws a curtain this Friday on her illustrious career in politics.* **2.** To conceal something; to keep something a secret. *The police have been accused of drawing a curtain on the officer's alleged involvement with the teenager's murder.*

draw the curtain over (something) **1.** To cease doing something; to bring something to an end. *No one is coming to the party; let's just draw a curtain over it and go home. The senator, now 83, draws a curtain this Friday over her illustrious career in politics.* **2.** To conceal something; to keep something a secret. *The police have been accused of drawing a curtain over the officer's alleged involvement with the teenager's murder.*

drawing card Someone used to attract a crowd to an event. *Bill Gates was definitely the drawing card for the computer security conference this year.*

dream come true A wish or a goal that a person has wanted or achieved after a long time. *Jessica has had a crush on David since she was a teenager. When he finally asked her out on a date, it was a dream come true. Some of my favorite organizations are the ones that make dreams come true for terminally ill children. Publishing this novel is really a dream come true.*

I never thought I'd see the day it happened.

dream house One's ideal residence. *After spending years living in a cramped apartment, Betty and I are finally building our dream house! My dream house would have at least two bathrooms—I don't know how I've lived all these years with just one.*

dream ticket Two or more politicians campaigning together to take advantage of their combined voter appeal. *Considering how polarizing this election season has been, it's hard to imagine a dream ticket for either party.*

drenched to the skin To be completely soaked with water—usually rain—through one's clothes. *Come in out of that rain! Oh, you're drenched to the skin, you'll catch cold if you aren't careful!*

dress to kill To dress in extravagantly fancy or stylish clothes so as to thoroughly impress others. *Mary always dresses to kill, so she turns heads wherever she goes. The chairman of the board will be there tonight, so be sure you dress to kill!*

drips and drabs Insignificant, skimpy, and/or piecemeal amounts. A: *"Have you been able to get any work lately?"* B: *"Just some drips and drabs to keep me ticking along, but nothing substantial."*

drill (someone) (with questions) To intensely or vigorously interrogate someone. *My parents wouldn't stop drilling me with questions as I was heading out the door—I thought I'd never be able to leave! Would you stop drilling me? I don't know where he is!*

drink from a fire hose To take on or be inundated by more of something (i.e., work, responsibility, information, etc.) than one is capable of handling. *My first day on the job was like drinking from a fire hose—they threw so much at me that I don't know how I'll remember any of it.*

drink with the flies To drink alone. Primarily heard in Australia. *Come on, meet up with me at the bar! As it is, I'm just drinking with the flies, and it's depressing. Don't leave me here to drink with the flies—stay a little longer!*

drinking age In poker, a slang term for the initial hand of a Two and an Ace, referring to the legal age to purchase alcohol in the US, 21. Also called an Acey Deucey or an A2. *I felt pretty good after I was dealt a drinking age, but the rest of the cards gave me nothing to work with.*

drive (one's) pigs to market To snore. *I can't get any sleep with Will driving his pigs to market every night—I think it's time for him to see a doctor about his snoring.*

drive (oneself) to an early grave To do things or act in a way that is likely to result in one's premature death. *You're going to drive yourself to an early grave if you keep drinking as much as you do now.*

drive (someone) buggy **1.** To upset, irritate, or annoy someone to the point of distraction. *It drives me buggy seeing all these people just staring at their phones all day long. Would you stop shouting, you're driving me buggy!* **2.** To cause someone to become unhinged, insane, or mentally unstable. *All that pressure finally drove Steve buggy in the end. You kids are going to drive me buggy one of these days with all of your arguing.*

drive (someone) crazy **1.** To upset, irritate, or annoy someone to the point of distraction. *It drives me crazy seeing all these people just staring at their phones all day long. Would you stop shouting, you're driving me crazy!* **2.** To cause someone to become unhinged, insane, or mentally unstable. *All that pressure finally drove Steve crazy in the end. You kids are going to drive me crazy one of these days with all your arguing.*

drive (someone) mad **1.** To upset, irritate, or annoy someone to the point of distraction. *It drives me mad seeing all these people just staring at their phones all day long. Would you stop shouting, you're driving me mad!* **2.** To cause someone to become unhinged, insane, or mentally unstable. *All that pressure finally drove Steve mad in the end. You kids are going to drive me mad one of these days with all your arguing.*

drive (someone) potty To make someone particularly annoyed, vexed, or crazy. Primarily heard in UK. *I need you to mind the kids for a while, they've been driving me potty all morning!*

drive (someone) to an early grave To do things or act in a way that is likely to result in someone's premature death. *The stress of John's job is going to drive him to an early grave.*

drive (someone) wild **1.** To put someone into a state of extreme excitement. *The band drove the crowd wild when they played their greatest hit.* **2.** To make someone very sexually aroused. *His French accent is driving me wild!*

drive the porcelain bus To vomit profusely into the toilet, usually as the result of drinking excessive amounts of alcohol. *John was driving the porcelain bus for the rest of the night after his seventh tequila shot.*

drool bucket **1.** An unintelligent or moronic person, derogatorily likened to a mentally disabled person (i.e., one who may drool involuntarily). *The Internet is filled with drool buckets like you who make ignorant claims with no basis in reality.* **2.** A figurative bucket needed to collect saliva as a result of seeing someone or something particularly attractive. *I'm going to show you my grandfather's vintage 1967 Corvette—get your drool bucket ready!* **3.** Someone, especially a baby, who drools a great deal. *He's such a happy baby, but my goodness, he's a little drool bucket!*

drop a bollock vulgar slang To mess something up; to make a particularly egregious error. Primarily heard in UK. *That new intern is totally useless, he's always dropping a bollock on important projects. That player really dropped a bollock during the match yesterday.*

drop a brick **1.** To unintentionally say or do something embarrassing, tactless, or indiscreet; to commit some social faux pas or mistake. Primarily heard in UK. *I dropped a brick on our first date by ordering veal, only realizing later that he's a staunch animal rights advocate.* **2.** To announce a particularly surprising, alarming, or upsetting piece of news. An alternative form of "drop a bombshell." Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *Mary dropped a brick when she told me she was moving to France next week. I'm about to drop a brick on my parents by telling them that I'm going to quit law school and pursue a career in art.*

drop a dime To snitch or inform on someone to a person of higher authority. Originally street slang for informing to police, it refers to the old price of using a public payphone (10 cents). Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *Timmy is such a teacher's pet, always ready to drop a dime on any of the other students he thinks are misbehaving. He knew he was facing 10 years in prison, so he agreed to drop a dime or two to police in exchange for a lighter sentence.*

drop anchor To let down the anchor to secure a ship. *We've been sailing all day, and here seems like a good enough spot to drop anchor, don't you think?*

drop by (sometime) To come over and briefly visit or converse with

someone at a future period in time. *If you still have questions on the material, why don't you drop by my office sometime, and we'll go over everything step by step. Be sure to drop by the next time you're in the area.*

drop in the bucket A tiny amount, especially when compared to a much larger one. *I'm glad Tony started repaying the money he borrowed from me, but the five dollars he gave me yesterday is just a drop in the bucket compared to what he still owes.*

drop in the ocean A tiny amount, especially when compared to a much larger one. *I'm glad Tony started repaying the money he borrowed from me, but the five dollars he gave me yesterday is just a drop in the ocean compared to what he still owes.*

drop like flies To succumb to a particular problem, often an illness. This phrase is typically only used when more than one person has been adversely affected. *Now that the flu is going through our school, people are dropping like flies.*

drop off the radar To be ignored or forgotten in favor of something more important; to fall into obscurity or disappear from public view. *When the economy crashed, many social welfare projects simply dropped off the radar. The band had a hugely popular single in the 1980s, but they dropped off the radar soon afterward.*

drop (one) a line To contact someone, usually with a letter, note, or phone call. *I know you'll be busy enjoying yourself, but please, drop me a line on your trip. I'll drop you a line once I get settled in at school.*

drop (one's) guard To become less guarded or vigilant; to stop being cautious about potential trouble or danger. *We'll wait long enough for them to drop their guard before we launch our invasion. There will always be people in this business looking to exploit you, so you can never drop your guard.*

drop (something) in (someone's) lap To give to or force upon someone suddenly and unexpectedly. *When Steve won the lottery, we suddenly had the chance to travel the world dropped in our laps. Our son dropped his student debt in our laps when he lost his job last year.*

drop the F-bomb To use the word "fuck," especially at a particularly inappropriate time or place. *I was so nervous and emotionally shaken at my grandfather's funeral that I accidentally dropped an F-bomb during his*

eulogy. You need to be careful that you don't drop the F-bomb around her parents.

drop the gloves 1. In ice hockey, to engage in or prepare for a fistfight, i.e., by discarding one's gloves immediately beforehand. *In an effort to keep this game under control, referees are getting in between players, warning them not to drop their gloves. With tension rising between them all night, the two players dropped the gloves as soon as the whistle blew.* **2.** By extension, to engage in or prepare for any fight, dispute, or confrontation in which the participants' actions or sentiments are unrestrained or unmitigated. *The two presidential candidates dropped their gloves at the debate last night. A spokeswoman said the video game company was prepared to drop the gloves to combat online piracy.*

drop the L-bomb To say "I love you" or a similar expression of love to a romantic partner, especially unexpectedly and/or for the first time. *We'd only been dating for a couple of months when he dropped the L-bomb on me. I was so shocked that all I could think to say back was, "Thank you!"*

drop the mic 1. To dramatically drop one's microphone (or, often, to mimic such a motion) after a particularly decisive or impressive performance, action, or statement. *Did you see him drop the mic after that rap battle?* **2.** By extension, to perform a decisive or impressive action. *Dude just dropped the mic with that dunk!*

drop the writ Of prime minister, to issue a request to the head of state to dissolve parliament and (generally) call for new elections. A corruption of the proper term "draw up the writ," it has now passed into common vernacular. Primarily heard in Canada. *With members of parliament in open opposition to one another, the prime minister is expected to drop the writ as early as Saturday.*

drop trou To pull down one's pants and underwear (where "trou" is short for "trousers"). *I hate having to drop trou during the physical examination at the doctor's office.*

dropout factory A high school that has an unusually high number of students who leave school (drop out) before graduating. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *With so little funding going to public education these days, it's no wonder that so many schools are becoming dropout factories.*

drown in self-pity To be entirely consumed by sorrow, self-

deprecation, or other negative emotions to the point of self-indulgence and/or paralysis. *It's hard to help someone who would rather drown in self-pity than find a solution to their problems.*

a drowning man will clutch at a straw Someone who is desperate will try to use anything for help, even if it is really no help at all. *Facing the possibility that his marriage might be over, John began visiting psychics to help him decide what to do. A drowning man will clutch at a straw.*

drug deal The exchange of money for drugs. *I think I just watched a drug deal take place on our corner!*

drug of choice **1.** An illicit substance one is addicted to or tends to prefer. *I dabbled with a few different recreational drugs in college, but marijuana was my drug of choice.* **2.** The favored pharmaceutical treatment for a given medical condition or ailment. *Lithium has long been the drug of choice for many physicians to treat depression and bipolar disorder.* **3.** By extension, any habit, activity, or vice that one is particularly fond of or dependent upon. *A lot of people resort to drugs or alcohol to cope with their problems, but exercise has always been my drug of choice. Coffee became my drug of choice after working as a barista for three years during college.*

drug on the market Something that is not in great demand because it is abundantly available. *Mobile phones are a drug on the market these days, which is why they're so affordable.*

drugstore cowboy **1.** A young man who loiters in public places, such as on street corners or outside of drugstores, especially in the attempt to impress or woo young women. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *I hate going through this area, there's always a few drugstore cowboys cat-calling me when I pass by.* **2.** A person who dresses and acts like a cowboy but who has never worked as one and has none of a cowboy's skills or experience. Originally a reference to extras in Hollywood western films (who would remain in costume off set), it later extended to anyone who wears cowboy clothing purely for the purposes of style or affectation. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *The senator accused his challenger of being a drugstore cowboy—a city slicker who had no idea what it meant to live or work in the rural countryside.* **3.** One who sells, steals, and/or gets high on prescription or over-the-counter medications. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *Police*

apprehended a drugstore cowboy who held up a local pharmacy and made off with loads of prescription medication.

drum (something) into (someone's) head To educate someone of something through intense and frequent repetition. *The teacher tried drumming the material into their heads before the statewide exam, but he was still concerned they weren't getting it. You never listen to what I'm telling you! Do I have to drum it into your head, or what?*

Drumpf slang The original surname of US President Donald Trump's family. The term was popularized in 2016 by the satirical TV show *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver*. Thanks to *Last Week Tonight*, "Make Donald Drumpf Again" became a popular alternative to Trump's actual campaign slogan, "Make America Great Again."

drunk as a fiddler Extremely intoxicated. *You're drunk as a fiddler, stumbling in here reeking of alcohol! I only meant to stay for one drink, but I wound up getting drunk as a fiddler.*

drunk as a lord See [as drunk as a lord](#).

drunk as a skunk Extremely intoxicated. *You're drunk as a skunk, stumbling in here reeking of alcohol! I only meant to stay for one drink, but I wound up getting drunk as a skunk.*

drunk with the flies See [drink with the flies](#).

dry behind the ears Mature; well experienced in some situation or for some role. (Often used in the negative.) *You boys can't enlist for the army, you aren't even dry behind the ears yet!*

dry (one's) eyes To stop crying; to wipe away tears from one's eyes. *Come, come, dry your eyes; I'll be back before you even know it! I know he's upset, but he needs to dry his eyes before coming out to meet our guests.*

dry powder finance Cash reserves kept to cover unforeseen future obligations or purchases; low-risk liquid assets or securities that can easily be converted to cash. *I learned early on in my career that any viable business has to have dry powder ready for anything. I've kept a decent amount of dry powder on hand, so we should be able to get through your unemployment.*

dry run A practice session or test designed to identify and correct possible problems. *Before going for a job interview, I always make a dry run to the company ahead of time to make sure I won't get lost. The theater group did a*

dry run of the play to iron out any technical problems before opening night.

DTF vulgar slang Willing to have sex. It is an abbreviation for "down to fuck." *You need to find out if she's DTF. My date is DTF, so I'll see you in the morning!*

duck face slang A pouty face (with the lips stuck out, like a duck bill) typically made by young women in photos posted to social media, especially selfies. *What's with the duck face? Do you ever smile in pictures?*

duck test A form of logical, intuitive reasoning to deduce the nature of an uncertain thing or situation, usually in the absence or in spite of concrete evidence. Adapted from the saying, "If it looks like a duck, swims like a duck, and quacks like a duck, then it's probably a duck." *You aren't sure whether he likes you? Just use the duck test—if he's showing you all the signs of being interested, then he most likely is.*

dud **1.** Something that does not work as intended, is ineffectual, or is defective. *This car I bought yesterday is a complete dud. Its engine won't even start!* **2.** Someone who is disappointing or unsuccessful. *He turned out to be a bit of a dud. He doesn't have any plans to get a job; he just wants to watch TV all day.*

dug her own grave See [dig \(one's\) own grave](#).

dug in heels See [dig in \(one's\) heels](#).

dumb bunny A stupid, silly, or naïve person, usually used in an affectionate or endearing (if condescending) manner. *Ah, don't mind him; he's just a dumb bunny, but he is harmless. Oh, my darling! You are the sweetest dumb bunny I've ever known.*

a dumb priest never got a parish You'll never get what you want if you don't ask for it. *Although I'm nervous, I'm going to ask my boss for a raise. After all, a dumb priest never got a parish, so what's the worst that can happen if I ask?*

dumb shit **1.** rude slang Something stupid or trivial. *I won't argue with you about this dumb shit for a second longer!* **2.** rude slang A stupid person. *Listen, you dumb shit, I'm in charge here, so you better do what I say! Oh right, like I would listen to him—he's a dumb shit!*

dumb (something) down To make something less complicated to accommodate a less intelligent, educated, or sophisticated audience. *The*

professor decided to dumb down the course material a bit after most of his class failed the first exam. I think we ought to dumb the play down a bit; after all, most of the people coming to see it won't have a PhD in drama.

dummy run A trial or practice version of an event, done to prepare for (and mitigate any possible problems during) the real thing. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *Let's do a couple dummy runs of your speech so you feel totally comfortable with it for tomorrow's ceremony.*

dummy run A practice session or test designed to identify and correct possible problems. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *Before going for a job interview, I always make a dummy run to the company ahead of time to make sure I won't get lost. The theater group did a dummy run of the play to iron out any technical problems before opening night.*

dummy spit A childish, angry overreaction to a negative situation or outcome; a display of bad temper, likened to a temper tantrum of a child. "Dummy" here refers to the British term for the device used to soothe babies (called a pacifier in the US or a soother elsewhere), which they may spit out when in the middle of a tantrum. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *John had a dummy spit when I told him I'd sold his old comic book collection.*

dumpster fire slang A complete and utter disaster or a completely chaotic situation, likened to a fire in a dumpster, which quickly becomes uncontrollable. The phrase can be applied to both situations and people. *As you might imagine, a 17-1 loss was a dumpster fire. That intern spilled coffee himself yesterday and accidentally laminated his tie today. He's a total dumpster fire.*

(the) Dunkirk spirit An attitude of strength, determination, and camaraderie, especially by the British people as a whole, during a difficult and adverse time or situation. Refers to the evacuation of allied troops from Dunkirk, France, carried out by several civilian boats during World War II. Primarily heard in UK. *Our country faces the worst economic crises in decades, but I remain confident that, with a bit of the Dunkirk spirit, we can come out of this stronger than ever.*

during the course of In or during the process of. *During the course of your employment in the company, were you ever aware or suspicious of any illicit financial activity going on? I learned during the course of the meeting that our department was being downsized by over 50 percent.*

dust mouse A small accumulation of dust and lint, as found behind or under furniture. Also called a "dust bunny" or "dust ball." *I was appalled by the amount of dust mice that were behind the sofa when we moved it from the corner of the room.*

dust off the batter In baseball, to throw a pitch at or very close to the body of the batter. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *Don't be afraid to dust off the batter a bit if he's crowding the plate.*

dusty miller Any of several low-growing plants that have fuzzy stems and leaves. *I think I've got a dusty miller growing in my backyard.*

Dutch act 1. The act of committing suicide. The disparaging use of the word "Dutch" is a reference to the fierce rivalry between England and the Dutch in the 17th century. *After her daughter died, we were worried that Mary might be tempted to do the Dutch act.* **2.** The act of deserting or fleeing from something, especially military duty. (See above for origin.) *Robert is likely to be court-martialed for doing the Dutch act while on active duty in Iraq.*

the Dutch have taken Holland A sarcastic phrase said in response to outdated news. *A: "Did you know that Kelly is getting a divorce?" B: "Oh please, that happened months ago. Did you know that the Dutch have taken Holland?"*

Dutch reckoning obsolete A bill or other account of charges that is not itemized or detailed in any way and that is usually irregularly high. The disparaging use of the word "Dutch" is a reference to the fierce rivalry between England and the Dutch in the 17th century. *At the end of our stay in the country hotel, we were a little nonplussed at the Dutch reckoning with which we were presented by the concierge.*

Dutch treat A situation in which two people agree to split the cost of something or pay for their own share, usually a meal. *Since Bob and Sue were just friends, neither ever objected to a Dutch treat when they went out to dinner.*

a dwarf standing on the shoulders of giants A person whose insights, discoveries, or knowledge in general is not due to their own ingenuity, but rather due to the discoveries or previous work of great minds that have come before. *Though this is indeed an exciting discovery toward*



curing cancer, I am but a dwarf standing on the shoulders of giants.

dye in the wool To stain wool fibers with dye before they are spun into thread, thus making the coloration more permanent. This phrase has led to the idiomatic modifier "dyed-in-the-wool," meaning permanent and or firmly established, such as one's opinions. *All of our products are handmade, and we always dye in the wool to ensure that your clothing's color remains vibrant for years to come.*

dying for See [be dying for \(something\)](#).

dying for want of lobster sauce See [die for want of lobster sauce](#).

dying like Roland See [die like Roland](#).

dying wish A final wish, desire, or request made shortly before one dies. *Her dying wish was to have her ashes scattered at the bottom of the Grand Canyon.*

dynamite charge An encouragement to a divided jury to come to a verdict. It is also known as the "Allen charge" because such a tactic was employed for the deadlocked jury in the 1896 case *Allen v. United States*. *Come on, let's give the jury a dynamite charge, in the hopes of getting all the jurors to reach a consensus.*

E

e pluribus unum A Latin phrase meaning "one out of many." Considered a motto of the United States, it is inscribed on many US coins and the Great Seal. *When I hear E Pluribus Unum, I think about how our nation is one country of many peoples.*

each man for himself Each person (not necessarily a male) is now responsible for their own success, survival, betterment, etc., without regard for others. *Working on Wall Street, you learn pretty quickly that it's each man for himself.*

each other Each the same in action toward the other person(s), animal(s), or thing(s) in a given group of two or more. *You can just tell when you're around them that Joe and Sarah love each other very much. There are these birds in our back yard that are always fighting with each other in the morning. It's really annoying!*

each way A bet in horse racing, in which the bettor wins money if their chosen horse comes in first, second, or third place. Primarily heard in UK. *Give me an each way—that pony's got to finish in the top three.*

eager beaver One who is industrious and enthusiastic (perhaps annoyingly so). *Give that big project to the new girl, she's a real eager beaver. Aren't you an eager beaver, getting to the office an hour early.*

ear to the ground Listening for any indication of what is happening or will happen. Often used in the phrase "keep a/one's ear to the ground." A: *"I'm not sure what's going to happen with this merger, so I'm keeping an ear to the ground."* B: *"Please let me know if you hear anything." I know Kim's got her ear to the ground in case word gets out about the promotion.*

ear tunnel 1. A short, cylindrical piece of jewelry that is fitted to one's earlobe, stretching it in such a way as to create a visible opening through the flesh. *I'm in support of all forms of body modification, but the thought of getting an ear tunnel still gives me the willies.* **2.** The visible opening through the flesh of the earlobe that results from such a piercing. *I think she tried to stretch her ear tunnel too fast, and now it's pretty badly infected.*

an earful A lengthy reprimand or lecture. *I got an earful from my mom once she heard about my speeding ticket. I gave that kid an earful after he dented my car.*

an early bath A premature end to something. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *Take an early bath, Edwards! I don't tolerate illegal hits on my playing field!*

early bird 1. Someone who is more active and alert in the early hours of the morning than later in the day; an early riser. *I tried dating an early bird once, but since I like to sleep in late, it didn't really work out. I suppose it's more out of necessity than anything, but I turned into an early bird as soon as I had kids.* 2. Someone who arrives early to an event. *We'd better have everything ready for the garage sale—the early birds will be here sniffing around before we get a chance to set up.*

early days The beginning period or phase of some entity, trend, or phenomenon. The phrase is used when such a thing is being recalled at a later time. *In the early days of this project, I expected a very different outcome than what we have seen. Back in the early days, the company that became this multinational corporation only had four employees!*

early grave An unnaturally early death. Usually used in reference to a behavior that will bring about such a death. *You're headed toward an early grave if you keep drinking the way you do now. My mom is always telling me, "If you keep staying out till all hours of the night, you're going to put me in an early grave!"*

earmuff it A warning that one should stop listening (perhaps by covering one's ears, in the manner of actual earmuffs). *Earmuff it, kids! This story is not appropriate for your young ears.*

earmuffs! A warning that one should stop listening (perhaps by covering one's ears, in the manner of actual earmuffs). *Earmuffs, kids! This story is not appropriate for your young ears.*

earn a crust To do work of any kind for a living; to earn money by some means. *No, working in a canning factory isn't exactly glamorous, but we've all got to earn a crust somehow.*

earn a living To make money in order to support oneself financially. *If you quit your job at the hospital, how on earth will you earn a living? Right*

now, I have to work three jobs just to earn a living.

earn an honest buck To earn money in an honest, legal manner. Primarily heard in US. *After 10 years working for the mob, Jeremy was ready to finally start earning an honest buck.*

earn (one's) crust To do work of any kind for a living; to earn money by some means. *No, working in a canning factory isn't exactly glamorous, but I've got to earn my crust somehow. I hear Janet is earning her crust with an investment firm in Tokyo now.*

earn (one's) wings To prove one's merit and skill. *I never thought much of Stu, but he really earned his wings this week with how well he handled the merger.*

(one's) ears are burning Said by or of someone who did not witness people talking about him or her, intuiting that this is the case. *Are you two talking about me? My ears are burning.*

earth mother 1. A female goddess of fertility. *Since I still haven't gotten pregnant, I've started praying to an earth mother.* **2.** A particularly nurturing and/or fertile woman. *My yoga teacher is so kind and warm—she's a real earth mother. My sister has five kids already, and now, she's pregnant again! She's practically an earth mother.*

earthly desires Desires for tangible things (such as wealth, property, or other material goods) or for pleasures of the body (such as sexual activity, gluttony, or other hedonistic pursuits). *Buddhism teaches us to try to let go of our earthly desires, freeing our minds and bodies for a state of enlightenment. Because our earthly desires are a reflection of our sins, we should shun them if we wish to receive God's light.*

ease into (something) To become gently introduced or accustomed to something new, such as a job or situation. *I was really stressed about beginning a job I was so unfamiliar with, but my boss let me ease into it, and I have a good handle on things now. Your grandfather has lived in the same home for over 60 years, so we have to be sure he's eased into living with us.*

ease someone into (something) To gently introduce or accustom someone to something new, such as a job or situation. *I was really stressed about beginning a job I was so unfamiliar with, but my boss made sure to ease me into the work. Your grandfather has lived in the same home for over*

60 years, so we have to be sure we ease him into living with us.

ease up (on someone or something) To reduce the pressure or urgency placed on a person, thing, action, or situation. *Ease up on the brakes there, we don't want to come to a stop that fast. Would you ease up already? I know I messed up the account, and I don't need you berating me for it further. Ease up on Samantha, she's under a lot of pressure at home.*

easier said than done It is easy to say that one can or will do something, but is much more difficult to actually do it. *You vowed to double the amount of last year's donations? Easier said than done. I know you're confident in your idea, but starting a company from the ground up is easier said than done.*

easier than falling off a log Extremely easy; very intuitive; requiring little or no skill or effort. *After so many years as an accountant, doing taxes is easier than falling off a log for me. Boy, that test was easier than falling off a log!*

easier than rolling off a log Extremely easy; very intuitive; requiring little or no skill or effort. *After so many years as an accountant, doing taxes is easier than rolling off a log for me. Boy, that test was easier than rolling off a log!*

east German judge See [\(some score\) from the East German judge](#).

easy as 1-2-3 See [be \(as\) easy as one-two-three](#).

easy as ABC Extremely easy. *Come on, give me a hard one! These equations are easy as ABC!*

easy as falling off a log See [\(as\) easy as falling off a log](#).

easy as falling off of a log See [be \(as\) easy as falling off \(of\) a log](#).

easy as one-two-three Extremely easy. *Come on, give me a hard one! These equations are easy as one-two-three!*

easy as pie See [be \(as\) easy as pie](#).

easy as rolling off a log See [be \(as\) easy as rolling off \(of\) a log](#).

easy mark One who is or will be easy to swindle, con, persuade, or exploit. Refers to the slang meaning of "mark," the intended victim of a swindler or con artist. *We should see if Larry will give us the 20 dollars; he's usually an easy mark.*

easy on the eye Attractive. The phrase is more frequently seen as "easy on the eyes." A: "He's easy on the eye, isn't he?" B: "Of course he is, he's a model!"

easy sledding Progress that will or is expected to require little to no effort. *With their opponents' star player out with an injury, it should be easy sledding for the home team today. It will be easy sledding once I get this one assignment out of the way.*

eat (away) at (someone's) conscience To increasingly cause or inspire troubled feelings of guilt, especially for an extended period of time. *Stealing that money from my parents has been eating away at my conscience for the past month. Don't let it eat at your conscience, anyone would have done the same thing in that situation.*

eat for two To be pregnant, that is, to eat for the sake of both oneself and one's unborn child. *I really want to start eating healthier foods; after all, I'm eating for two now.*

eat high off the hog To prosper or otherwise live very well. It refers to the rich being able to afford the choicest cut of meat, which, from a pig, is higher up on the animal. *They've been eating high off the hog ever since David won the lottery. It must be a shock for them having to count their pennies like this—they're used to eating high off the hog, after all.*

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eat into (something) 1. To take away or use up a large amount of resources over a certain period of time. *Changing voter demographics have been eating into the party's traditionally strong hold on state politics. Don't eat into your savings to pay for that fancy new smart phone.* 2. To erode, corrode, or slowly consume something. *Rising acidity in the ocean has caused it to start eating into the hulls of our ships.*

eat it rude slang An interjection by a speaker who is annoyed or frustrated with someone else. *Eat it, Ben! You cheated on me, remember?*

eat (one's) gun To commit suicide by shooting oneself in the head

through the roof of one's mouth. *Tom was so overcome with grief after his sister died that he ate his gun shortly thereafter.*

eat (one's) own dog food **1.** To use the product(s) one's company produces or develops as a means of demonstrating or validating its quality, capabilities, or superiority to other brands. Used primarily in reference to software industries, the phrase is thought to have originated with advertisements for Alpo dog food in the 1980s, in which actor Lorne Green promoted the product by pointing out that he fed it to his own dogs. *The company sent out a memo to all of its employees telling them to eat their own dog food to demonstrate their new operating system's speed and ease of use.* **2.** By extension, to use software one's company is developing—usually in its beta form—so as to test it for flaws and ensure its ease of use by end users before it is released. *We didn't have time to eat our own dog food before the new operating system's release, so I'm worried it may still have a lot of glitches that haven't been accounted for yet.*

eat (one's) salt To stay at someone's house. *I feel bad eating Jim's salt for a week, but his house is closer to the meeting site than any hotel.*

eat (one's) shirt **1.** To face the repercussion of being incorrect after one's claim, boast, or assertion is refuted; to eat one's words. *The member of parliament will have to eat his shirt for his claim that no new taxes would be introduced this year. You'll be eating your shirt if this new engine isn't as fast as you say it is.* **2.** To take a loss on a wasted or unfruitful investment. *I ended up having to eat my shirt on the cost of the lumber for the new shed after it was ruined by the rain.*

eat (one's) Wheaties To mentally and/or physically prepare or bolster oneself for a task or activity that requires a large amount of energy or effort. Refers to the cereal Wheaties, which advertises itself as the "Breakfast of Champions" and features prominent athletes on the front of its box. *You're running an ultramarathon at the end of the summer? You'd better eat your Wheaties!*

eat (one's) words To retract, regret, or feel foolish about what one has previously said. *You think I can't get an A in this class, but I'll make you eat your words when we get our report cards! After my negative prediction for the season, I certainly ate my words when the team started out undefeated.*

eat (one's) young To neglect, betray, or harshly criticize members of a

group that are of a lower status or position. *The more experienced nursing staff has been accused of eating their young, treating trainees and new nurses with sometimes intolerable contempt. As the business crumbled, the CEOs and members of management began eating their young out of desperation, indiscriminately firing anyone who had less than five years' experience in the company.*

eat pussy vulgar slang To perform cunnilingus on a woman.

eat (someone's) ass out **1.** rude slang To vehemently or furiously scold or reprimand someone, especially in the armed forces. *The captain ate my ass out after I came back to the barracks drunk.* **2.** vulgar slang To sexually stimulate someone's anus with one's mouth.

eat (someone's) dust To be outperformed or outrun by someone, usually by a very wide margin. *The veteran runner was performing at the best of his career, and everyone else in the race ate his dust. We've been eating the competitor's dust since they released their new line of smartphones.*

eat (something or someone) for breakfast To defeat, complete, or handle something easily. Often used as part of a boast. *He can challenge me all he wants, I'm not worried! I eat chumps like him for breakfast! If anyone can write a term paper in one night, it's Rich—he eats assignments like that for breakfast!*

eat, drink, and be merry A call for others to enjoy themselves, usually in the context of a party or other festive gathering. *Come on, people, this is a party—eat, drink, and be merry!*

edge in To insert, work, or force something or oneself into a narrow margin of available time or space. *I usually go unnoticed at the board meetings, but I managed to edge in a few suggestions before the time was up. The party was packed, and I didn't really know anyone, so I edged in and took a place by the corner.*

edge out To surpass, overtake, or defeat, especially by a narrow margin or degree. *With sales of their new affordable smartphone surging, the company has finally edged out the leading mobile phone distributor from the top spot in the market. The newcomer managed to edge out the reigning champion by just a few technical points at the end of the championship boxing match.*

an educated guess A thoughtful, well-reasoned guess; a guess with some basis in one's knowledge. *Class, we've studied cells all semester. Take an educated guess as to what the answer might be.*

eff my life See [fuck my life](#).

effed slang A euphemism for "fucked" (using the spelled-out version of its first letter, "F"); in a problematic or daunting situation; certain to fail or experience the worst possible outcome; doomed. *Dude, we are so effed—mom is on her way home from the airport, and the house is still a wreck from our party! I knew I was effed when I found out my enemy was on the recruiting committee.*

egg in (your) beer Something for nothing; a free, unnecessary, or unmerited bonus or favor. Most often used in the phrase, "What do you want, egg in your beer?" as a retort to someone who gripes or complains about something for which they should already be content. *Your parents paid for your college degree and now you're moaning that they won't pay for your rent? What do you want, egg in your beer?*

egg on (one's) face The embarrassment that results from a failure or faux pas. Typically used in the phrase "have egg on (one's) face." *Oh man, the boss found out that messed up the budget report, and now I have egg on my face. Sally was left with egg on her face after forgetting the words to the song during her audition.*

eggs is eggs A phrase used to describe something that is definitely going to happen. It might be a corruption of the phrase "x is x." Typically used in the phrase "(as) sure as eggs is eggs." *Of course I'll be there, sure as eggs is eggs!*

ego trip A display of superiority and self-centeredness. *Are you on an ego trip? I'm not one of your lowly interns, so you can get your own coffee! The boss must have been on a real ego trip when he decided to name the building after himself.*

eight-hundred-lb. gorilla See [800-pound gorilla](#).

eight ways from Sunday Thoroughly or completely; in every possible way; from every conceivable angle. *Everyone had their money on the reigning champion, but he was beaten eight ways from Sunday by the newcomer. We researched the case eight ways from Sunday, but there didn't*

seem to be any way that we could win with the evidence at hand.

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the eighth wonder of the world Something deemed magnificent enough to be recognized along with the classical Seven Wonders of the World (which include the Great Pyramids of Egypt and the Hanging Gardens of Babylon). *Many people consider the Great Wall of China to be the eighth wonder of the world.*

elbow (one's) way To force one's way in, to, or through a crowded place, as by pushing other people with one's elbows. *The party was so packed with people that I had to elbow my way just to get to the bathroom! We had to elbow our way through the crowd to board the train on time.*

elbow (one's) way to the top To find or pursue success by means of aggressive, relentless determination, often at the expense of others. *Martha elbowed her way to the top of the business world, but she made very few friends in the process.*

element of surprise A method of stealth or secrecy employed to catch someone off-guard. *I'll get mom to let me stay out till midnight, but I can't ask her now, when she's expecting it—I need the element of surprise. The fish camouflages itself and disappears onto the ocean floor, relying on the element of surprise to catch its prey.*

elephant ear 1. Any of several varieties of plants that have large, heart-shaped leaves. A: *"Look at those enormous leaves!"* B: *"Oh wow! I guess that's an elephant ear."* 2. A puff pastry that is shaped like a palm leaf. Also known as a "palmier." *I know I should be eating better, but I couldn't resist getting an elephant ear at the bakery for breakfast.*

elephant ears Metal discs on the outside of a missile or rocket. *The elephant ears on the rocket need to be repaired.*

(the) elephant in the room An obvious truth or fact, especially one regarded as embarrassing or undesirable, that is being intentionally ignored or left unaddressed. *We all sat sipping our tea quietly; no one wanting to bring*

up the elephant in the room about Joel's expulsion from college.

an elephant never forgets One remembers everything. A play on the idea that elephants have great memories. *I don't think we can pick up where we were before you betrayed me because an elephant never forgets! I would be hesitant to cross him—he's a dangerous man, and an elephant never forgets.*

Elvis has left the building Said when an event or performance has come to an end, or when someone or something has left a place, especially in a dramatic fashion. The phrase refers to an announcement famously made at the end of Elvis Presley concerts alerting people that he vacated the premises and no further encores would be played. *We kept waiting for the band to come back on stage to perform some of the fans' favorite songs, but it looked like Elvis had left the building. That ball is flying, and it looks like... yes, it's a homerun! Elvis has left the building, folks!*

Elysian Fields A place or time of perfect, happy contentment, likened to the paradisiacal afterlife of Greek mythology. *After three years living in the big city, barely making any money, I find myself dreaming of the Elysian Fields of my childhood in the Midwest.*

an embarrassment of riches Too much or more than enough of a desired or needed thing. *There are so many stellar applicants for the job that we can't choose between them—it's truly an embarrassment of riches.*

éminence grise Someone who is powerful in a particular area without having an official title. The phrase, French for "grey eminence," originally applied to one of Cardinal Richelieu's advisors, a monk who wore a grey robe. A: *"Why should I worry about what Bob thinks? He doesn't even have a title!"* B: *"Yes, but he's the éminence grise of the firm, and the partners really value his opinion."*

emoji A small picture that can be included in text messages. The term is Japanese for "picture writing." A: *"Did you see all the cute new emojis?"* B: *"Yes, because you sent me about 20 of them in your last text."*

emotional cripple 1. Someone who is unable or finds it difficult to form or express emotions, thus hindering their ability to properly relate to other people. *Raised by a single father who was at best distant and at worst abusive, Jonathan grew up a cold, emotional cripple, with no friends or companions.* 2. Someone who has become incompetent, indecisive, socially

alienated, helpless, or apathetic due to an overwhelming and debilitating experience or abundance of negative emotions. *My anxiety has left me an emotional cripple—I can do little more than make myself breakfast each day.*

the emperor's new clothes Something widely accepted as true or professed as being praiseworthy due to an unwillingness of the general population to criticize it or be seen as going against popular opinion. Taken from the Hans Christian Andersen fable of the same name, in which a vain king is sold imaginary clothing by two weavers who promise him that it can only be seen by those who are ignorant, incompetent, or unfit for their position. *The company's newest device is, in fact, a complete waste of money, but so many people are invested in their brand loyalty that they will continue to buy and adore it like the emperor's new clothes.*

employ a steam engine to crack a nut To use excessive, overcomplicated, or extravagant means or force to accomplish something relatively minor or simple. *With this new system of issuing licenses, the government has employed a steam engine to crack a nut: four separate departments now handle each stage of an application, when a single department could easily process applications from start to finish.*

empty nest A family home inhabited by parents after their children have grown up and departed. *Many parents feel depressed when they are left in an empty nest.*

empty promise A promise that is devoid of worth or meaning, one that cannot or was never intended to be carried out. *John may be a sweet-talker, but in reality, he's a lowlife full of empty promises.*

an empty sack cannot stand upright One must eat in order to carry out one's duties. *Have some dinner before you go back to your research. An empty sack cannot stand upright, you know.*

empty suit A person with the appearance of authority, importance, or significance, but who, in reality, is completely ineffectual, incompetent, or unremarkable. *My boss likes to think he's God's gift to the world, but he's just an empty suit who couldn't run the business for a day if it weren't for me.*

empty the tank To contribute, expend, or put forth the utmost of one's effort, ability, and/or energy. *The veteran singer still empties the tank at each and every one of his performances. All right, ladies. There's two minutes left and we need four more points to win the game, so go out there and empty the*

tank!

empty threat A threat that is devoid of worth or meaning, one that cannot or was never intended to be carried out. *The manager is always full of empty threats about docking our pay, but he'll never actually go through with it.*

an end in itself Something that is its own entity with no greater purpose. *My parents think that studying literature is an end in itself and will never lead to a career.*

end in view A focus on the end goal or desired outcome. *Although working on my thesis was overwhelming, I tried to keep the end in view and envisioned holding my degree. I don't take these personnel decisions lightly—they are all made with the end in view.*

end of A final statement used to signify that a decision or conclusion has been reached and that one will not discuss it further. It is a shortening of "end of discussion." *I don't want to hear it! We're moving next week, end of!*

the end of (one's) rope A point of utter exhaustion or exasperation; a point or state at which one has no more patience, endurance, or energy left. *Joshua started throwing a tantrum this afternoon, and with all the other things I have to get done, I've just reached the end of my rope! Daniel's been at the end of his rope for weeks now—he has seriously got to get a different job!*

the end of (one's) tether A point of utter exhaustion or exasperation; a point or state at which one has no more patience, endurance, or energy left. *Joshua started throwing a tantrum this afternoon, and with all the other things I have to get done, I've just reached the end of my tether! Daniel's been at the end of his tether for weeks now—he has seriously got to get a different job!*

end of play In business, a working day's end. Often used in the construction "by the end of play," it refers to the end of a given day's play in sports such as cricket or tennis. Primarily heard in UK. *I'm under a lot of pressure to finish this report by the end of play.*

the end of the line 1. The physical end of a route of travel, usually a bus or train route. *This is the end of the line, folks, so everyone needs to get off the bus.* 2. By extension, the conclusion or final step of something.

Printing our report is the end of the line—now, we just have to hand it in and pray for a good grade! Regardless of how this championship series goes, I know this is the end of the line for me, after 16 years in the league.

the end of the road The conclusion or final step of something. *Printing our report is the end of the road—now, we just have to hand it in and pray for a good grade! Regardless of how this championship series goes, I know this is the end of the road for me, after 16 years in the league.*

end of the world A very big deal or problem. Often used in the negative to describe a situation that one believes is being exaggerated. *I know you're upset that you failed a test, but really, it's not the end of the world! You might think that not getting your driver's license today is the end of the world, but it's not. In five years, you won't even remember this day!*

the end of the world as we know it Refers hyperbolically to some sudden or unexpected deviation from what is familiar or customary. *Well, whoever is elected, it won't be the end of the world as we know it; each candidate is as good or bad as the other in my book.*

end run An evasive or diversionary action or maneuver around some obstacle or difficulty. An allusion to a play in American football, in which the carrier of the ball runs wide to evade the defensive line. *Many wealthy citizens try to perform an end run around their country's tax laws by filtering their money in offshore accounts.*

end (something) on a high note To finish, complete, or leave (something) at a successful, impressive, or climactic point. *I know we've had quite a few losses this season, but let's win this last game and end on a high note! After winning the Oscar, she decided to end her acting career on a high note.*

end to end 1. Placed in a row, such that the ends of each item are touching. *If you laid out all her books end to end, I bet you they would stretch all the way down the street!* 2. From the very beginning to the very end of something. *The skilled player ran the ball end to end down the field. That film was excellent end to end!*

end up in the knacker's yard To be in or enter a state of ruin or failure due to having become useless or obsolete. Refers to a slaughterhouse for old or injured horses. *Once a booming industry before the age of the Internet, home video rental has largely ended up in the knacker's yard these*

days.

endgame The final stages of a process, development, or activity. An allusion to the last stage in chess, when the majority of pieces have been removed from the board. *The two companies began the endgame of their historic, multi-billion-dollar merger deal.*

enemy combatant A term, popularized during the post-9/11 War on Terror, applied to a captured fighter who was allowed fewer rights than those laid out in the Geneva Convention. *Many of the enemy combatants captured in Afghanistan were taken to be held at special military sites.*

the enemy of my enemy is my friend A phrase highlighting how a common enemy can be a unifying force for otherwise disparate groups or people. *I didn't want to work with that organization until I realized that we all wanted to keep the same candidate out of office. That's when I realized that the enemy of my enemy is my friend.*

enfant terrible A famous person who is known to behave inappropriately, often to others' shock or horror. As this phrase is French for "terrible child," it is typically pronounced with a French accent. *If you continue to have tantrums on the court, you will be known as the enfant terrible of tennis. He is the enfant terrible of high society, so of course he wore blue jeans to the gala.*

engine room The main source of talent, power, or ability in a team or group, likened to the room that houses a ship's engine. *Sarah is our engine room, so with her injured, I'm not sure how we'll be able to win on Saturday.*

an Englishman's home is his castle One should be the sole person in control of one's home and the happenings there. Primarily heard in UK. *I vehemently oppose any laws that dictate how I behave in the privacy of my own home. An Englishman's home is his castle!*

enlarge (up)on (something) To add or supply more information or details about something. *I can see you aren't familiar with this material yet, so allow me to briefly enlarge upon it for you. I asked the boss to enlarge on the details of the proposal for me.*

enough (something) to choke Caligula's horse A lot of something. The phrase likely mentions Caligula because the Roman emperor was known for his penchant for excess. A: *"Do you think I got enough*



balloons? B: "Are you kidding? There are enough balloons here to choke Caligula's horse!"

enough to choke a horse A huge or excessive amount. *When my grandmother cooks for family gatherings, she always makes enough to choke a horse!*

enough to make the angels weep So terrible, distressing, or grievous as to shake the foundations of one's faith or hope. *The tragedy of those two young boys' deaths is enough to make the angels weep.*

epic fail An especially big or embarrassing blunder. *I can't believe I called the CEO by the wrong name! What an epic fail. I tried to bake a cake for my sister's birthday, but I accidentally used salt instead of sugar. Epic fail.*

equal to the occasion Having the necessary ability, talent, qualities, or capability to handle or accomplish a given role or situation. *The young soldier proved equal to the occasion and saved his platoon from an enemy ambush. We need a manager who can lead project initiatives and efficiently direct employees—do you think you're equal to the occasion?*

equal to the task Having the necessary ability, talent, qualities, or capability to handle or accomplish a given role or situation. *The young soldier proved equal to the task and saved his platoon from an enemy ambush. We need a manager who can lead project initiatives and efficiently direct employees—do you think you're equal to the task?*

escape fire 1. A fire created in an area of vegetation so as to create a path clear of fuel to avoid an oncoming wildfire. *A lighter might seem like the last thing you'd need in the middle of a grasslands wildfire, but it saved my life when I used it to start an escape fire.* **2.** By extension, any nonstandard, counterintuitive, and/or improvised solution to a problem that is too large or complex to be dealt with by traditional means. *The country's welfare debt was so insurmountable that the government began looking at radical escape fires to manage the situation.*

escape the bear and fall to the lion To avoid a frightening or problematic situation, only to end up in a worse one later. A: "After I swerved to avoid hitting a pedestrian, I wound up in oncoming traffic, and my car was totaled." B: "That's awful. You escaped the bear and fell to the lion."

esprit de l'escalier See [l'esprit de l'escalier](#).



esthetically challenged Distinctly unattractive or unpleasant to the eye; homely. A euphemistic and humorously politically correct term, usually said of a person. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *Deborah's new boyfriend is a bit esthetically challenged, but she loves him and I guess that's all that counts.*

etched in stone Permanently fixed or firmly established; not subject to any amendment or alteration. Often used in the negative. *The deal isn't yet etched in stone, but we're confident it will go ahead as hoped.*

eternal sleep A euphemism for death. *Even though she had been sick for months, we were all devastated when our grandmother entered her eternal sleep.*

ethically challenged Dishonest, corrupt, or otherwise unethical in behavior. *Though many suspected the governor of being ethically challenged, it wasn't until evidence of a bribery scheme emerged that any legal action was taken against him.*

ethnic music Traditional music of a particular ethnic group or community. *I love all types of music, especially the ethnic music you hear in the big city.*

eureka moment A moment or instance at which a sudden, revelatory idea, realization, or solution to a problem comes to mind. *We'd been working on the problem in the lab for weeks, but the eureka moment came to me when I was out gardening!*

Evel Knievel Jocular slang for someone who engages in dangerous stunts. Evel Knievel was an American daredevil known for performing dangerous motorcycle jumps. *Hey, Evel Knievel, if I hear about you jumping trash cans on your bike again, you'll be grounded for a month!*

even break An equal opportunity; fair treatment. Primarily heard in US. *I know I'm not the CEO's niece or daughter, but this is my dream job, and I am more than qualified for it. Can I please just get an even break?*

even Homer (sometimes) nods Even the best creators of fiction sometimes commit errors. An allusion to the Greek poet Homer, whose epic poems contain several apparent errors in continuity. *The film is without a doubt the filmmaker's masterpiece, despite a minor plot hole in the third act; even Homer nods, after all.*

even keel **1.** adjective Calm and stable. *I know this is a stressful time, but we need to try keep things as even keel as possible.* **2.** noun A calm and stable situation. The phrase alludes to a ship's keel, a supporting structure that helps to keep the ship stable in the water (and thus needs to be "even" or level). *Whoa, let's all stop yelling and try to get back on an even keel!*

even money Equal odds or likelihood of some outcome or event happening or not. Taken from a gambling wager of 1:1, in which the bettor stands to win or lose equal amounts of money on the outcome. *I've been training all year, but my opponent is exceptionally tough, so I'd say it's even money as to who will win. The rail system is so poor here that it's usually even money whether the train will arrive or not.*

even the score To avenge a wrong or make an unfair situation more equal. *After Danny stole my girlfriend, I had to even the score by dating his ex. After taking a big hit, Scott tried to even the score with one of his own, but he ended up getting a penalty.*

ever and again antiquated From time to time; occasionally; now and then. *Ever and again, I find something on television worth watching, but mostly I prefer to read.*

ever so To a great or exceeding degree or extent. Used as a modifier for other adjectives. *I was ever so grateful for your help the other day. Your brother has been ever so kind to me.*

every dark cloud has a silver lining It is possible for something good to come out of a bad situation. (A silver lining on a cloud is an indication that the sun is behind it.) *I know you're upset about not getting the lead in the school play, but just keep in mind that every dark cloud has a silver lining—you'll get lots of experience as the understudy! When I'm going through a hard time, I try to remind myself that every dark cloud has a silver lining.*

every eel hopes to become a whale A phrase highlighting one's ambition. *Just like every eel hopes to become a whale, I dream of becoming the CEO one day.*

every picture tells a story Simply observing the scene or the look on one's face will allow one to determine what has taken place. *Katie didn't have to say anything—every picture tells a story, and the scared look on her face*

told me she had broken the vase.

every silver lining has a cloud A good situation can be followed by something bad or negative. A reversal of the more common phrase "every cloud has a silver lining." *I wouldn't get too excited, if I were you—every silver lining has a cloud, after all.*

every single one Every individual person or item within a group, without exception. *This is going to be the hardest game we've played all year, so I need every single one of you giving it everything you've got! I can't believe it, every single one of these dishes has been broken!*

every Tom, Dick, and Harry Every kind of common, undistinguished person; anyone at all, indiscriminately. *You don't want every Tom, Dick, and Harry coming to your performance, but then you don't want to limit the amount of business you might bring in, either. Kate's being very selective as to who gets invited to the wedding, as she doesn't want every Tom, Dick, and Harry turning up.*

every which where In every direction; all over the place; everywhere. An alternative form of "every which way." *I've lived in the countryside all my life, so these cars and people moving every which where in the city never cease to astonish me.*

everybody and his cousin Used hyperbolically to express a large number or a majority of people. *I'm so jealous, everybody and his cousin is going on a vacation this summer except for me.*

everybody and his dog Used hyperbolically to express a large number or a majority of people. *I'm so jealous, everybody and his dog is going on a vacation this summer except for me.*

everybody and his mother Used hyperbolically to express a large number or a majority of people. *I'm so jealous, everybody and his mother is going on a vacation this summer except for me.*

everybody and his mum Used hyperbolically to express a large number or a majority of people. Primarily heard in UK. *I'm so jealous, everybody and his mum is going on a vacation this summer except for me.*

everybody and his uncle Used hyperbolically to express a large number or a majority of people. *I'm so jealous, everybody and his uncle is going on a vacation this summer except for me.*

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everyone and their brother A large number or a majority of people. Used hyperbolically. *Everyone and their brother is going to be at the wedding this July, I hope I can make it too.*

everyone and their dog A large number or a majority of people. Used hyperbolically. *I'm so jealous, everyone and their dog is going on a vacation this summer except for me.*

everyone and their mother A large number or a majority of people. Used hyperbolically. *I'm so nervous, everyone and their mother is coming to our show tonight.*

everyone and their mum A large number or a majority of people. Used hyperbolically. Primarily heard in UK. *I don't really want to get an iPhone. Everyone and their mum has one these days.*

everyone and their mum Used hyperbolically to express a large number or a majority of people. Primarily heard in UK. *I'm so jealous, everyone and their mum is going on a vacation this summer except for me.*

everything and the kitchen sink Nearly everything one can reasonably imagine; many different things, often to the point of excess or redundancy. An alternative form of "everything but the kitchen sink." *After the bank foreclosed on our house, we had to pack up everything and the kitchen sink into our truck and drive across the state to my mother's house. We were only going to be camping for two nights, but she still insisted on bringing everything and the kitchen sink along with us.*

everything tastes of porridge No matter how lost one gets in fantasy, the reality of day-to-day life (here represented by "porridge") is always present and cannot be ignored. *Just remember, future Broadway star, that everything tastes of porridge.*

evil eye 1. The power believed by the superstitious to inflict harm, injury, or misfortune by a look or stare. *They say that the old lady living in the house at the end of the road has an evil eye—if she catches you in her gaze, you'll be cursed with bad luck for a year!* **2.** A hateful, malicious, or villainous look or stare that suggests or is thought to be capable of inflicting harm or misfortune. *I saw him giving me the evil eye, so I turned around and walked the other way.*

the evil one The devil. *My son has never gotten into trouble like this before—I worry that he's under the evil one's influence.*

evil twin 1. A malignant, treacherous, and/or malicious counterpart of a person or thing. *Our competitor sells similar products, but they manufacture them in sweatshops—they're like our evil twin.* **2.** In telecommunications networking, a hidden wireless access point located near a legitimate one, used for the purposes of eavesdropping or diverting sensitive personal information.



I know you think I'm just a conspiracy theorist, but the government is using evil twins to listen in on digital communications between people all around the country!

excess baggage **1.** Literally, travel luggage that exceeds the dimensions of size or weight normally allowed on a plane or train, usually requiring a fee for it to be allowed onboard. *My suitcase was only slightly over the weight limit, but the airline clerk still insisted on labeling my suitcase as excess baggage and slapping me with a fine.* **2.** Any person or thing that is unnecessary or unwanted and thus is or becomes burdensome. *I know it's ungenerous, but Martin's younger brother has been nothing but excess baggage since we agreed to let him live with us.* **3.** A personal history, emotional disposition, or traumatic experience that is or becomes debilitating or burdensome in life. *He carried the excess baggage of his abusive parents with him for years after leaving home. Her reclusiveness has become real excess baggage for her in recent months.*

exchange flesh To engage in sexual intercourse. *The party atmosphere in college encourages many students to drink too much and exchange flesh with as many people as they can.*

execution style Describing a shooting in which the victim is conscious and shot at close range, often with no means of escape. *I'm terrified to go into that neighborhood now that I've heard about the execution style shootings that have happened there.*

exercise for the reader A subject, debate, or other matter that is not decided or dealt with directly by the author or presenter, but rather is left up to the judgment or interpretation of the observer, reader, or addressee. *The report merely details the spending practices of the parties concerned; whether or not these payments were dubious in nature is left as an exercise for the reader. The politician's speech made broad references to invigorating the economy with practical, no-nonsense measures—what such measures might be, though, was left as an exercise for the reader.*

exist on borrowed time To live or exist in a temporary and/or tenuous position, which may come to an end suddenly and abruptly. *The small aboriginal population has been existing on borrowed time since the invaders began colonizing their land. Accidents and disease can strike so unexpectedly that it feels like we're all existing on borrowed time.*

exit stage left 1. noun A timely and inconspicuous exit or departure, done so as not to make a scene or attract attention to oneself. An allusion to stage directions in theater, indicating when (and where) an actor should leave the stage from a scene. *When the rally was interrupted by protesters, the senatorial candidate made a quick exit stage left to avoid undue media attention.* 2. verb To leave in a timely and inconspicuous manner, so as not to make a scene or attract attention to oneself. (Sometimes used as an imperative.) *The CEO decided to exit stage left from the company before his embezzlements became too noticeable. I suggest you exit stage left before I lose my temper.*

exotic cheroot A euphemism for marijuana or a marijuana cigarette. Coined by the British satirical magazine *Private Eye*. Primarily heard in UK. *The young up-and-coming doctor was caught by police with an exotic cheroot in his pocket. I'd say you've been smoking too much exotic cheroot lately because that's the stupidest idea I've ever heard!*

expect the unexpected Be prepared to face unanticipated events or situations. *Climbing a mountain has many dangers, so no matter how much you prepare, expect the unexpected.*

experience is the mother of wisdom Most wisdom is gained by experiencing different things (compared to acquiring knowledge through schooling or other means). *A few years ago, I couldn't even get behind the wheel without having panic attacks, but, with practice, I'm much calmer and can drive with no problems. Experience is the mother of wisdom after all.*

explore all avenues To investigate or pursue every possible means to find a solution to a given problem or to achieve a desired outcome. *Right now, we are exploring all avenues to catch the perpetrator of this heinous crime. We've explored all avenues, but I just can't see how we can continue to afford living in this house.*

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expose (one)self To show one's genitals in a public setting. A: *"Did you hear that someone got busted for exposing himself at the mall?"* B: *"No! I'm*

really glad I stayed home today."

extra pair of hands Additional help or assistance provided by another person. *I think we need to hire an extra pair of hands to help clean the house and mind the children.*

extract the urine (out of someone or something) To mock, deride, tease, or ridicule someone or something. A humorously polite alternative to the phrase "take the piss (out of someone or something)." Primarily heard in UK. *It took me a while to realize that all her brother's bizarre questions about America were really just his way of extracting the urine out of me. Jeff's always extracting the urine out of the way politicians behave in public. It always takes foreigners a while to come to terms with English people's penchant for extracting the urine.*

an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth Compensation or retribution that is (or should be) of an equal amount or degree to the injury or offense that was originally dealt. The saying comes from various passages in the Old Testament, including in Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy. *I cannot be placated by paltry excuses of reparation! An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth; this I demand from all who have wronged me.*

eye of the beholder The subjective appreciation or evaluation made by an individual viewer, participant, appraiser, etc. From the proverb "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder" (i.e., an approximation of beauty will differ greatly between different people). *It's only in the eye of the beholder that such a nebulous thing as "truth" or "justice" has any real meaning. You may not like my new jacket, but style is in the eye of the beholder.*

eye of the wind The direction from which the wind blows. *Which way is the eye of the wind right now?*

eye opener 1. An utterly shocking or startling thing, situation, or revelation. (Sometimes hyphenated.) *The former champion's crushing defeat in the first round of the tournament was an eye opener to everyone who had expected her to make it to the finals without resistance. Learning about John's opium addiction was a real eye-opener for me.* 2. A strong alcoholic beverage consumed early in the morning or first thing upon waking. (Sometimes hyphenated.) Primarily heard in US, Canada, South Africa. *After going on quite a bender over the weekend, an eye opener was the only thing that could get me moving on Monday morning.*

eye sex An act in which two people exchange looks indicating intense mutual sexual desires or attraction. *I kept having eye sex with this guy across the bar, but he left before I had a chance to talk to him.*

eye (someone) up **1.** To look over a person so as to evaluate and form an opinion of their appearance and demeanor. *I could feel everyone eyeing me up as I made my way toward the main stage.* **2.** To look attentively upon or at someone in whom one is romantically or sexually interested. *There's a really cute guy eyeing you up from across the bar.*

eye up **1.** To look at someone carefully in order to make a judgment about him or her. *I saw the other poker players eyeing me up, trying to figure out if I was any good.* **2.** To look at someone or something in a way that indicates desire, attraction, or sexual interest. *You're totally eyeing up that cute blonde over there, aren't you? I've been eyeing up the dessert menu, but everything looks so good. I can't decide what to order.*

eye up (something) To closely inspect something in which one is interested. *I've been eyeing up this vintage Mustang that my neighbor is selling.*

the eyes are the windows of the soul The eyes can reveal a lot about one's inner state and emotions. *When I gazed into her eyes for the first time, I felt like I had known her forever. I guess it's true that the eyes are the windows of the soul.*

F

f-bomb A euphemism for the word "fuck." Usually used with the verb "drop." *Please don't drop any f-bombs while babysitting my kids, OK? They repeat everything.*

F my life See [fuck my life](#).

F4F An abbreviation for "first for first," a common comment on popular social media posts that promotes the exchange of "likes," in which one requests a "like" on the first picture on one's own page in return for liking the first picture on the other person's page. *Ever since I started writing "F4F" on famous people's posts, my Instagram pictures have been getting way more likes!*

face (that) would stop a clock **1.** A face that is strikingly or shockingly unattractive. *His physique was remarkable, but unfortunately he was cursed with a face that would stop a clock. She is extraordinarily bright, but her face could stop a clock.* **2.** Less commonly, a face that is strikingly or shockingly attractive. *He walked down the street—tall, muscular, and with a face that could stop a clock—and everyone stared to admire his beauty. John's new girlfriend has a face that would stop a clock, so beautiful that it seems like time stands still when she enters a room.*

face value The apparent or base value of something, assessed without further examination or consideration. *Don't try to pick apart this movie for deeper meaning, just take it at face value. I made a mistake when I took my manipulative aunt's word at face value.*

(the) fact is The truth of the matter is; in reality; actually. *Whatever your beliefs about the cause of it, the fact is that millions of people live in abject poverty every single day. Fact is, if we don't act now, it will be too late.*

fact of life Something unpleasant that is accepted because it cannot be changed. *Gloomy, rainy days are just a fact of life for the British.*

facts on the ground The reality of a given situation, as opposed to speculation or abstract conjecture. *You can argue about what his intention was, but the facts on the ground are that we found him with the missing*

money.

fade fast **1.** To rapidly approach death, as due to illness or injury. *Our mother was taken ill last night from pneumonia, and now she's fading fast. He's losing a lot of blood and fading fast—we need to get him to a hospital right away.* **2.** To become increasingly incapable of remaining conscious or awake. *After seven hours working the night shift, I was starting to feel incredibly drowsy and was fading fast. I think John has had too much to drink, he's fading fast!* **3.** To rapidly disappear or dissolve. *Due to the rapid globalization of the world, there are many languages unique to small groups of people that are fading fast from existence. Support for the president's controversial tax plan is fading fast.*

faff about To waste time or procrastinate by doing something unproductive or unhelpful; to fool around or spend time idly. Primarily heard in UK. *Would you quit faffing about and give me a hand cleaning the house? I should have started this essay last week, but I've been faffing about with my new video game console.*

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fag hag offensive slang A woman who spends time with or has many gay male friends. The phrase is usually used in a derogatory way.

fail **1.** An exclamation, perhaps of annoyance or frustration, when something has gone wrong. *I called him Mark, but apparently his name is Steven. Ugh, fail! I tried to bake a cake for my sister's birthday, but I accidentally used salt instead of sugar.* **Fail.** **2.** noun A mistake or blunder. Something that has gone wrong. *I called him Mark, but apparently his name is Steven! What a fail. I tried to bake a cake for my sister's birthday, but I accidentally used salt instead of sugar, and it was a big fail.*

fail at life slang To fail in a way that is exaggeratedly likened to one's entire life being a failure. *I can't believe I blew my audition! Ugh, I fail at life. I overheard you struggling to ask Kim to the prom, and, yeah, you fail at life, dude.*

fail of success To not reach a goal or accomplishment. *I know you*

worked hard on the fundraiser, so I'm really sorry to hear that you failed of success. After not making the team last year, I'm really hoping I don't fail of success this time around.

fail the red face test See [red-face test](#).

fail the smell test To be morally questionable, unacceptable, or untrustworthy. *The new pro-drilling bill that's being put through Congress certainly fails the smell test, and many are suspicious that Big Oil has been responsible for its inception.*

fail to see To be incapable of understanding or unwilling to accept something. *Mary, I fail to see what your fear of spiders has to do with your unwillingness to go on this trip. Congressman, I fail to see how your opponent, as you claim, is in any way responsible for the economic slump in your state.*

failure to thrive A medical term used to describe an infant or young child who has experienced delays in physical growth, for a variety of possible reasons. *I'm a bit concerned about little Howie's failure to thrive, so I want you to bring him back the office next week for further examination.*

a fair crack at something An opportunity to try one's ability at a task. *I wish they would let me have a fair crack at scoring a goal next game.*

fair shake Just treatment; a fair chance (to do something). *When Tara negotiated with the salesman for a new car, she was afraid she wasn't getting a fair shake because she was a woman. I'm not asking for special treatment, just give me a fair shake at the tryouts.*

fair-weather fan A person who is supportive of and enthusiastic about a sports team only when that team is performing well. *I've been rooting for the home team in their playoff run, but I'll admit I'm just a fair-weather fan.*

fair-weather friend Someone who remains a friend only when things are going well but abandons others during times of trouble or difficulty. *I thought Allison and I had a strong friendship, but I learned she was just another fair-weather friend when she stopped talking to me after my divorce.*

fairy godmother 1. In children's fairy tales, a woman with magical powers who appears in order to help others in their time of need. *Cinderella's fairy godmother helped her get ready for the ball so she could meet Prince Charming.* 2. Someone who helps others with their problems, usually

providing financial assistance. *Thank you so much for helping me with my car repair bill! You are my fairy godmother.*

fait accompli A decision that has already been made or something that has already been accomplished or completed. *The decision by the CEO to close 50 of the company's stores came as a fait accompli to the rest of the management team, who were powerless to stop it. Failing this class is not a fait accompli—you have the ability to study and bring up your grade!*

fake check 1. A written order to a bank that has been forged. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *A lot of fake checks have been circulating in the area lately, claiming to be from the local university; in reality, they are scams trying to swindle people out of money.* **2.** A written order to a bank for a certain amount of funds that has been dishonored, either because such funds are not available or because the given checking account does not exist. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *My ex-husband has been writing fake checks all over town to pay for his gambling debt.*

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fake news 1. Fabricated news reports presented as authentic. As they aim to drive web traffic to the providing website, they often have provocative headlines. *That story is clearly fake news, spreading lies in support of a thinly-veiled political agenda.* **2.** By extension, any news report that one judges to be biased or inaccurate. *That article came from a legitimate site, so you can't just dismiss it as fake news.*

fall about the place (laughing) To be consumed by uncontrollable laughter. *We all fell about the place when the professor accidentally swore during his lecture. My brother-in-law's wicked sense of humor has us falling about the place laughing every time we hang out with him.*

fall (a)foul To become disliked or to come in conflict with due to one's actions, often resulting in further trouble or conflict. Used in the phrase "fall

(a)foul of (someone or something)." *Since you're new here, be careful not to fall afoul of Bill—he'll keep you off of every case if he's mad at you. I fell foul of the committee, and now, I'm not sure how to improve my reputation.*

fall asleep at the switch To fail to attend to one's responsibilities or duties; to be inattentive to that which is important or for which one is responsible. *Johnson was supposed to make sure the paperwork went through before the deadline, but it looks like he fell asleep at the switch. Our goalkeeper is such a nincompoop. We would have won that match if he hadn't fallen asleep at the switch!*

fall asleep at the wheel To fail to attend to one's responsibilities or duties; to be inattentive to that which is important or for which one is responsible. *Johnson was supposed to make sure the paperwork went through before the deadline, but it looks like he fell asleep at the wheel. Our goalkeeper is such a nincompoop. We would have won that match if he hadn't fallen asleep at the wheel!*

fall at the final hurdle To fail to accomplish some task or goal at the very end of the attempt. *Negotiations between the two warring countries fell at the final hurdle due to disagreements over cross-border taxation.*

fall at the first hurdle To fail to accomplish some task or goal at the very beginning of the attempt. *John had his business plan all laid out, but he fell at the first hurdle when the bank refused to grant him a loan.*

fall at the last hurdle To fail to accomplish some task or goal at the very end of the attempt. *Negotiations between the two warring countries fell at the last hurdle due to disagreements over cross-border taxation.*

fall between the cracks To be overlooked, neglected, or ignored, especially due to mismanagement or disarray in the midst of a large or complex situation. *In these overcrowded and underfunded public schools, many students end up falling between the cracks. The details of the enforcement of the law seem to have fallen between the cracks during its creation.*

fall guy A scapegoat; someone who takes the "fall" (consequences) for someone else. *The jurors didn't believe that Mike actually murdered the victim. They felt that he was set up by his brother as a fall guy.*

fall into (one's) lap To be received unexpectedly or without effort. *I*

didn't steal the internship from you—it fell into my lap, I swear! Your aunt has decided to get a new car, so her old one might fall into your lap.

fall off a truck Of goods or merchandise, to be acquired by illegal or dubious means; to come into (someone's) possession without being paid for. *Danny says he has several laptops and smartphones he wants to sell for cheap—sounds like they fell off a truck to me.*

fall off the back of a lorry Of goods or merchandise, to be acquired by illegal or dubious means; to come into (someone's) possession without being paid for. Primarily heard in UK. *Danny says he has several laptops and smartphones he wants to sell for cheap—sounds like they fell off the back of a lorry to me.*

fall off the back of a truck Of goods or merchandise, to be acquired by illegal or dubious means; to come into (someone's) possession without being paid for. *Danny says he has several laptops and smartphones he wants to sell for cheap—sounds like they fell off the back of a truck to me.*

fall off the radar To be ignored or forgotten in favor of something more important; to fall into obscurity or disappear from public view. *When the economy crashed, many social welfare projects simply fell off the radar. The band had a hugely popular single in the 80s, but they fell off the radar soon afterward.*

fall off the turnip truck To be gullible, naïve, or unsophisticated. The subject is often a person from a rural or rustic background. *Mary has no idea about how to act in polite society, always behaving as if she just fell off the turnip truck.*

fall over backward To expend a lot of energy or effort to do something; to inconvenience oneself. *I can't believe how ungrateful you're being, especially since we fell over backward planning this dinner party for you! Please don't fall over backward preparing for my visit—I'm totally prepared to sleep on your floor!*

fall (squarely) on (someone's) shoulders To be or become the sole responsibility of someone. *I never intended for the company's well-being to fall on your shoulders, but you're the only one who can take over for me while I'm ill. With my father gone, putting food on the table for the family now falls squarely on my shoulders.*



fall through the cracks To go unnoticed or undealt with; to be unintentionally neglected or ignored, especially in a corporate, political, or social system. *Because so many other social issues take priority for the government, such as drug addiction and unemployment, the welfare of children in the foster system very often ends up falling through the cracks. We were all so busy drawing up the contracts for this new deal that the thank-you dinner we'd promised to our interns simply fell through the cracks.*

fall to bits **1.** Literally, to fall or break apart. *This old truck my grandfather sold me started falling to bits as soon as I began driving it.* **2.** To become emotionally upset or unstable. *She fell to bits when she heard the news of her mother's death.*

fall to (one's) knees **1.** Literally, to kneel down, usually in a show of respect, fealty, awe, subjection, or reverence. *The members of the congregation all fell to their knees to begin their morning prayer. I fell to my knees at the sight of the devastation.* **2.** By extension, any extravagant or elaborate display or expression of praise, adoration, respect, or reverence. *Many believe that the company's newest product will make converts of many and cause current fans to fall to their knees in admiration.*

fall under (someone's) spell To come under the influence or control of someone who one finds fascinating, enchanting, or seductive. *Our son has never acted out like this before. I think he must have fallen under his new friend's spell. I would normally never rush into a relationship this quickly before I fell under Janet's spell. Such was the magnitude of her beauty that countless men have fallen under the duchess's spell.*

fall under the spell of (someone) To come under the influence or control of someone because one finds him or her fascinating, enchanting, or seductive. *Our son has never acted out like this before. I think he must have fallen under the spell of that new friend of his. Such was the magnitude of her beauty that countless men have fallen under the spell of the duchess.*

fall victim To fall prey to something. *I fell victim to peer pressure, and I started drinking at the party. Please be careful not to fall victim to senioritis—you can't stop doing your work this close to graduation.*

fallen angel **1.** An angel who has rebelled against God and has been subsequently cast out of heaven. *The Bible describes Lucifer as having become a fallen angel after he desired to become God rather than be a*

servant of God. **2.** In finance, a stock or bond that has drastically declined in value. *Try to avoid investing in fallen angels—they may have been highly priced once, but they will never return to their original value.* **3.** A company or organization that was previously successful but is currently failing. *The high school's debate team was this year's fallen angel, losing all of their competitions after being dominant last year.*

fallen idol Someone who is no longer respected or admired. *He was so popular and loved when he was a young actor, but now that he is approaching middle age, he's a fallen idol. Nobody even talks about him anymore.*

fallen woman dated A woman who has lost respect because of engaging in premarital sex. *Many cultures still consider females who engage in sex before they are married as fallen women and advise men against becoming involved with them.*

falling-down drunk Severely intoxicated from alcohol, to the point of being unable to stand upright. *On his 21st birthday, Jeff's friends took him to every bar in town until he was falling-down drunk.*

a falling out A severe quarrel or disagreement, especially one that leads to a temporary or permanent end of a relationship. *I haven't spoken to my brother for nearly three years because of a falling-out we had over our late father's estate.*

false alarm A benign situation initially mistaken for an emergency. *Mary thought she was going into labor, but it turned out to be a false alarm. When the smoke detectors started beeping, we thought the building was on fire, but it was just a false alarm caused by faulty wiring.*

false as Cressida Unfaithful. A phrase used to underscore one's infidelity. In medieval tales of the Trojan War, Cressida is a Trojan woman who pledged herself to Troilus, only to forsake him for Diomedes later. *I know you cheated on me! You're as false as Cressida!*

false dawn A situation that looks like it is beginning to improve when, in reality, it is not. *Barb thought her marriage was beginning to improve when her husband came home in a good mood, but it proved to be a false dawn when he handed her divorce papers. Everyone was happy when they heard that they were all getting a raise, but it turned out to be a false dawn when management cut all of their hours.*

false economy An initial attempt to save money that ends up costing a person more money in the future. *Although people often join wholesale clubs for the discounts, it ends up being a false economy because they spend more there than they would at a regular grocery store. Not getting regular oil changes might save you money in the short term, but it's a false economy because you'll ruin your engine.*

false friend A phrase, word, or letter that sounds or looks similar to one in another language or dialect but has a significantly different meaning. *I used the word "embarazada" to tell my Spanish friend I was embarrassed, not knowing that it was a false friend and actually means "pregnant"—now I'm even more embarrassed!*

false modesty A vain or hypocritical pretense of holding a low or humble opinion of oneself, one's abilities, or one's circumstance so as to encourage others to say the opposite. *There's no need for that false modesty here; you are fully aware of your success and achievement, and you don't need me to reaffirm it for you. I find her false modesty quite unbecoming.*

false note An indication that something is wrong, disingenuous, or deceitful. *I know she apologized, but it struck a false note with me—I don't believe she meant what she said.*

false pride An exaggeratedly high or pretentious opinion of oneself, one's abilities, or one's circumstance that is not based on real achievement or success. *He goes on and on about his literary abilities, but it's just false pride if you ask me—he's never even been published!*

false start **1.** In a sporting event, a situation in which one player or team begins before the official signal has been given. *The team was issued a penalty by the referee after the false start.* **2.** An unsuccessful attempt to begin something. *After several false starts, Gina was finally able to make some progress in writing her term paper.*

false step **1.** Literally, a misstep or stumble while one is walking. *I took a false step on the mountain path and nearly went tumbling over a cliff!* **2.** By extension, an unwise, miscalculated, or blundering act or decision. *We made a few false steps while setting up our business that nearly ruined our endeavor altogether. It seems now that the president's decision might have been something of a false step.*

fam An abbreviation for "family" that can be used to refer to one's blood relatives or close friends. Despite the plural connotation of "family," it can also be applied to an individual. *I'd love to go out tonight, but I'm having dinner with the fam—my mom's making her famous meatballs! Of course I'll help you, fam. You're my best friend!*

family jewels slang Male genitalia, especially the testicles. An allusion to the testes' role in producing offspring and thus maintaining the family line. *When she heard he had an affair, she kicked him right in the family jewels.*

family man A man devoted to taking care of his wife and children. *Paul goes home every night after work and never likes to spend time away from his wife and kids. He's a real family man.*

fan dance 1. Literally, a striptease or exotic dance employing the use of large fans to conceal, suggest, or slowly reveal the nudity of the performer. *While striptease is often relegated in the public imagination to seedy bars and desperate women, the fan dances performed in this club are truly beautiful.* 2. By extension, any incremental exposure or divulgence of information, especially that which is tantalizing or of great interest. *The filmmaker has been doing something of a fan dance over the past few weeks, offering tiny bits of information about who will be in his upcoming blockbuster.*

fanboy 1. noun A male who is very interested in or devoted to an element of pop culture (such as a celebrity, athlete, book series, TV show, band, or movie). *My brother Eric is such a Star Wars fanboy that his voicemail message is "This isn't the Eric you're looking for," like he's Obi-Wan Kenobi!* 2. verb To express excessive glee and excitement over a person or thing that one likes. *My brother totally fanboyed when he met his favorite football player.*

fangirl 1. noun A female who is very interested in or devoted to an element of pop culture (such as a celebrity, athlete, book series, TV show, band, or movie). *My sister is a total Supernatural fangirl—she never misses an episode and has even met the actors from the show!* 2. verb To express excessive glee and excitement over a person or thing that one likes. As a verb, this phrase can be applied (derisively) to males. *It's hard not to fangirl when one of your favorite actors is three feet away from you! My brother totally fangirled when he met his favorite football player—what a dork.*

fanny about **1.** To waste time or procrastinate by doing something unproductive or unhelpful; to fool around or spend time idly. Primarily heard in UK. *Would you quit fannyng about and give me a hand cleaning the house? I should have started this essay last week, but I've been fannyng about with my new video game console.* **2.** To wander around a place, especially in an aimless or idle manner. Primarily heard in UK. *After I quit my job, I spent six months fannyng about Paris.*

Fanny Adams obsolete A ration of tinned mutton, as provided upon a naval ship. This macabre sobriquet was taken from the name of an eight-year-old girl who was brutally murdered in 1867, thus likening the quality of the meat rations to the remains of the young girl. *I swear if I have to eat Fanny Adams one more time, I will throw myself overboard.*

fanny around **1.** To waste time or procrastinate by doing something unproductive or unhelpful; to fool around or spend time idly. Primarily heard in UK. *Would you quit fannyng around and give me a hand cleaning the house? I should have started this essay last week, but I've been fannyng around with my new video game console.* **2.** To wander around a place, especially in an aimless or meandering manner. Primarily heard in UK. *After I quit my job, I spent six months fannyng around Paris.*

a far cry from Vastly different from. *Living in the heart of New York City is certainly a far cry from living in the rural countryside.*

far post In soccer (football), the goal post that is farthest from the player in possession of the ball. *That was a great save—I never thought the goalie would get to the far post that fast!*

the far side **1.** On the opposite side of something. *Put that table on the far side of the room—this area over here is too cramped. She looks so young, I can't believe she's on the far side of 60.* **2.** The side of the Moon that does not face the Earth. *I am currently studying images of the far side of the moon.*

fare thee well The highest degree; perfection. *Wow, you really played that part to a fare thee well—I'm so impressed!*

a fare-thee-well See [to a fare-thee-well](#).

farmer's tan A tan line or sunburn on the neck and lower arms that results from wearing a T-shirt during prolonged sun exposure and that is clearly demarcated from the pale skin of the chest and upper arms that

remained covered. *It was so warm that I only wore a T-shirt on the four-hour hike, but I had a pretty gnarly farmer's tan by the end of the day.*

fart in a windstorm slang A trivial act. An action that has little to no importance. *Don't worry, your little blunder was just a fart in a windstorm—everyone has already forgotten it.*

fashion plate **1.** An illustration advertising the newest or most current trends in style and fashion. *She had a keener eye for designing attractive fashion plates than for fashion itself.* **2.** By extension, a person who wears the most stylish and fashionable clothing available. *In this moneyed area of town, it's not uncommon to see fashion plates parading themselves along the main streets at any given moment.*

fashion victim A person who places too much value on popular trends and styles. *It's one thing to have good taste in clothing, but it's another to be a fashion victim who always needs to be seen wearing popular brand names.*

fashionably late Arriving after the arranged time to a meeting or event that does not require strict punctuality, especially so as to give the appearance of nonchalance or having been preoccupied by other social engagements. A: *"John's party is starting in 20 minutes, so we'd better get moving soon!"* B: *"No one will even be there by then. Haven't you ever heard of being fashionably late?"* *Mary doesn't like to appear overeager when she goes to parties, so she always makes a point of being fashionably late.*

fast as lightning See [\(as\) fast as lightning](#).

fast asleep In a deep, sound sleep. "Fast" in this instance means "secure or fixed firmly in place," rather than "moving quickly." *I had an 18-hour shift at the warehouse, so I was fast asleep in no time when I finally got into bed.*

fast buck **1.** noun Money made quickly and/or without effort, often through dishonest, unscrupulous, or ethically dubious means. Often used in the phrase "make/earn a fast buck." *The people hawking T-shirts commemorating the tragedy are just looking to make a fast buck.* **2.** modifier (hyphenated and always before a noun) Concerned with making money quickly, easily, and (often) unscrupulously. Often used to modify the word "artist," thus implying the individual is a swindler to some degree. *All of these Wall Street investors are just a bunch of fast-buck artists, if you ask me. Before the economic crash, a huge amount of fast-buck speculators were selling over-inflated loans to people for property that was essentially*

worthless.

fast talk 1. noun Speech that is fervent, persuasive, glib, and (usually) manipulative or deceptive in intention. *These door-to-door salesmen are adept at fast talk, trying to convince you to buy something before you can consider the purchase properly. The CEO always had a lot of fast talk lined up if anyone challenged the ethics of the company's business transactions.* 2. verb (usually hyphenated) To speak in a fervent, facile, and (usually) manipulatively or deceptively persuasive manner. *Be careful when you speak to the police—their detectives could fast-talk you into believing you'd killed your own mother.*

fast talker A person who verbally manipulates others into doing or believing something, especially something that is not in their best interest. *I could tell that he was a fast talker just by the way he tried to close the deal so quickly. Used car salesmen have a reputation for being fast talkers. They'll say anything to sell a car.*

fast track An accelerated path to success or achievement. *Jacob was doing so well in all of his classes that his school put him on the fast track so he could graduate early. Many authors sell books that promise to put their readers on a fast track to wealth and prosperity.*

faster than greased lightning Extremely fast. *Wow, that car just blew past me—it's faster than greased lightning! When I take tests, I'm faster than greased lightning, so I'm sure I'll be the first one done.*

faster than you can say Jack Robinson Extremely quickly; almost immediately; suddenly or in a very short space of time. *Once I'm finished with high school, I'll be outta this two-bit town faster than you can say Jack Robinson! I was out fishing one day when, faster than you can say Jack Robinson, a 20-pound trout jumped out of the water and right into my lap!*

fat cat A disparaging term for a rich and powerful person. *The voters were tired of all the fat cats running for political office. They wanted someone who understood the plight of the middle class.*

fat farm A slightly derogatory term for a clinic, treatment center, or resort that is aimed at helping people lose weight. *My weight ballooned after the inactivity that resulted from my surgery, so I'm heading to the fat farm this summer to try to get it back to normal.*

a fat lot A very small amount or degree, or none at all. *A fat lot you care whether I succeed or not! It was a fat lot of thanks I got for my 20 years of service to the company.*

fat lot of good Something that is useless or not worth the effort. *A fat lot good that did me, spending all that time carefully wrapping the ceramic mugs only to drop the box on the floor and break them all.*

fat of the land **1.** The hypothetical surplus that one can access in order to live comfortably without working very hard. Often used in the phrase "live off the fat of the land." *Ben has been living off the fat of the land for too long—it's time for him to get a job!* **2.** The best of something. *It's a party, and we've got some delicious food—come on, everybody, and enjoy the fat of the land!*

Fata Morgana A mirage, especially one in which the viewer sees castles. The phrase is an Italian translation of "Morgan le Fay," alluding to the character in the Arthurian legend. In the 19th century, a mirage attributed to le Fay's sorcery took place in Italy's Strait of Messina. *A: "Do you see that castle ahead?" B: "No, so I think you're seeing a Fata Morgana."*

fatal attraction **1.** In a romantic relationship, an attraction to the very qualities in a person that ultimately lead to the relationship falling apart. *John had a fatal attraction to the wild, uninhibited life Cynthia led, but she cared more about "living free" than having a functional relationship. I was completely enamored by his self-confidence and charm, but it was just a fatal attraction to a man who turned out to be a complete narcissist.* **2.** An intense and obsessive infatuation with another person, especially by a spurned lover, that might lead to harassment or violence. *A: "I broke up with Chris over two months ago, but he's still constantly checking in on me and even started threatening this new guy I started seeing." B: "Whoa, talk about a fatal attraction."*

fate worse than death A hyperbolic phrase referring to a situation or experience that is very unpleasant. *I appreciate Gina inviting me to go with her to the theater, but having to listen to those opera singers would be a fate worse than death.*

fathead A dull, stupid, or foolish person. *I can't believe you sold your car to pay for a video game console. You can be a real fathead sometimes, you know that?*

fathom the depths of (something) To explore or penetrate the deepest, core meaning or nature of something. *The movie hardly fathoms the depths of the human condition, but it's an entertaining picture nonetheless. You really have to fathom the depths of your own imagination to get the most out of reading her latest novel.*

fatten the kitty In betting, to put more money into the pool (which is known as a "kitty"). *Come on, guys, put in your money so we can fatten the kitty and get on with this hand!*

Faustian bargain An agreement, bargain, or deal in which a person sacrifices or abandons moral, ethical, or spiritual values in favor of wealth, power, or other benefits. A reference to the legend of Faust, who sold his soul to the devil for unlimited knowledge and power. *I fear we might have devised something of a Faustian bargain for ourselves with our overdependence on technology, having traded in every speck of our private lives for flashy gadgets and convenience. She struck a Faustian bargain with the competitors, selling her own company's secrets for shares in each of their companies.*

faux pas An embarrassing blunder or breach of proper etiquette, often made in front of other people. *Daria didn't realize she had made such a faux pas when she went to use her salad fork to eat the main course.*

faux queen A performance artist whose sex is biologically female but who performs in the exaggerated style and dress of a male drag queen. Also known as a bio queen. *To be honest, the faux queen's performance was so good that I couldn't tell her apart from the drag queens.*

favorite daughter A well-known person, especially a politician, who is supported and celebrated by people in her hometown. *Rose was clearly the favorite daughter of her hometown of Bozeman, Montana.*

favorite son A well-known person, especially a politician, who is supported and celebrated by people in his hometown. *Ray was the favorite son of his hometown of Twin Falls, Idaho.*

favourite daughter A well-known person, especially a politician, who is supported and celebrated by people in her hometown. *Rose was clearly the favourite daughter of her hometown of Manchester.*

favourite son A well-known person, especially a politician, who is

supported and celebrated by people in his hometown. *Ray was the favourite son of his hometown of Manchester.*

FB 1. An abbreviation for "Facebook." *Oh, those two are dating now—she posted about it on FB. I liked his picture on fb, so I don't know why he thinks I'm mad at him.* **2.** An abbreviation for "follow back" that is typically posted as a comment on social media, encouraging other people to "follow" them on the site or app. *When someone writes "FB" on one of my posts, it makes me never want to visit their page. LOVE this dress! FB*

FBF An abbreviation for "flashback Friday," a social media phenomenon in which older pictures (such as childhood photos) are posted on Friday with the phrase as an accompanying hashtag or caption. *As you can see, my love of animals started young. #fbf*

fear no colors To be brave in a dangerous situation. "Colors" has a military connotation, although the phrase can be used more broadly than that. *I can handle this situation, I swear—I fear no colors.*

fear of missing out slang The worry that one may miss an enjoyable activity, especially due to the fact that one often sees others documenting such activities on social media. Often abbreviated as "FOMO." *Fear of missing out convinced me to go to that crazy outdoor festival with my friends.*

a feast for the eyes An especially attractive, pleasing, and/or remarkable sight or visual experience. *His newest film has such lush cinematography that it is truly a feast for the eyes. He emerged from the tailor in a brand new designer suit, and I thought he was a feast for the eyes.*

feast (one's) eyes To gaze upon something with joy or pleasure. *Feast your eyes! Dinner has been served! I got my report card today—feast your eyes on all those A's!*

feather in (one's) cap An accomplishment or achievement that one takes pride in. *If this clinical trial is successful, it will be a real feather in her cap. I can't wait until I'm named valedictorian— it's such a feather in my cap!*

feather in (one's) cap A big achievement or accomplishment. *Earning that full scholarship to Yale is quite a feather in his cap. Getting promoted to management after spending only a month at the new job was a feather in her cap.*



featherless biped A humorous and somewhat belittling alternative term for a human being. *But he, like most other featherless bipeds, was quick to place his own safety and comfort as his primary concern.*

feck it **1.** An expression of indifference, apathy, or nonchalance. "Feck" here is a euphemistic, though still mildly vulgar, substitution for "fuck." Primarily heard in Ireland. *You know what, feck it, I'm tired of waiting; let's go home.* **2.** An exclamation of dismay, exasperation, anger, or frustration. Primarily heard in Ireland. *Ah, feck it! I can't find my keys anywhere! Feck it, I just had the car fixed and now you've put a dent in it!*

federal case A big deal. The phrase is often used to complain that someone is exaggerating a problem or alleged wrongdoing. *So I ate your leftovers. Geez, don't make a federal case out of it! I'm not trying to make a federal case out of it, but I know you stole my new sweater!*

feed a cold, starve a fever Antiquated advice that suggests that someone with a cold should eat, while someone with a fever should fast. Most health experts now agree that "starving" is not the right course for either malady. *My grandmother always said "feed a cold, starve a fever," but it's best to stay properly nourished even when you have a high temperature.*

feed (someone) to the wolves To sacrifice someone to ruin, destruction, or hostility from others, especially for one's own benefit or survival. *He cares nothing for the people he works with and is willing to feed them to the wolves if it means his stock might increase a bit. In the face of the scandal, the administration has been feeding to the wolves anyone they can use to deflect blame from themselves.*

feed the beast **1.** In politics, to fund or supplement governmental spending, especially through increased tax revenue. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *Politicians are always looking for new ways to feed the beast, but if we really want the economy to recover, we need to be cutting taxes across the board.* **2.** To devote or contribute an undue amount of resources, time, or energy to a self-perpetuating pursuit, situation, behavior, or desire. *His addiction had become so severe that he sold everything he owned to keep feeding the beast. The country's leaders enlisted every able man to feed the beast of its war of expansion. We're brainwashed from a young age to continue feeding the beast of consumerism.*

feed the dragon **1.** To outsource business or jobs to China. A reference

to the Chinese dragon, a long-established symbol of Chinese culture and mythology. *With labor-law pressures and costs so much lower in China, it's no wonder more and more manufacturing firms are choosing to feed the dragon rather than pay for workers at home to do the same task.* **2.** To purchase or sell products that are made or imported from China. *Everything that store sells is marked "Made in China." I'd rather not feed the dragon, so I buy my equipment elsewhere.* **3.** To devote or contribute an undue amount of resources, time, or energy to a self-perpetuating pursuit, situation, behavior, or desire. *His addiction had become so severe that he sold everything he owned to keep feeding the dragon. The country's leaders enlisted every able man to feed the dragon of its war of expansion. We're brainwashed from a young age to continue feeding the dragon of consumerism.*

feed the fishes slang To drown. Primarily heard in UK. *We've got a search party out there right now, but I'm getting more and more worried about some of our guys feeding the fishes. If you can't swim, it's only a matter of time till you feed the fishes!*

feeding frenzy **1.** A group attack on prey by predatory animals. *All the children enjoy going to the aquarium to watch the feeding frenzy that occurs when the sharks are given food by the staff.* **2.** An intense competition by a group of people striving to get the same thing. *The media feeding frenzy that occurred when the actress slipped and fell on the red carpet was an embarrassment for journalists everywhere.*

feel all the feels To experience a range of strong emotions. *Oh man, that video for the animal shelter made me feel all the feels. I want to adopt 10 puppies now!*

feel as if a cat has kitted in (one's) mouth To feel very hungover (with an awful taste in one's mouth). A: *"You don't look so good. How are you feeling after your night of partying?"* B: *"Ugh, I feel as if a cat has kitted in my mouth."* *A long night of drinking will leave you feeling as if a cat has kitted in your mouth.*

feel for A better sense of (a situation or how to do something); a greater knowledge or experience in (something). *Once I got a feel for the company's daily operations, I felt more comfortable taking on the management role.*

feel honor-bound to do something To feel obliged to do

something because it is morally correct or required by one's sense of duty or integrity, even if one does not desire to do so. Primarily heard in US. *It pains me to turn you in to the police, my friend, but I feel honor-bound to inform them of your actions.*

feel it in (one's) bones To sense something strongly and intuitively. *Please stay home tonight—this storm is going to be bad, I feel it in my bones. I know you don't agree with her decision, but she feels it in her bones that this is the best thing to do.*

feel light-headed To feel dizzy, as if one might faint. *I'm feeling light-headed because I stood up too quickly. Your mother needs to sit down because she feels light-headed all of a sudden.*

feel like a million bucks To feel exceptionally attractive or in very robust health. *Wow, I feel like a million bucks in this new suit! I guess fluids and rest were all I needed to beat that cold. I'm already feeling like a million bucks compared to yesterday!*

feel like a million dollars To feel exceptionally attractive or in very robust health. *Wow, I feel like a million dollars in this new suit! I guess fluids and rest were all I needed to beat that cold. I'm already feeling like a million dollars compared to yesterday!*

feel like a new man/woman To feel completely refreshed and in good health and spirits, especially after an exhausting or debilitating experience. *After he had some time to recover from the surgery, he felt like a new man. I'll feel like a new woman once I have a shower and a good night's sleep.*

feel (like) (one)self To feel as one normally does, physically or emotionally. *I'm finally starting to feel like myself again after my bout with the flu. Marcy has been struggling with depression lately—I hope she feels herself again soon.*

feel like two cents To have a feeling of complete worthlessness or unimportance, likened to the paltry value of two cents. *I'm glad to have finally broken up with Steven, he always made me feel like two cents.*

feel no pain euphemism To be or feel drunk. *Jonathan took me on a tour of the local pubs, and pretty soon I was feeling no pain.*

feel out of humour To be in an irritable, grouchy, or unhappy mood; to

feel unwell, displeased, or in poor spirits. Primarily heard in UK. *I think something is bugging John because it seems like he's been feeling rather out of humour lately. I think you should get to bed earlier because you always wake up feeling so out of humour in the morning.*

feel out of sorts To be in an irritable, grouchy, or unhappy mood; to feel unwell, displeased, or in poor spirits. *I think something is bugging John because it seems like he's been feeling rather out of sorts lately. I think you should get to bed earlier because you always wake up feeling so out of sorts in the morning.*

feel small To feel insignificant or see oneself negatively. *After that disastrous meeting with my boss, I've never felt so small in my life. He is such a jerk and always insults her so that she feels small.*

feel sorry for (someone) 1. To empathize with or feel compassion for another person and their sorrows, problems, or plight. *It's infuriating that the CEOs swindled the country for millions of dollars, but I feel especially sorry for the thousands of their employees who are now out of a job. I feel so sorry for Johnny—his addiction has gotten completely out of control.* 2. To pity someone or their situation, especially in a condescending manner. *I don't need you or anyone else feeling sorry for me! I must say, I feel sorry for the way you need constant affirmation from other people.*

feel the crunch To be under strain from a lack of money or resources. *Many non-profits are beginning to feel the crunch from having their federal funding slashed earlier this year.*

feel the draught To be in a situation in which one does not have much money. *Steve is feeling the draught right now and wants to know if we can go out next week instead, after he gets paid. If I get laid off, I know it won't be long before I feel the draught.*

the feels Emotions. Often used in the expressions "feel all the feels" and "(something) hit me right in the feels." *Oh man, that video for the animal shelter hit me right in the feels. I want to adopt 10 puppies now! I was feeling all the feels during my hike. I felt so alive!*

feet first As or in the manner of a dead person. *They knew that the only way the gunman was leaving the building was feet first. If you mess up this deal, you'll be going home feet first!*

femme fatale A mysterious and attractive woman who puts men in dangerous or compromising situations. *James Bond is always able to see through the evil plot of the femme fatale.*

fence with (someone) In a conversation, to evade or avoid directly answering someone or something. *Ever the sly spin doctor, the candidate was able to deftly fence with the journalist around questions of his dubious background.*

fend and prove dated To argue and defend a point or opinion. *I was forced to fend and prove my stance before the tribunal.*

fend away To turn away or deny; to keep something at bay; to fight or ward off. *The governor fended away questions about his role in the money laundering scandal. I fended away the blows of my attackers.*

fender bender A small car accident in which minimal damage is incurred. *Michelle was a new driver so she was extremely upset when she had her first accident. Luckily, it was a fender bender and there was no real damage to either car involved.*

festina lente A Latin phrase meaning "make haste slowly." *I know you're nervous about being late, but please, festina lente—unless you want to be pulled over for speeding!*

fetch and carry (for someone) To perform menial tasks or errands at the behest of someone else. *I thought the internship would teach me valuable skills in business, but all I did was fetch and carry for the office manager.*

a few bricks short of a (full) load A pejorative phrase meaning not very intelligent or of questionable mental capacity. It can appear in many different forms and variations (for example: a few sandwiches short of a picnic, a few cards shy of a full deck, etc.). *He says he's going to start a business selling bees as pets—I think he may be a few bricks short of a load. The new manager is nice enough, but he's a few bricks short of a full load, if you ask me.*

a few bricks shy of a load A pejorative phrase meaning not very intelligent or of questionable mental capacity. It can appear in many different forms and variations (for example: a few sandwiches short of a picnic, a few cards shy of a full deck, etc.). *He says he's going to start a business selling*

bees as pets—I think he may be a few bricks shy of a load.

a few fries short of a Happy Meal A pejorative phrase meaning not very intelligent or of questionable mental capacity. It can appear in many different forms and variations (for example: a few bricks shy of a load, a few cards shy of a full deck, etc.). *Every time Paul tells me about his latest conspiracy theory, I can't help thinking that he's a few fries short of a Happy Meal.*

a few kangaroos loose in the top paddock See [have a few kangaroos loose in the top paddock](#).

a few sandwiches short of a picnic A pejorative phrase meaning not very intelligent or of questionable mental capacity. It can appear in many different forms and variations (for example: a few bricks shy of a load, a few cards shy of a full deck, etc.). *He says he's going to start a business selling bees as pets. I think he may be a few sandwiches short of a picnic.*

fib (one's) way out of (something) To escape trouble or some predicament by telling lies. *John fibbed his way out of a speeding ticket by saying he was rushing to his dying grandmother's hospital bed.*

fiddle about (with something) To play with or idly handle (something); to tinker (with something), especially ineptly or improperly. *John, would you quit fiddling about with the engine and bring the car to a shop already? Mary, stop fiddling about with hem of your dress and sit still!*

fiddle (someone) out of (something) To steal something from someone through a cheat, swindle, or con. Primarily heard in UK. *That dirty lawyer managed to fiddle my family out of thousands of dollars of inheritance money.*

fidget about To compulsively move around in a nervous or restless manner. *Mary, stop fidgiting about like that and sit still! My mother always fidgets about the house when we have company.*

fidget spinner A small propeller-shaped toy designed to be spun atop one's fingertip. Ostensibly a device to help people with attention deficit disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder increase their focus, the fidget spinner became popular with schoolchildren and those who use it to try to ease anxiety or restlessness. *Ever since I got my son a fidget spinner, he's had an easier time paying attention in class, but the school is considering*

banning them as a distraction.

fifteen minutes of fame See [15 minutes of fame](#).

fifth column A clandestine group of people who work subversively within a group, organization, or country in order to betray it to an allied outside force. *In the US during the Cold War, there was constant fear and suspicion of people supposedly working in a fifth column to spread the influence of communism from within.*

fifth columnist A member of a clandestine group of people who work subversively within a group, organization, or country in order to betray it to an allied outside force. *In the US during the Cold War, there was constant fear and suspicion of people supposedly working as fifth columnists to spread the influence of communism from within.*

fifth wheel Someone who has no real place or purpose in a situation, likened to a superfluous extra wheel on a four-wheeled vehicle. *I didn't realize that the party was for couples only, so when I showed up alone, I felt like a fifth wheel.*

fifty-fifty chance An equal chance of one of two results occurring. Refers to a 50% probability. *When I flip this coin, there is a fifty-fifty chance that it will land on heads.*

fig leaf Something used to hide an embarrassing or shameful problem. In the Bible, Adam and Eve used fig leaves to conceal their genitals after they became ashamed of their nakedness. *Gary used humor as a fig leaf to conceal the fact that he was struggling with depression.*

fight a losing battle To try persistently and with great effort to do or achieve something that is ultimately doomed to fail. *You're fighting a losing battle if you think you can convince Sarah to go to college. It looks like I'm fighting a losing battle trying to get a raise from my boss.*

fight fires To deal with emergencies or urgent matters, rather than ordinary day-to-day tasks. *I spent so much time today fighting fires with our suppliers that I didn't even have a chance to read my emails.*

fight in armour obsolete Of a man, to wear a condom while engaging in sexual intercourse. Primarily heard in UK. *With such a high risk of sexually transmitted infections among strangers, you'd be extremely foolish not to fight in armour.*

fight like Kilkenny cats To fight almost to the death. The phrase alludes to an Irish fable in which two cats fought and nearly killed each other. *This team does not give up, so we need to fight like Kilkenny cats if we're going to beat them. By the time I called the police, those two were fighting like Kilkenny cats.*

fight tooth and nail To fight, battle, or compete with great ferocity, vigor, and intensity. *I know my brother has fought tooth and nail to be re-elected, so his victory tonight is certainly well earned. These elite troops have been selected by the royal palace to fight tooth and nail against any possible invaders.*

fighting chance A small possibility to succeed or overcome a situation. *David wanted to give his marriage a fighting chance so he agreed to go to counseling with his wife. If I'm going to have a fighting chance to pass this test, I'm going to have to study all night.*

fighting words Speech meant to provoke a fight or confrontation with someone. *The senatorial candidate issued strong fighting words to her opponent today, challenging her to an open debate on the matter of tax increases.*

figment of (one's)/the imagination An experience that initially is thought to be real but is actually imagined. *I thought I heard the sound of my front door opening last night but it turned out to be a figment of my imagination.*

figure of fun A person who is ridiculed or not taken seriously. *Jesse became tired of being treated like a figure of fun so he changed his demeanor to be taken more seriously.*

figure of speech A form of expression in language, either spoken or written, that employs nonliteral meaning, unusual construction, or a particular combination of sounds to emphasize or heighten the rhetorical effect. *Bob: "Does eating an apple a day really keep doctors away from you?" Doug: "Don't take it so literally, Bob, it's just a figure of speech."*

(one) figures (that) One presumes or anticipates (that); one reckons or thinks (that). *If we can maintain these increasing profits, I figure that we'll be able to open a second branch by the end of the year. Mom figures it's time I moved out and found a place of my own to live.*

file 13 A wastepaper basket. *We don't need those reports anyway—you can put them in file 13.*

file off the serial number(s) **1.** Literally, to erase or make illegible the serial number of a registered product, especially a firearm or motor vehicle, by filing it with a metal instrument, so as to make it harder to trace when sold or traded illegally. *Even with improved laws in place to help police track down stolen guns, many criminals are still able to distribute them on the black market by filing off the serial numbers.* **2.** By extension, to remove copyrighted elements from a fan-written piece of fiction ("fanfic") so that it may be sold or distributed as an original piece of work. *I used the sci-fi series as a foundation for my fanfic, but—after many requests from readers—I have decided to file off the serial numbers and develop it as a standalone body of work.*

fill in the blank **1.** To provide information or details, usually by actually writing something in a blank space on a test, form, etc. *Fill in the blank with what you think is the correct answer.* **2.** To figure something out; to determine an answer to something that was previously unknown. *My parents may not know who dented the car now, but they'll fill in the blank eventually.*

fill in the details To give information about a particular topic, sometimes by actually writing it in the blank space on a form. *Please fill in the details about your medical history on this form. Who are you dating? Come on, fill in the details for me!*

fill (one's) hand **1.** To draw a firearm into one's hand, as in preparation for a gunfight. *Fill your hand, stranger, you've been talkin' fighting words all day and I've had enough!* **2.** biblical To be consecrated or initiated as a priest, i.e., by placing objects of worship or holy sacrifice into one's hands. *After years of studying in the rectory, young Adam was finally ready to fill his hands and enter the priesthood.*

film at 11 A phrase used in broadcast journalism during clips of news stories that are to be featured in greater detail later (when a news program airs, traditionally at 11 PM). Although it was once reserved for serious news stories, the phrase is often used now in a joking or sarcastic manner in conversation or news parodies. *A five-alarm fire engulfs a historical landmark—film at 11. Ooh, Jill and Megan are fighting again! Film at 11!*

filter down **1.** (literally) Of a liquid, to slowly seep down through lower

substrate levels. *The company bottles rainwater that has filtered down through seven layers of volcanic rock, purifying it and enriching it with minerals.* **2.** (by extension) Of information, resources, communication, etc., to move slowly and in small amounts down to lower levels of people in an organization, population, or group. *It always takes a dog's age for any important company information to filter down to me and the other interns. The government has approved a staggering \$200 billion stimulus package, but some experts warn it could be years before that money filters down to individuals and smaller businesses.*

filter up Of information, resources, communication, etc., to move slowly and in small amounts up to higher levels of people in an organization, population, or group. *Local think-tanks are developing new, pragmatic strategies to deal with the burgeoning housing crisis, but they are unlikely to filter up to the agenda of state lawmakers anytime soon.*

final cut The completed and finalized edited version of a film, as authorized by its director and producer. *We finished shooting last week, but it will likely be another several months before we're ready with the final cut.*

final hurrah A last action before one ceases to do something. *It's so good to see all of you at this meeting, my final hurrah before retirement. But this performance is your final hurrah before graduation—you have to do it!*

final nail in the coffin An event, decision, action, etc., that seals, confirms, or ultimately leads to the failure of a situation or event that has already begun to fail. *The candidate's uncouth comments toward the lower class were the final nail in the coffin of an already foundering campaign.*

(one's) final resting place The location where one's body is interred after death. *After I die, I want my ashes to be buried with the seed of an oak, so that instead of a headstone, I might have a new, living tree mark my final resting place.*

the Final Solution The Nazi program of annihilating all Jews in Europe during the reign of the Third Reich, an act of mass genocide that led to the murder of more than six million Jews. *My great-grandfather was one of only a few Jews in his city to survive the Final Solution in Germany during World War II.*

find it in (oneself) (to do something) To have the courage, conviction, or compassion to do or go through with something. *If you could*

find it in yourself to lend me a few hundred bucks, it would really get me out of a jam. I simply couldn't find it in myself to fire him after he had just found out his father had passed away.

find (one's) bearings To recognize or determine one's orientation, position, or abilities relative to one's surroundings or situation. *It took me a little while to find my bearings in the new office, but after a week, I felt as if I'd been working there for years. We need to get above the treeline if we're going to find our bearings and reach the campsite before dark.*

find (one's) calling To discover and pursue one's true and inherent passion, skill, or vocation. *I know you're unhappy in your job, so I think you should take some time off to really find your calling. Many students leave college and realize that they still have yet to find their calling.*

find (one's) feet To reach a level of comfort in a new situation. *It took a while, but I've finally found my feet in my job. I know you're nervous, but all freshmen are—you'll find your feet at school, don't worry.*

find (one's) (own) level To reach one's level of proficiency, comfort, or competency in a particular area. *I'm so impressed with the interns—they've really found their level now. It takes time to find your own level as a teacher, but you'll get there—we all do.*

find (one's) voice **1.** To find one's distinctive style or vision of artistic expression. *I think this is your best story yet, Betsy—you've really found your voice as a writer. It takes time to find your voice, but I'm confident you'll get there by the end of our photography class.* **2.** To regain the ability to speak, especially after something frightening or startling has happened. *It took him a minute, but Pete found his voice again after we startled him at his surprise party.*

find (oneself) **1.** To discover and pursue one's true and inherent character, passion, skill, or vocation. *I know you're unhappy in your job, so I think you should take some time off to really find yourself. Many students leave college and realize that they still have yet to find themselves.* **2.** To discover, recognize, or realize one's location, thoughts, or sentiments. *Lost in a deep reverie, I suddenly found myself in a neighborhood I didn't recognize. I find myself inclined to agree with the professor's assessment.*

find (something) out the hard way To learn or discover something through personal experience, especially that which is difficult,

painful, or unpleasant. Can also be phrased as "find out about something the hard way." *Starting your own business is really tough. I had to find that out the hard way. Everyone will tell you that becoming a parent is challenging, but you never really know what that means until you find out about it the hard way.*

find (something) wanting To discover or determine that someone or something is deficient in certain or overall requirements, expectations, or standards. *The report found the government's stimulus plan wanting in several key areas. Though impressed by his application letter, the firm found his C.V. wanting. Mary was found wanting in basic social etiquette by her peers.*

find the net In sports that use netted goals (e.g., soccer, hurling, hockey, etc.) or hoops (e.g., basketball), to score a goal or point by sending the ball or puck into the net. *Their offense played brilliantly today, but they just weren't able to find the net often enough to secure a win.*

find true north To find or proceed on the correct course or in the right direction. A reference to finding the position of the North Pole (e.g., by compass or by locating a pole star) so as to navigate properly. *I would strongly advise that you seek professional legal counsel to find true north in your case against the state.*

find way out of a paper back See [couldn't find \(one's\) way out of a paper bag](#).

a fine how-d'ye-do See [how-d'ye-do](#).

a fine howdy-do See [howdy-do](#).

a fine Italian hand 1. literal The refined style of penmanship that replaced Gothic script in parts of Europe starting in the 17th century. *I can't understand any of the old Gothic texts we're archiving. Thank goodness for the ones written in a fine Italian hand that I can actually read!* 2. figurative A skill in a distinct field. *Jenna's brushstrokes are so beautiful, you wouldn't mistake her work for anyone else's. She should major in art because she truly has a fine Italian hand in that area. Alex may think he has a fine Italian hand as a spy, but I knew he planted the note because it smelled of his cologne!*

fine kettle of fish A difficult or awkward situation; a mess. Primarily heard in US. *Well, that's a fine kettle of fish. I thought I paid the credit card*

bill, but it turns out that I missed the due date by a week.

fine line A narrow margin separating two things. A: *"I only borrowed your sweater, I swear!"* B: *"Well, it's a fine line between borrowing and stealing, isn't it?"*

a fine line A very narrow division between two deceptively similar things, one of which is worse than the other. *As a new parent, you learn that there's a fine line between looking out for your child's welfare and being overprotective.*

fine print The details of a contract or other document that are important but easily overlooked (often due to very small size of the text.) *If you had read the fine print, we wouldn't be going to court over this, now would we? Be sure to read the fine print before you sign any contracts!*

a fine state of affairs A situation that has gone wrong and is very problematic. The term is an instance of irony or sarcasm. *Well, this is a fine state of affairs we're in now. The client doesn't like the job we've done, and they want it fixed in less than a week.*

(one's) finest hour The moment or time of one's greatest success or achievement. *The team's come-from-behind victory in the semi-finals proved to be their finest hour.*

the finger An obscene gesture in which the middle finger is extended upright and shown to another person to convey frustration, anger, contempt, etc. *I can't believe that other driver just gave me the finger when I clearly signaled that I was changing lanes! What a jerk!*

finger in every pie Involvement in several different activities at once. *Monica wouldn't be so busy and stressed if she didn't have a finger in every pie.*

finger in the pie A sign of one's involvement (often seen as meddling) in a situation. *Mom is now calling me every hour, and I'm sure you had a finger in the pie—what exactly did you tell her?*

fingers crossed An expression of hope that something one desires will come to pass or turn out to be true. A truncated version of the phrase "keep your fingers crossed." *I studied for that exam for two weeks, so I hope I get a good grade on it. Fingers crossed! Fingers crossed my packages get delivered in time for Christmas!*

finish (something) on a high note To finish, complete, or leave (something) at a successful, impressive, or climactic point. *I know we've had quite a few losses this season, but let's win this last game and finish on a high note! After winning the Oscar, she decided to finish her career on a high note.*

fire-breather One who is intensely and aggressively passionate and fiercely determined. Likened to a dragon or other beast able to shoot streams of fire from its mouth. *The company's new boss proved to be a real fire-breather, and in just a few months she turned a once-middling local business into a national powerhouse.*

fire-breathing (used as a modifier before a noun) Particularly ardent, vehement, or excoriating in speech or behavior. Likened to a dragon or other creature able to shoot streams of fire from its mouth. *Their fire-breathing boss had all the employees constantly on edge. The fire-breathing politician was quite polarizing, but her fans were intensely loyal and supportive.*

fire bug Someone who enjoys setting fires; a pyromaniac or arsonist. *I'm sure that fire bug Max set our shed on fire—it wouldn't be the first time he started a fire in the neighborhood.*

fire drill **1.** An organized evacuation of a building to prepare its occupants for the proper procedure in the event of an actual fire. *Less than an hour after the school day began, the students were ushered out onto the lawn for a fire drill.* **2.** By extension, any event, activity, or situation that is useless, unproductive, or a complete waste of time. Usually used in business. *The massive flop of the company's newest smartphone means that the huge amount of time and money they invested in it ultimately proved to be nothing but a fire drill.* **3.** Any unexpected, hurried, and particularly chaotic task, activity, event, or situation. Usually used in business. *The boss dropped a fire drill in my lap at the last minute, saying I needed to write up a 15-page report for the board by the end of the hour.*

fire hose A strong, heavy stream of something. *When I defended my dissertation, it felt like the questions were coming at me like a fire hose.*

fire in the belly Passion and determination. *I'm confident that Bill will get them to listen to our pitch—he has such a fire in the belly for this sort of work.*

fire on all cylinders To function or operate at the most desirable or greatest possible level of efficiency, speed, or productivity. (Usually used in the continuous tense.) *The new website will be firing on all cylinders once we get the comments section up and running! I only fire on all cylinders after I've had my coffee.*

fire (one's) pistol in the air **1.** In a duel, to shoot one's firearm into the air to avoid injuring the other party. A: "Did I just hear a gunshot? Is the duel over?" B: "Sir Edmund fired his pistol into the air, so Master William is unscathed." **2.** To avoid harshly criticizing or otherwise hurting someone during an argument or debate. *I usually fire my pistol in the air in these sorts of debates—I hate hurting people's feelings.*

firing line **1.** In battle, a line of soldiers armed and ready to fire on an enemy. *Our firing line will be able to push back the enemy, I'm sure of it.* **2.** A place where one is vulnerable to criticism. *I'm not going into the boss's office right now—I'm not ready to be on the firing line this early in the morning!*

firm hand on the tiller Full control over a situation. *I felt comfortable knowing that even during this difficult time, he had a firm hand on the tiller.*

first A common comment on popular social media posts that encourages others to "like" the first picture on the commenter's page. A: "Why did you write 'First!' on Kylie Jenner's Instagram post?" B: "So that her fans will like my pictures too!"

first and last Altogether; on the whole; primarily; above all else. *First and last, be sure to be true to your own desires. Though they have begun venturing into other fields of business, the company is a tech firm first and last.*

first cousin Someone or something that bears a close relation or resemblance to another person or thing. *Their newest model of car, though spiffed up, remains a first cousin to their last design. In terms of artistic vision, the young director is clearly a first cousin to the likes of Alfred Hitchcock.*

first for first A common comment on popular social media posts that promotes the exchange of "likes," in which one requests a "like" on the first picture on one's own page in return for liking the first picture on the other

person's page. Often abbreviated as "F4F." *Ever since I started writing "first for first" on famous people's posts, my Instagram pictures have been getting way more likes!*

first impression The initial, introductory evaluation upon meeting a person, encountering something, or experiencing a situation for the first time. *I had a bad first impression of the job when, on my very first day, the boss humiliated me in front of everyone in the office. I didn't have a great first impression of Steve, but we ended up becoming very close friends.*

first loser One who achieves second place in a competition, i.e., who loses to the first-place contestant. Likely derived from the phrase "Second place is the first loser," which was popularized by (and often credited to) race car driver Dale Earnhardt, Sr. (1951–2001). *You go out into that ring and you give it absolutely everything you've got! You haven't come all this way to simply be crowned the first loser!*

first love **1.** The first person one falls in love with. *Brian was my first love. I can't possibly talk to him at the reunion!* **2.** The first or main thing one is passionate about. *Painting was my first love, but I've really taken to photography in my later years. As much as I enjoy teaching, writing is my first love, so I always make time for it on the weekends.*

first port of call The first place where one stops to visit, accomplish something, or begin a process. Taken from nautical terminology, referring to the first port that a seafaring vessel calls in to at the beginning of a voyage. *The president's first port of call on his re-election campaign will be his hometown. If your passport is lost while traveling abroad, your first port of call should be your home country's consulate or embassy. Paris will be our first port of call on our trip through Europe.*

first-rate **1.** adjective Excellent; of the best or highest possible quality or rank. *That movie was positively first-rate! The tiny nation boasts a first-rate healthcare system.* **2.** adverb Very well; superbly; fantastically. *I hear Joanna did first-rate on her exams last week.*

first up A phrase used to introduce the first topic one wants to address. *I do want to hear about your day, but first up, let's me tell you what the wedding planner had to say. First up at today's assembly, we have our sixth grade spelling bee.*

first world problem slang A frivolous issue or problem that is only a

source of great concern or frustration because the speaker lives in an economically-developed country; a minor issue compared to the hardships faced by those living in so-called "third world" countries. A: *"I can't believe the Wi-Fi is down. What am I supposed to do if I can't watch Netflix?"* B: *"Hello first world problems!" I just got back from a service trip to Haiti, and things I was worried about before I left just seem like first world problems now.*

fish-eating grin A smug, self-satisfied, or overly pleased smile, especially one that (intentionally or unintentionally) irritates others. *She's been walking around with that fish-eating grin on her face ever since she found out she got into Harvard.*

fish eye 1. In photography, a type of wide-angle camera lens. *Oh, let me get a shot of that scene with my fish eye!* **2.** A scowling and/or menacing look. *I didn't even do anything to her, and she's totally giving me the fish eye!*

fish flesh red herring See [neither fish, flesh, nor good red herring](#).

fish out of water One who does not feel comfortable in a new environment. *When Carla transferred to a new school, she felt like a fish out of water because she didn't know anyone there. Marie was like a fish out of water when she assumed a manager position at the company where she had worked as a clerk for so long.*

fish to fry Matters to deal with. Often used in the phrases "bigger fish to fry" or "other fish to fry." *I can't deal with this right now, I've got other fish to fry! Susie did bring me the latest report, but I've got bigger fish to fry at the moment.*

a fishbowl A place, situation, or environment in which one has little or no privacy. A reference to the (typically) spherical bowls in which pet fish are often kept, which can be seen into from all sides. *One of the prices of success for a pop star is having to live in a fishbowl under the scrutiny of the public eye. I feel like I'm in a fishbowl working at this new company, with all their security cameras posted everywhere.*

fishing expedition An attempt to discover information without knowing what it may be. The term implies that the search does not have a specific subject but is rather performed in the hopes that some new information will be found that will be beneficial to the searcher. Primarily heard in US. *The defense attorney objected to the vague line of questioning,*

accusing the prosecutor of engaging in a fishing expedition.

fishy Highly dubious or suspicious; seeming to not be aboveboard. *I don't know if you should sign that contract, it seems a bit fishy to me. Don't you think it's a little fishy how eager he is to be in charge of the accounts?*

fishy about the gills Hung-over. A: "How are you feeling after your night of partying?" B: "Ugh, fishy about the gills—I've been throwing up all morning!"

fist bump **1.** noun The act of touching the knuckle side of one's clenched fist with someone else's, either as a greeting or in a cheerful or celebratory manner. Also known as a "pound." *He was so excited by the team's overtime win that he gave everyone fist bumps as we left the stadium.* **2.** verb To touch one's clenched fist with someone else's in such a manner. *He was so excited by the team's overtime win that he was fist bumping everyone as we left the stadium.*

five will get you ten In all likelihood; chances are good that. Taken from betting parlance for even odds, i.e., a successful bet of five (dollars, etc.) will give you five back, leaving you with ten. *I know there's some suspicious activity going on in this company; five will get you ten the boss is cooking the books. Five will get you ten that Jonathan is having an affair.*

the fix is in Something has been manipulated, perhaps illegally. *I think the fix is in. How else do you explain a baseball team with such a good record plummeting in the standings all of a sudden? I know that those guys want to throw me in jail for as long as they can, so I'm worried that the fix is in already.*

fix (someone) To exact revenge upon or punish someone. *You lousy piece of road kill, if you ever show your face around here again, I'll fix you good! Don't worry, I'll fix him when he gets home.*

fixed for life Having enough money to live one's life easily and comfortably. *Steve was fixed for life after winning the lottery.*

flake out **1.** To cancel a prearranged meeting or event, especially at the last minute; to fail to attend or go through with something. *I'm going to stop inviting Samantha to do stuff with me because she always ends up flaking out. I hate to flake out on them again, but I'm just too tired to go out tonight.* **2.** To collapse or faint from exhaustion or fatigue. *After the eighth or ninth hour*

wandering in the woods, George eventually flaked out under a tree. **3.** To go, or cause to go, crazy. *I don't know what happened! I just mentioned that her father had called, and she started flaking out at me! His huge, arduous assignments are really starting to flake his students out.* **4.** To fall asleep or take a nap. *I think I'm going to head home at lunch and flake out for a bit.* **5.** To lose one's confidence, courage, or resolve. *I really need your help in this fight, please don't flake out on me now!*

flannelled fool One who plays the sport of cricket. Taken from the white flannel trousers cricketers wear. Primarily heard in UK. *Every afternoon you can see us flannelled fools gathered in the park for a spot of cricket.*

flap (one's) chops To chatter or blather. *Quit flapping your chops—I need some quiet so I can think! Whenever Charlie starts to flap his chops, I can't get in a word!*

flap (one's) gums To chatter or blather. *Quit flapping your gums—I need some quiet so I can think! Whenever Charlie starts to flap his gums, I can't get in a word!*

flap (one's) jaws To talk in a meaningless, aimless, or idle manner. *Jim always starts flapping his jaws after he's had a couple of drinks.*

flash in the pan Someone or something whose success or popularity is short-lived. *With only one hit song, it was obvious that the young pop star was going to be just another flash in the pan. The new startup created a lot of buzz, but it ended up being just another flash in the pan, out of business after just two years.*

flashback Friday A social media phenomenon in which older pictures (such as childhood photos) are posted on Friday with the phrase (often abbreviated "FBF") as an accompanying hashtag or caption. *I'm going to post my second grade class picture for flashback Friday! Me at my senior prom! #flashbackFriday*

flat as a strap See [\(as\) flat as a strap](#).

flat chat **1.** adjective (sometimes hyphenated) Very busy; preoccupied with many different things at once. Primarily heard in Australia. *Sorry I couldn't make it to lunch today, I've been flat chat with the kids all day. I've been so flat-chat at work that I barely have time to see my kids anymore.* **2.** adverb (sometimes hyphenated) At the greatest possible speed, efficiency, or

power. Primarily heard in Australia. *We drove that car flat chat out of town. The whole team is working flat-chat to get this project finished and perfect.*

flat-earthier One who stubbornly believes or adheres to outdated, outmoded, and/or debunked theories, ideologies, ideas, or beliefs, despite overwhelming evidence against them. Taken from the now disproven belief that the Earth is flat, rather than spherical. *There are too many flat-earthers in these parts, holding on to things their ancestors believed.*

flat footed **1.** Slow to react. Unprepared. Often used in the phrase "caught flat footed." *That goal was my fault, guys, I got caught flat footed on the play.* **2.** Clumsy and awkward. *Don't trust her carrying that vase, she's so flat footed. I would change your opening argument—it's a little flat footed right now.*

flat out like a lizard drinking **1.** adjective Very busy; preoccupied with many different things at once. Primarily heard in Australia. *Sorry I couldn't make it to lunch today, I've been flat out like a lizard drinking all day. I've been flat out like a lizard drinking at work lately—I barely have time to see my kids anymore.* **2.** adverb At the greatest possible speed, efficiency, or power. Primarily heard in Australia. *We drove that car through town flat out like a lizard drinking. The whole team is working flat out like a lizard drinking to get this project finished on time.*

flat strap **1.** adjective (sometimes hyphenated) Very busy; preoccupied with many different things at once. Primarily heard in Australia. *Sorry I couldn't make it to lunch today, I've been flat strap with the kids all day. I've been so flat-strap at work that I barely have time to see my kids anymore.* **2.** (sometimes hyphenated) At the greatest possible speed, efficiency, or power. Primarily heard in Australia. *We drove that car flat strap out of town. The whole team is working flat-strap to get this project finished on time.*

flatter (oneself) To hold a vain, self-congratulatory, and exaggeratedly high opinion of oneself and/or one's achievements. *Yeah, don't flatter yourself—she only asked you out to dinner because she wants to ask you about your brother. Gaston likes to flatter himself that he's the best man in town, but everyone knows he's just a pompous jerk.*

flavor of the week Something temporary. The phrase is often used to describe fleeting romantic relationships. *I wouldn't get too attached to Katie, she's just Ralph's flavor of the week—they'll break up in no time. You change*

majors all the time, and Biology is just the flavor of the week, trust me!

a flea in (one's) ear A sharp, strident, or disconcerting reproof or rebuff. *She gave me a flea in my ear over my spending habits. I'll be sure to put a flea in his ear the next time I see him!*

flea in the ear **1.** Something annoying. *We need to stop that beeping smoke alarm because it's a flea in my ear today.* **2.** A harsh reprimand. *I had to talk to Mr. Myers about the botched report today, and boy, did he give me a flea in the ear.*

flea market A typically outdoor market or bazaar where sundry goods, antiques, household items, or trinkets are sold, bartered, or traded. Possibly from the French *marché aux puces*, a name given to an outdoor market in Paris where second-hand goods were sold. *I love our town's local flea market — you never know what you might find there!*

flew under her radar See [fly under \(the/someone's\) radar](#).

flick the bean vulgar slang Of a woman, to masturbate by directly stimulating the clitoris, either with one's finger(s) or with a sex toy.

flight of fancy An imaginative but unrealistic idea. *No one took his campaign for office seriously because his proposed solutions to problems were filled with flights of fancy.*

flight of fantasy An imaginative but unrealistic idea. *No one took his campaign for office seriously because his proposed solutions to problems were filled with flights of fantasy.*

flight of imagination An imaginative but unrealistic idea. *No one took his campaign for office seriously because his proposed solutions to problems were filled with flights of imagination.*

fling (one's) bonnet over the windmill To act in a deranged, reckless, or unconventional manner. Refers to the eponymous character of the novel *Don Quixote*, who tosses his hat over a windmill (which he imagines is a giant) as a challenge to it. *Sarah is always trying to buck social conventions, flinging her bonnet over the windmill whenever possible. I know you like to take risks in business, but don't fling your bonnet over the windmill.*

fling (one's) cap over the windmill To act in a deranged, reckless, or unconventional manner. Refers to the eponymous character of the

novel *Don Quixote*, who tosses his hat over a windmill (which he imagines is a giant) as a challenge to it. *Sarah is always trying to buck social conventions, flinging her cap over the windmill whenever possible. I know you like to take risks in business, but don't fling your cap over the windmill.*

fling (one's) hat over the windmill To act in a deranged, reckless, or unconventional manner. Refers to the eponymous character of the novel *Don Quixote*, who tosses his hat over a windmill (which he imagines is a giant) as a challenge to it. *Sarah is always trying to buck social conventions, flinging her hat over the windmill whenever possible. I know you like to take risks in business, but don't fling your hat over the windmill.*

flip **1.** verb To purchase and then repair and/or remodel a house for sale, ideally in a short period of time with the goal of maximizing one's profit on the sale. *A: "Beige is so boring. Can't we use a bolder color?" B: "No. We're only flipping this house, and neutral colors will appeal to most prospective buyers."* **2.** noun A house that is being or has been flipped. *A: "Beige is so boring. Can't we use a bolder color?" B: "No. This house is a flip, and neutral colors will appeal to most prospective buyers." Look at the cheap cabinets and flooring they used in the kitchen. This place was definitely a flip.*

flip-flop **1.** To completely change one's opinion or stance. Primarily heard in US. *The voters were tired of hearing the candidate flip-flop and felt they could not trust him to stick with one position. I used to hold a staunch view about the case, but then I flip-flopped after hearing the other side's testimony.* **2.** noun A complete change in opinion or stance. *There have been several flip-flops among the candidates during the campaign, with some changing their stance more than once!* **3.** noun A thong sandal. Often used in the plural to refer to the pair. *Don't forget your flip-flops when we go to the beach, or you'll have to walk on the hot sand barefoot!*

flip (one's) wig To react to something, good or bad, with strong emotion. *I had to talk to Mr. Myers about the botched report today, and boy, did he flip his wig. I figured Aunt June would be excited to hear I'm getting married, but she totally flipped her wig!*

float (one's) boat To make someone happy. Often used in the phrase "whatever floats (one's) boat." *A: "What do you want for dinner?" B: "Whatever floats your boat, I'm not even hungry." I think this new job in the lab will really float Isabel's boat.*

flog the dolphin vulgar slang Of a man, to masturbate.

flog the log vulgar slang Of a man, to masturbate.

floppy baby syndrome Colloquial term for an abnormally limp posture in an infant lying prone due to an inability to maintain flexed ligaments or muscles. Also called "floppy infant syndrome." *We were only made aware of our child's spinal muscular atrophy when she began showing signs of floppy baby syndrome.*

floppy infant syndrome Colloquial term for an abnormally limp posture in an infant lying prone due to an inability to maintain flexed ligaments or muscles. Also called "floppy baby syndrome." *We were only made aware of our child's spinal muscular atrophy when she began showing signs of floppy infant syndrome.*

flourish like a green bay tree To thrive; to grow very successfully. The green bay tree is known to grow several new branches every year. *Wow, you have just been flourishing like a green bay tree ever since you changed majors.*

flourish of trumpets A musical fanfare. *And when I enter, I want to be accompanied by a flourish of trumpets, OK?*

flower 1. The best example or greatest representative of a group. *Margaret was long considered the flower of her graduating class.* 2. The best state or prime condition of something. *It was in the flower of my youth that I knew I wanted to be a great writer.* 3. slang The vagina, especially the labia majora and the labia minora. 4. slang An effeminate, weak, ineffectual, or cowardly man or boy. *Don't be such a flower, Jimmy, stand up for yourself and fight him!* 5. A term of endearment, often toward a girl or woman. Primarily heard in UK, Ireland. *Ah, my little flower! Come here and give your auntie a kiss! Here you are, me auld flower, two tickets to the show, as promised!*

flower of the flock The best person or thing in a group. *Your cupcakes are just the flower of the flock—there is no better item at the bake sale. She's the best we've got, the flower of the flock, so you should absolutely put her on this case.*

a flutter in the dovecote A stir or mild disturbance among a certain organization or group of people, especially one that is typically quiet, reserved, or conservative in nature. Likened to domestic pigeons fluttering

their wings in response to an agitation (a dovecote being a structure built to house and raise them). *The unexpected entrance of an exuberant young woman caused a bit of a flutter in the dovecote at the old Men's Only club.*

flutter the dovecote To cause a stir or mild disturbance among a certain organization or group of people, especially one that is typically quiet, reserved, or conservative in nature. Likened to domestic pigeons fluttering their wings in response to an agitation (a dovecote being a structure built to house and raise them). *The exuberant young woman fluttered the dovecote of the old Men's Only club by bursting in unannounced.*

fly beneath (the/someone's) radar To go without being noticed, detected, or addressed. A: "Have you heard this band's latest album?" B: "I didn't even know it was out, it must have flown beneath my radar." *Every year, the government promises to do something about the homelessness problem, yet every year it seems to fly beneath the radar.*

fly by the seat of (one's) pants To rely on one's instinct, as opposed to acting according to a set plan. *I really don't know how to operate this thing, I'm just flying by the seat of my pants here. You can't just fly by the seat of your pants, Jenna—please give your future some serious thought.*

fly in the face of To be or act in clear opposition to something else. *I can't believe you said something so awful. It flies in the face of everything we stand for! Don't quit now, that just flies in the face of all your hard work.*

fly in the ointment A flaw or imperfection that detracts from something positive. *The only fly in the ointment in an otherwise perfect wedding day was the fact that the bride tripped when walking down the aisle.*

fly in the teeth of To be or act in clear opposition to something else. *I can't believe you said something so awful. It flies in the teeth of everything we stand for! Don't quit now, that just flies in the teeth of all your hard work.*

fly low To have the zipper (fly) of one's trousers open. *Hey Jeff, just so you know, you're flying a bit low there.*

fly on the wall One who is able to observe something closely but invisibly and without interfering in the situation. *I would love to be a fly on the wall in John's house when he finds out his wife bought a new car without telling him.*

fly (one's) freak flag slang To behave in or embrace an unusual,

unconventional, or uninhibited manner or mode of being. *My parents are rather conservative, so it's liberating to be in college where I can fly the freak flag without worrying about their reprisals. My favorite music tends to come from artists who aren't afraid to fly their freak flags a bit.*

fly out of the traps To begin something with great speed, energy, and/or intensity. *The home team flew out of the traps against their competition in an attempt to gain an early advantage.*

fly under (the/someone's) radar To go without being noticed, detected, or addressed. A: *"Have you heard this band's latest album?"* B: *"I didn't even know it was out, it must have flown under my radar."* Every year, the government promises to do something about the homelessness problem, yet every year it seems to fly under the radar again.

Flying Dutchman A name that can apply either to a legendary ship, whose ghostly wreckage is said to be sometimes seen in times of bad weather near the Cape of Good Hope, or to the captain of this ship, who must sail until Judgment Day. *I swear, I saw the Flying Dutchman during that last storm. Every time I take out my boat, I'm reminded of the Flying Dutchman, and how he is doomed to sail the seas until kingdom come.*

flying fish A type of fish that has winglike fins that allow it to glide above the water after it leaps into the air. *Those flying fish soaring above the water are just about the craziest thing I've ever seen.*

flying visit An exceptionally brief visit. *We went for a flying visit to my mother's house before continuing on our way to the beach.*

FML rude slang An abbreviation of "fuck my life," typically used to express one's frustration with a situation gone awry. *Did I really leave my wallet at home? Ugh, FML!*

F.O.B. See [fresh off the boat](#).

fold (up) (one's) tent To quit, withdraw, or disengage (from something), especially quietly or discreetly. *After allegations of embezzlement, the CEO decided to fold his tent and take an early retirement. You're going to have a lot of setbacks in life, so don't just fold up your tent and go home at the first sign of failure.*

folk devil Someone or something that is feared because it is seen as a danger to, or a bad influence on, society. *Ever since news of the mayor's*

cheating scandal broke, he has become the town's folk devil. Now that they think we're a part of a radical group, they are trying to run us out of town like a couple of folk devils!

follow back A comment (often abbreviated "FB") added to social media posts encouraging other people to "follow" the commenter on the site or app. *LOVE this dress! Follow back!*

follow in (one's) footsteps To pursue something that someone else (often a family member) has already done. *My father was an engineer, and I plan to follow in his footsteps and study engineering in college. I am following in my sister's footsteps and joining her old sorority.*

follow in the footsteps of To pursue something that someone else (often a family member) has already done. *I plan to follow in the footsteps of my father and study engineering in college. We are following in the footsteps of all the members of the sorority that came before us!*

follow (one's) nose 1. To walk straight ahead (thus walking in the direction that one's nose is facing). *A: "Should I turn here?" B: "No, follow your nose and keep walking in a straight line—you'll be at my house soon enough."* 2. To follow a scent, in an attempt to find its source. *I thought I smelled something baking, so I followed my nose down to the kitchen and found my mom icing a cake!* 3. To take action based on one's instinct. *I tend to follow my nose when I have a bad feeling about someone, and it's helped me to avoid a lot of drama.*

follow (someone or something) in stride To follow the direction, lead, or guidance (of someone or something); to act in accordance (with someone or something); to follow suit. *I hope your little sister doesn't follow your bad behavior in stride. If you can develop a really strong social presence for your company, then your sales will follow in stride. I really hope the new president doesn't follow his predecessor in stride.*

follow the example of To do something that another person is doing. *Growing up, I really tried not to follow the example of my older brother, as he was always getting into trouble. I try to follow the example of Mother Teresa and treat all people with kindness.*

follow the golden mean To follow or adopt the general rule of moderation, avoiding both extreme excess and extreme deficiency in any given aspect of life. *Some people will argue ardently against ever consuming*

alcohol, but to me, as long as you follow the golden mean, you'll be just fine.

follow the sea To be a sailor; to live a sailor's life. *I always assumed that I would follow the sea, like all of the men in my family, but I just didn't have the constitution for that life.*

FOMO slang An abbreviation for "fear of missing out," the worry that one may miss an enjoyable activity, especially due to the fact that one often sees others documenting such activities on social media. *FOMO is the only reason I went to that crazy outdoor festival with my friends.*

food baby A large and/or protruding stomach (thought to resemble a pregnant belly) after one has eaten a big meal. *Don't take any pictures right now, my stomach is huge! I totally have a food baby!*

food chain 1. A hierarchy of organisms that transfer food energy between them. The smallest organisms are at the bottom—and they are preyed upon by the larger ones above them in the food chain. *Grizzly bears are at the top of the food chain.* **2.** A hierarchy of people in a group or organization. Often used in the phrases "at the top of the food chain" and "at the bottom of the food chain." *As a medical intern, I'm at the bottom of the food chain, but I'll move up soon enough. It will take a while to move up the food chain in such a large company, but you'll make manager soon enough.*

food coma slang A state of drowsiness and lethargy induced by eating a large quantity of food (often carbohydrates). *I was in a food coma for the rest of the night after Thanksgiving dinner.*

food for worms A dead person. *You better drive more carefully, unless you want to be food for worms!*

a fool and his money are soon parted Foolish people make purchases without consideration; it is easy to sell something to someone foolish. *As soon as Greg won the big lottery jackpot, he turned around and spent it all at the casino. A fool and his money are soon parted.*

a fool may give a wise man counsel Do not be overconfident in others' advice. *I know you hold Bill in high esteem, but I don't think you should do as he suggested. Just keep in mind that a fool may give a wise man counsel.*

fools build houses and wise men live in them It is so expensive to build a house that one cannot afford to build a house and also

live there. *I'm drawing up the plans for my dream house, and I can't stop thinking that fools build houses and wise men live in them.*

fool's errand A task that has little to no chance of being successful or beneficial. *Giving the baby a bath before he eats spaghetti is a fool's errand.*

Football's a game of two halves. sports cliché In football (soccer), the fortunes of each team can reverse dramatically between the two 45-minute halves of play. Used especially in sports reporting and analysis. *Barcelona has overcome a four-goal deficit to defeat Real Madrid. Football really is a game of two halves.*

for a start In the first place; to begin with; as the first of a given set of points (e.g., in an argument). *You're bored and don't know what to do? Well, you could go play outside, for a start! I'm sick of living in this city—for a start, the traffic makes commuting to work an absolute nightmare!*

for a wonder Contrary to the expected outcome; surprisingly. *I just started exercising again this year as part of my New Year's resolution, and, for a wonder, I'm actually really enjoying it! For a wonder, my son didn't argue when I asked him to clean his room.*

for all 1. To the degree or extent that; insofar as. *We might as well have been educated by dogs for all the good their teaching did! For all I know, she could be living in Timbuktu by now! 2. In spite of; notwithstanding. *For all our efforts to stop the bill, it still cleared both the House and the Senate with ease.**

for all intensive purposes An erroneous misconception of the phrase "for all intents and purposes," meaning "in every practical or functional sense." *I know the two countries have very distinct differences, but for all intensive purposes, America and Canada are nearly identical.*

for all (one) is worth To the greatest degree or extent of one's ability; to the utmost; as vigorously or intensely as possible. *When I saw the police approaching, I ran for all I was worth.*

for all that In spite of; notwithstanding. *We drove like bats out of hell to get there on time, but for all that hurrying, we were still too late to board the plane.*

for Chrissake An exclamation of shock, annoyance, frustration, or anger (an informal pronunciation of "for Christ's sake"). *Would you let me finish my*

story, for Chrissake? For Chrissake, I just had the car fixed and now you've put a dent in it!

A for effort A verbal acknowledgement of appreciation for attempting a task, even if it did not produce a successful result. *You forgot to sand the wood before you painted it, but I'll give you an A for effort since you tried to help.*

for England A lot. Often used in the phrase "talk for England," meaning to talk a lot. *Whenever I'm with Miranda, she just talks for England, and I can't get a word in!*

for fuck's sake rude slang An expression of annoyance or frustration at what someone is doing or at a situation that is unfolding. *Oh, for fuck's sake, Chris—you know I wasn't trying to hurt you, so stop acting like a wounded puppy. Stop playing your music so loud, for fuck's sake!*

for fun In jest; humorously; not seriously. *He teased her mercilessly, but though she found it hurtful, in his mind, it was all just for fun.*

for good and all Permanently; indefinitely; forever. *After she found out about his latest relapse with drugs, she decided it was best to leave him for good and all.*

for heaven's sake A mild oath of surprise, exasperation, annoyance, frustration, or anger. *For heaven's sake! I haven't seen you in years! Would you let me finish my story, for heaven's sake? Oh for heaven's sake, I just had the car fixed and now you've put a dent in it!*

for hire Available for employment. *I hear that Sasha's old tutor is available for hire—I think she would make a great addition to our teaching staff.*

for mercy's sake A mild oath of surprise, exasperation, annoyance, frustration, or anger. *For mercy's sake! I haven't seen you in years! Would you let me finish my story, for mercy's sake? Oh for mercy's sake, I just had the car fixed and now you've put a dent in it!*

for once On this one occasion or occurrence, if (or but) not on another. *For once, I'd like to see you take responsibility for your actions, instead of always trying to foist it on someone else.*

for (one's) life Desperately, urgently, or frantically, as if (or because) one's life is at stake. *With the outcome of this game determining whether*

they'll continue in the tournament, the team will need to play for their lives. The reactor is going to blow any minute—run for your lives! With the cancer progressing at an alarming rate, Mary is now fighting for her life.

for (one's) money In one's opinion; according to one's preference or choice. *For my money, I'd like to see our tax dollars go toward fixing all the potholes in our roads.*

for (one's) (own) sake Out of regard or respect for someone or oneself; for the benefit, advantage, or good of oneself or another person. *For my own sake, I'm going to take a few extra days off at Christmas to spend with my family. For Jonathan's sake, we need to be sure to find a restaurant that is sensitive to peanut allergies.*

for (one's) pains In return or compensation for one's efforts, troubles, or work. Almost always used to indicate that the compensation is not worth the effort put in or the trouble taken. *When I retired from the force, all they gave me for my pains was a cheap wristwatch.*

for pity's sake A mild oath of surprise, exasperation, annoyance, frustration, or anger. *For pity's sake! I haven't seen you in years! Would you let me finish my story, for pity's sake? Oh for pity's sake, I just had the car fixed and now you've put a dent in it!*

for show Done merely for the sake of appearance; not genuine or sincere. *Edward always carries a lot of highly literary books around with him, but it's all for show so he can appear smarter to other people. The items in the window are just for show, so I'm afraid I can't sell them to you.*

for the ages That will stand the test of time; that will be remembered or regarded for years to come. *His epic novel is truly one for the ages, as it explores the human condition in a way few authors have achieved before. The question of free will is a philosophical mystery for the ages.*

for the love of God An oath of shock, exasperation, annoyance, frustration, or anger. *For the love of God, I didn't even see that car coming! Would you let me finish my story, for the love of God? Oh for the love of God, I just had the car fixed and now you've put a dent in it!*

for the love of Mike A mild oath of shock, exasperation, annoyance, frustration, or anger, with "Mike" being a euphemistic substitution for "God." *For the love of Mike, I didn't even see that car coming! Would you let me*

finish my story, for the love of Mike? Oh for the love of Mike, I just had the car fixed and now you've put a dent in it!

for the love of Pete A mild oath of shock, exasperation, annoyance, frustration, or anger, with "Pete" being a euphemistic substitution for "God."
For the love of Pete, I didn't even see that car coming! Would you let me finish my story, for the love of Pete? Oh for the love of Pete, I just had the car fixed and now you've put a dent in it!

for the love of (something) For the sake of; in regard or consideration for.
For the love of mercy, judge, please don't condemn this man to die! Please don't speak like that in church, for the love of all that is holy!

for the nonce Temporarily; for the time being; for a single particular occasion.
That will have to do for the nonce, but be sure to get a clearer answer by the end of the day. He fell over, being for the nonce incapable of maintaining an upright posture. The two parties passed a unilateral emergency bill, crafted for the nonce to manage the looming financial crisis.

for the sake of (someone) Out of regard or respect for someone or something; for the benefit, advantage, or purpose of something or somebody.
For the sake of those who have already read the chapter, I won't go into it in too much detail here today. For the sake of decency, please stop using such profane language in church!

for two pins At the slightest provocation; for the smallest reason. Primarily heard in UK.
I would cancel this party for two pins, but my husband has been looking forward to it all week. She'll drop this class for two pins, so you better convince her she loves it.

for XYZ reasons For various unknown or unspecifiable reasons. Primarily heard in US, South Africa.
Many people don't like country music for XYZ reasons, but I've always really enjoyed it.

forbidden fruit is the sweetest People are drawn to things that they are forbidden from doing or having.
A: *"I know you're intrigued by Derek, but he's married!"*
B: *"But forbidden fruit is the sweetest!"*
Since forbidden fruit is the sweetest, I couldn't stop myself from taking a piece of the cake my mom had specifically made for work.

force (one's) hand To push one to do something that one is not

inclined to do otherwise. (The phrase alludes to a hand of playing cards.) *Dave still hasn't decided where he wants to go to dinner, so I'm going to force his hand—I need to make reservations as soon as possible! I was hoping to play golf today, but the storm forced my hand, so I stayed home instead. The president is trying to force Congress's hand by threatening a veto.*

force (something) down (someone's) throat **1.** Literally, to compel or physically force someone to swallow something. *I hate how doctors try to force pills down your throat for even the tiniest of colds. The government has come under fire for ordering prison staff to force food down the hunger strikers' throats.* **2.** To force, compel, or attempt to make someone accept, endure, consider, or agree with/to something. *I hate going to my friend's house, because his husband's always forcing conservative rhetoric down my throat. Look, I'm just browsing around for a car—quit trying to force one down my throat!*

force the issue To compel a decision, discussion, or confrontation regarding a particular issue or matter at hand. *For months my boss has been dragging his feet about increasing my pay, so tomorrow I'm finally going to force the issue with him.*

force to be reckoned with A person or thing considered to be strong, powerful, or difficult to defeat. *They say the young boxer is a force to be reckoned with, so I'm betting he'll win the match tonight. The attorney may look petite and meek, but she's a force to be reckoned with in the courtroom.*

foregone conclusion An inevitable result. *After how poorly the team has played so far this season, it's a foregone conclusion that they won't make it to the championship.*

Foresight is better than hindsight. cliché It is better to anticipate and prevent future problems than to realize how they could have been avoided after the fact. *If I were you, I would pay the extra \$50 for full insurance coverage while you're traveling. You never know what might happen, and foresight is better than hindsight.*

forever and a day **1.** Eternally; always; ceaselessly. *Honey, I'll love you forever and a day!* **2.** An exceptionally long period of time. *Jim, how you been? It's been forever and a day since I last saw you!*

forge away at (something) To work on or toward goal or task with

great determination, diligence, and vigor. *I've been forging away at my little business here for two years, and now I've really established myself within the community. The team has been forging away at their shot for a championship all year.*

fork out the dough To pay, generally unwillingly, a certain amount of money. *If you want the most cutting edge technology, you'd better be prepared to fork out the dough for it. Listen, fork out the dough or you'll never see your husband again!*

fork over the dough To pay, generally unwillingly, a certain amount of money. *If you want the most cutting edge technology, you'd better be prepared to fork over the dough for it. Listen, fork over the dough or you'll never see your husband again!*

fork the fingers To give a rude gesture with one's hand. This phrase is rarely heard today. *I told you, it was an honest mistake, so don't fork the fingers at me!*

forked tongue A trait of someone who speaks in a dishonest or deceitful manner. Often used in the phrase "speak with (a) forked tongue." *I wouldn't trust a thing Caitlin says, she's always speaking with a forked tongue.*

forlorn hope 1. An undertaking that seems very unlikely to succeed. *This plan you have is a forlorn hope and will never work out the way you want.* 2. A group of soldiers sent on an extremely dangerous mission. The phrase comes from the Dutch *verloren hoop*, meaning "lost troop." *Have you heard anything from the forlorn hope yet? Did they reach their target?*

fortune favors the bold Courageous action is often rewarded. The phrase encourages people to do what scares them. A variation is "fortune favors the brave." *I know you're nervous about asking for a raise, but keep in mind that fortune favors the bold—you'll never get anything if you don't ask for it. I decided to ask out the most popular girl in school because fortune favors the bold, right?*

fortune is smiling (up)on (someone) Someone is especially lucky, fortunate, or successful; good things tend to happen to someone. *I hear that Jenny just won some major award, so soon after her huge promotion. It seems that fortune is smiling on her at the moment! Fortune has been smiling upon my younger brother since he was little: things have just always worked out for the best for him.*

fortune smiles (up)on someone Someone is especially lucky, fortunate, or successful; good things tend to happen to someone. *I hear that Jenny just won some major award, so soon after her huge promotion. It seems that fortune smiles on her at the moment! If you're going into business for yourself, just remember that fortune smiles upon those who are willing to take risks.*

forty minutes of hell In collegiate basketball, the entire duration (40 minutes) of a game played in a suffocatingly aggressive manner. The phrase was reportedly coined by Nolan Richardson while coaching the Arkansas Razorbacks in the mid-1990s. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *OK, everyone, go out there and give them forty minutes of hell—don't even give them a chance to breathe!*

forty ways from Sunday Thoroughly or completely; in every possible way; from every conceivable angle. *Everyone had their money on the reigning champion, but he was beaten forty ways from Sunday by the newcomer. We researched the case forty ways from Sunday, but there didn't seem to be any way that we could win with the evidence at hand.*

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forty winks A nap or a brief sleep. *When you have a baby for the first time, you are suddenly forced to learn how to operate on only forty winks at a time. I'm going to go grab a quick forty winks before everyone starts arriving for the dinner party.*

fought a losing battle See [fight a losing battle](#).

fought like Kilkenny cats See [fight like Kilkenny cats](#).

fought tooth and nail See [fight tooth and nail](#).

foul ball In baseball, a ball that is hit past the foul line (and thus outside the playing field). *I started to run as soon as I heard the bat hit the ball, but it turned out to be a foul ball, so I had to go back to second base.*

fountain of youth Anything reputed or promising to restore one's youth, vitality, or health, or at least the appearance thereof. *At the age of 60,*

your grandmother looks fantastic! She must have discovered the fountain of youth. The way they advertise these skincare products makes you think each one is the fountain of youth or something.

four-eyes A disparaging or facetious term for a person who wears spectacles. *Nice glasses, four-eyes! I've been a four-eyes all my life. I got made fun of for it in elementary school, but in college, everyone loves my glasses!*

Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse In the Bible, the four figures who usher in the end of the world, representing pestilence, famine, war, and death. *It's so dark out here with this storm looming that I'm waiting for the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse to show up!*

the Four Hundred The wealthiest and most powerful of the social elite. The phrase allegedly originated from the number of people that Caroline Schermerhorn Astor (wife of US millionaire John Jacob Astor) could fit inside her ballroom. Primarily heard in US. *Thanks to my new husband, I am now part of the Four Hundred and the recipient of many jealous looks.*

four-leaf clover **1.** Literally, a clover with four leaves instead of the usual three, traditionally thought to be a good-luck charm due to its rarity. *You found a four-leaf clover and you saw a shooting star? Wow, you must be really lucky today!* **2.** By extension, any person or thing that is considered a bringer of good fortune. *The new kicker has been something of a four-leaf clover for the team, as they've won every game since he signed with them.*

four-letter word **1.** One of a handful of words with four letters that are considered profanity. *Jimmy was suspended from school after the teacher heard him shout a number of four-letter words at his classmates. The movie received its rating solely due to its high amount of four-letter words.* **2.** By extension, a word that has a positive or neutral connotation but that is treated as if it were highly negative. Such words do not have to literally contain four letters. *Young people today seem to think "school" is a four-letter word. All they want to do is sit around and play video games all day. To most voters, "taxes" is a four-letter word.*

four-on-the-floor See [4-on-the-floor](#).

four score and seven years ago Eighty-seven years ago. (A "score" is a set of 20 items.) The iconic first line of US President Abraham

Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, the speech he delivered at the dedication of the national cemetery in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. Lincoln gave this speech in 1863—87 years after 1776, the year of the founding of the United States. *Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.*

four sheets to the wind Severely intoxicated from alcohol, to the point of finding control of one's actions or coordination difficult. Taken most likely from nautical terminology, where a "sheet" is the rope that controls the sails of a tall ship; if several sheets are loose or mishandled, the boat's movement becomes unsteady and difficult to control, like that of a drunk person. *On his 21st birthday, Jeff's friends took him to every bar in town until he was four sheets to the wind.*

the Fourth Estate The people and organizations that report the news, or news journalism as a whole, regarded as having palpable but unofficial political influence. *One must never forget the sway held by members of the Fourth Estate—if we want public support, then we need the press on our side.*

fourth wall The imaginary barrier separating performers in a TV show, film, or play from the audience. *I hate those shows that break the fourth wall—I don't want to feel like the characters are having a conversation with me! Stay in character and don't break the fourth wall!*

fourth wall joke In fiction, especially theater, film, or television, a joke that intentionally draws attention to the illusion of separation between the audience and the fiction itself. *I love it when a TV show throws in a good fourth wall joke—I think it's fun being in on the humor like that.*

fox guarding the henhouse A person likely to exploit the information or resources that they have been charged to protect or control. *My sister is going to put her ex-convict brother-in-law in charge of her business, and I'm worried he'll be like a fox guarding the henhouse.*

fox in the henhouse Someone with bad intentions. (A fox would prey upon hens in a henhouse.) *I'd watch out for him if I were you—he walks around here like a fox in the henhouse.*

fox's sleep A state of apparent sleep (or feigned indifference) in which someone is actually aware of everything going on around him or her. Alludes to the idea that foxes sleep with one eye open and thus are always at the

ready. *I think Amy is just in a fox's sleep, so be careful what you say right now. The best way to get gossip on these trips is to be in a fox's sleep.*

fracking A commonly used nickname for "hydraulic fracturing," a method of oil and natural gas extraction that is subject to controversy for its potential environmental effects. *What do opponents of fracking cite as their concerns?*

fraid not See [\(I'm\) \(a\)fraid not](#).

fraid so See [\(I'm\) \(a\)fraid so](#).

frame of mind A person's outlook or mood. *I'm always in a much better frame of mind if I have a chance to unwind after work.*

Frankenstein's monster Something that harms or destroys its creator and cannot be controlled. A reference to the monster in the book *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley. *At first, my side business seemed like a good idea, but it has turned into Frankenstein's monster, eating away at my time and finances.*

freak flag Any unconventional, nonconformist, or uninhibited behavior, convictions, opinions, or lifestyle choices that are unique to an individual. *My high school literature teacher taught me to always be true to myself and to wear my freak flag proudly.*

freak of nature Something or someone that is unusual, rare, or abnormal in some way; beyond or outside the natural world. *The goat they have at the circus sideshow is a real freak of nature, it was born with two heads! He can lift over 500 pounds in the gym, he's like some freak of nature.*

free agent 1. A professional, especially an athlete, who is able to enter a contract with any organization without restrictions. *The star quarterback will be a free agent when his contract ends after the season, and everyone expects him to sign with whatever team offers the most money.* **2.** By extension, a person who has no limitations placed on him or her by others, either professionally or socially. *I just broke up with my girlfriend, so I'm a free agent again!*

free as a bird See [\(as\) free as a bird](#).

a free bit of advice A suggestion, opinion, or piece of advice that was unrequested or unsolicited by the recipient. *Allow me to give you a free bit of advice, my friend: don't say something you'll end up regretting later.*



free fall **1.** A vertical descent of a physical body in which gravity is the only force acting upon it. *If they were in true free fall, a feather and a bowling ball would both fall to the ground at the same rate.* **2.** In a parachute jump, the period of vertical descent leading up to and immediately before the parachute is opened. *I get such a rush from the free fall when I skydive that I often wish I didn't have to open my chute at all!* **3.** By extension of def. 1, any sudden, rapid, and uncontrollable decline (e.g., in value, reputation, success, etc.) that continues unabated for an indefinite length of time. *The stock market went into a free fall after the housing market collapsed. After getting busted by the police for using marijuana last year, John's life has been in a free fall.*

free-for-all A chaotic, uncontrolled situation. *Janice tried to plan a fun, organized birthday party for her son, but as soon as the other kids arrived, the event turned into a free-for-all. The debate turned into a free-for-all when the candidates all started yelling at each other.*

free rein Complete freedom to do what one wants or chooses. *Can you believe the boss gave me free rein on this project? Finally, I can present a campaign with my own vision!*

free ride An unfair advantage or special treatment that a person receives without earning it or paying for it. *Even though his grades were poor, Gary thought he should get a free ride to college because he was a football star. You're getting a free ride living with your parents. You don't even have to pay rent!*

free space In physics, an area of space that has no gravitational or electromagnetic fields. *I totally failed that physics test on free space.*

free spirit Someone who does not conform to social norms or expectations. *Maria is too much of a free spirit to be working in a stuffy corporate environment.*

free, white, and twenty-one antiquated Having the legal freedom to make one's own decisions in life, without being beholden to the influence of anyone else. The phrase arose from the time in the US when slavery was still prominent, and being white and twenty-one (the age of majority) meant that one was a free, and thus "full," citizen. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *Hell, I don't need your approval, or anyone else's, for that matter. I'm free, white, and twenty-one, so I'll do as I please!*

freedom of speech The right to express one's opinion without censorship or other forms of punishment imposed by the government. In the United States, freedom of speech is protected by the First Amendment to the Constitution. *The editor does not want to print my controversial article, but I'm pushing for it to appear in the next issue—what about freedom of speech?*

freeze (someone's) blood To affect in someone an intense feeling of fright, horror, or revulsion. *The sight of my brother's murderer in court absolutely froze my blood. When we were camping last weekend, we heard a scream in the night that froze our blood.*

French kiss 1. noun An open-mouthed kiss in which both partners' tongues touch. *I was a little surprised when she gave me a French kiss on our first date.* 2. verb To kiss in such a manner. *I'd prefer it if people didn't French kiss in public; it's just not something other people want to see!*

French kissing The practice of open-mouthed kissing in which both partners' tongues touch. *In my day and age, French kissing was not something one did in public!*

French letter slang A condom. Primarily heard in UK. *I have a date tonight, so I need to make sure I have a French letter in my wallet.*

French letter slang A condom. *Whether you call it a French letter or a condom, just make sure you have one.*

French tickler slang A condom designed with additional tactile elements, such as bumps, spirals, ribs, etc., so as to heighten vaginal stimulation during intercourse. Primarily heard in UK, Ireland. *Trust me, you should definitely try wearing a French tickler at least once—your partner will love it.*

fresh blood New members of a group or organization, brought in to revitalize or stimulate its productivity by bringing with them new ideas or energy. *With everything going digital and online, we're going to need some fresh blood if we want to remain a viable company in today's market.*

fresh-faced Of or having an appearance of health, vitality, and/or youthfulness. *After a good night's sleep, he woke up fresh-faced and feeling like a million bucks.*

fresh legs In sports, one or more substitute players who have not yet participated in a given game or match, thus having more energy than the

players they are replacing. *Their offense is completely wearing out our defense—it's time to get some fresh legs on the field!*

fresh meat 1. A person or group of people, especially newcomers, who are seen by others as a new target for scorn, humiliation, ridicule, or sexual advances. *When you first enter high school, you're often seen as fresh meat—an easy target for thick-skulled upperclassmen. John is a scumbag to women, referring to groups he finds in bars as "fresh meat" for his sexual conquests.*

2. Any newcomer or group of newcomers entering into a wider group or organization. *Every summer, we get a bunch of fresh meat entering into the company as interns, having just graduated from the local university.*

fresh off the boat Newly immigrated, especially without having yet assimilated the host country's language, culture, and/or behavior. *My grandfather was still fresh off the boat when he opened up his business here in 1820, and he didn't speak a lick of English.*

Freudian slip Any inadvertent verbal or written mistake that reveals, or can be construed as revealing, an unconscious or repressed intention, belief, thought, attitude, etc. Named for the Sigmund Freud, considered the founding father of psychoanalysis, whose work largely focused on the unconscious and repressed elements of the human psyche. *He said the wrong woman's name during his wedding ceremony, a Freudian slip that sent the bride-to-be into tears.*

fried the fat out of See [fry the fat out of](#).

friend To add someone to one's network on a social media site. *I just friended that cute girl from my English class.*

friend in need A person who is dependable and a good friend in difficult times. Taken from the proverb "a friend in need is a friend indeed." *Michelle stayed with me in the hospital when I broke my ankle. A friend in need is a friend indeed.*

a friend in need is a friend indeed A true friend offers help when one needs it most. *After I got out of the hospital, Sally checked up on me every day. Her kindness has really shown me that a friend in need is a friend indeed.*

friend of Bill W. A recovering alcoholic, especially one who attends Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meetings. The euphemistic phrase is an

allusion to William (Bill) Griffith Wilson, one of the two founders of AA. *Poor John, a longtime friend of Bill W., passed away from complications arising from a bout of pneumonia last night. Because of the prevalence of booze aboard cruise ships, I always look for those that advertise to "Friends of Bill W."*

friend with benefits A friend or acquaintance with whom one has casual sexual interactions without the commitment of a formal relationship. *After two long, ultimately painful relationships, I'm just looking to find a friend with benefits these days. John says he and Susan are just friends with benefits, but I think he's falling for her.*

friend zone **1.** noun Where someone is said to be when the object of their affection only sees them as a friend, rather than as a potential romantic partner. This term is usually (but not always) applied to males. *If Bella cries to you about all of her bad dates but never asks you out, I'm afraid you're in the friend zone, dude.* **2.** verb To treat someone who is romantically interested in one as a friend, rather than as a potential romantic partner. When used as a verb, this phrase is usually written as one word. *Why are you friendzoning Zack? He's a good guy, you should go out with him.*

Friendsgiving A Thanksgiving celebration among friends. It often takes place near Thanksgiving, rather than on the actual holiday. *I always have Friendsgiving with my college roommates the week before Thanksgiving. Because we all live far from our relatives, we celebrate Friendsgiving instead.*

friendship with benefits A friendship or acquaintance in which the partners engage in casual sexual activity but are not in a formal, committed relationship with one another. *After two long, ultimately painful relationships, I'm just looking for friendship with benefits these days.*

frig it **1.** An expression of indifference, apathy, or nonchalance. "Frig" here is a euphemistic, though still mildly vulgar, substitution for "fuck." *You know what, frig it, I'm tired of waiting; let's go home.* **2.** An exclamation of dismay, exasperation, anger, or frustration. *Ah, frig it! I can't find my keys anywhere!*

frighten the life out of someone To shock or frighten someone very suddenly and/or severely. (Hyperbolically alludes to frightening someone so severely as to cause them to die.) *Don't sneak up on me like that, you frightened the life out of me! That car accident seems to have frightened*

the life out of Janet—she's still shaken by it.

frighten the (living) daylights out of (someone) To shock or frighten someone very suddenly and/or severely. *Don't sneak up on me like that; you frightened the living daylights out of me!*

frighten the shit out of (someone) vulgar To shock or frighten someone very suddenly and/or severely. (Hyperbolically alludes to frightening someone so badly as to cause him or her to lose bowel control.) *Don't sneak up on me like that, you frightened the shit out of me! That car accident seems to have frightened the shit out of Janet—she's still shaken by it.*

frightened of (one's) (own) shadow Easily or constantly spooked, nervous, timid, afraid, or fearfully suspicious. *I can't say I have much faith in Johnny helping us on this expedition—that boy's frightened of his own shadow! You can't live life frightened of your shadow—you need to get out into the world and taste adventure!*

fringe benefit A non-monetary perk, incentive, or benefit for working a job that is given in addition to one's normal wage or salary. *One of the fringe benefits of working here is getting free lunch in the cafeteria.*

a frog choker See [a \(real\) frog-choker](#).

a frog in (one's) throat The feeling that something is caught or stuck in one's throat. Could refer to actual hoarseness or the inability to speak due to fear. *This cold has left me with such a frog in my throat that I can barely talk! A: "Elise couldn't say a word in the meeting and looked completely terrified." B: "Man, she must have had a frog in her throat."*

frog in (one's) throat Difficulty talking because of the need to cough or clear one's throat. *It's taking a long time to get over this cold. I'm tired of feeling like I have a frog in my throat every time I try to talk.*

a frog strangler See [a \(real\) frog-strangler](#).

from a mile away Well or far in advance; exceptionally easily. *That movie was so corny, you could tell what was going to happen from a mile away! Pickpockets can spot tourists in this city from a mile away.*

from A to izzard From the very beginning to the very end; covering or regarding the entire possible range or scope. "Izzard" here is a once-dialectical, but now largely humorous, variation on the phonetic spelling of

the letter "Z" (in British English, pronounced "zed"). *We have to do a stock count of everything in the warehouse, from A to izzard! This introductory philosophy course will examine the field from A to izzard, beginning with the Greeks and finishing with the work of modern philosophers.*

from A to Z From the very beginning to the very end; covering or regarding the entire possible range or scope. *We have to do a stock count of everything in the warehouse, from A to Z! This introductory philosophy course will examine the field from A to Z, beginning with the Greeks and finishing with the work of modern philosophers.*

from afar From a (sometimes great) distance. *You can't turn the man away, he came from afar, and the only polite thing to do is to offer him a place to stay! I was terrified my first week in the hospital, so I was quite content to watch surgeries from afar in the gallery.*

from can see to can't see From sunrise to sunset, i.e., from the point in which it is first light enough to see to the point where it is too dark to see. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *I used to work summers at my father's farm, laboring out in the fields each day from can see to can't see.*

from central casting See [\(straight\) from central casting](#).

from cover to cover Thoroughly and/or in its entirety (referring to a book that has been read from front cover to back cover). *I love those books, I read them from cover to cover when I was a kid!*

from Dan to Beersheba From one extremely remote place to another. The phrase comes from the Old Testament. In Biblical times, "Dan" was the northern boundary of Palestine, while "Beersheba" was its southern border. *I am going to take control of all the land here, from Dan to Beersheba, just you watch!*

from first to last Throughout the entire duration; from the very beginning to the very end. *I enjoyed that novel from first to last! From first to last, her performance will have you buzzing on an emotional high.*

(from) hand to mouth With just the bare minimum of money, food, or resources to survive, with little or nothing else to spare. (Usually preceded by "live.") *It's been pretty hand to mouth these days. If I don't find work soon, I don't know how we'll get by. With another child on the way, it looks like we'll be living from hand to mouth for the foreseeable future.*

from here to Sunday **1.** All over the place; over a very wide area or distance. *I shudder to think of shopping on Black Friday, when every store from here to Sunday is crawling with consumers. When I saw my brother get off the train, I had a smile on my face from here to Sunday.* **2.** At great length; as much as possible. *My father cussed me out from here to Sunday when he found out I'd taken the car without his permission last night. This book is boring me from here to Sunday, but I have to give a report on it next week.*

from my cold, dead hands A phrase used to indicate that someone is unwilling to give something up (thus, the item would need to be pried from one's "cold, dead hands"). The phrase gained popularity after Charlton Heston used it in a speech in support of the National Rifle Association. *If you want me to stop practicing at night, you'll have to pry my trumpet from my cold, dead hands!*

from the Department of the Bleeding Obvious Of such an obvious meaning or implication as to be completely redundant, superfluous, or unnecessary. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *Pauline: "The Prime Minister has said that lower-class families are bearing the brunt of the recession worse than anyone else." Johnny: "Wow, any other riveting news from the Department of the Bleeding Obvious?"*

from the East German judge See [\(some score\) from the East German judge](#).

from the get-go Immediately; from the beginning; from the very start. *Martha and I tried dating again, but right from the get-go, we knew it wasn't going to work. Their team has been dominating the match from the get-go.*

from zero to hero See [go from zero to hero](#).

front foot **1.** An advantageous position, especially over an opponent; an aggressive or attacking state or position. Typically used in the phrase "on the front foot." *The defending champions started the first half of the match truly on the front foot, but they've started losing momentum here in the second half. The senator came out on the front foot during the debate, remaining on the attack the whole way through.* **2.** In real estate, a foot measured along the front of a property. *I don't have a price yet on the front foot, but if you're interested in the property, I will call the listing agent right now and find out.*

front load To organize something (often a contract or itinerary) so that it

is most productive at the start and tapers off during the duration. *My agent front loaded my contract so that I would make the most money right now, in the prime of my career. Why did you front load our trip so much? I'm exhausted after three days of touring the city!*

front wall In racquetball, the wall that the ball must be bounced off of at the start of the game, and before each subsequent hit by a player. *I enjoy racquetball, but I'm not able to hit the ball off the front wall every time I swing.*

the frosting on the cake Something desirable that makes an already good situation even better. *I was so proud of my daughter for finishing her Master's degree, but finding out she finished at the top of her class was the frosting on the cake!*

froth at the mouth **1.** Literally, to produce foam from one's mouth, as due to a disease or other ailment. *All of a sudden she collapsed in a fit, convulsing and frothing at the mouth.* **2.** Figuratively, to be viciously and uncontrollably angry or upset. *The protesters had formed outside the courthouse, frothing at the mouth as the alleged murderer made his way up the steps.*

frown upon To show one's disapproval of something. *I just know my mother frowns upon my decision to go to a state school. Please stop frowning upon my choice and support me!*

froze her blood See [freeze \(someone's\) blood](#).

fruit of (one's) loins One's child or children; one's immediate or future descendant(s). *As the baby-boomer generation ages, many are increasingly relying on the fruit of their loins for financial and medical support. Little could she know that, nearly two centuries later, the fruit of her loins would be in nearly every continent on the planet.*

fruit of the poisonous tree In US law, any secondary legal evidence that has been obtained as the result of unconstitutional or illegal means or information gathered in such a way. Such evidence, both the primary source and the secondary result, are generally inadmissible in court. *The police were found to have obtained the knowledge of the illicit firearms' location from a search they conducted without a warrant, and thus this fruit of the poisonous tree was ultimately not admitted during the prosecution.*

fruit of the union **1.** A child or children resulting from the union between two people, such as a marriage or domestic union. Also written as "fruit of one's union." *Why wouldn't you want to have children? They're the normal fruit of the union of marriage! When we started the divorce proceedings, the largest question was who would retain custody over the fruit of our union.* **2.** The offspring resulting from a sexual union between two mates. A "labradoodle," one of the cutest but silliest-named crossbreeds around, is the fruit of the union between a Labrador Retriever and a poodle. **3.** The outcome, result, or product of an interaction or union between two or more bodies, elements, or forces. *Water is merely the fruit of the union of two hydrogen atoms and a single oxygen atom. The treaty was ultimately the fruit of the union of two brilliant academics on either side of the war, who worked for months with each side's leaders to find a peaceful solution to the conflict.*

fruit salad rude slang A disparaging term for a homosexual man (as is "fruit").

fry the fat out of To get money out of someone through violence and/or extortion. *If you don't pay up, I'll have my men fry the fat out of you, don't you worry. It's time to fry the fat out of you, Stan, because I always get my money, one way or another.*

fuck all rude slang A vague phrase that usually means "nothing" and shows the speaker's disdain for the subject matter. Primarily heard in US. *They stay out all night, doing fuck all, while I'm here, working to keep us from losing the house!*

fuck knows rude slang No one knows. *I'm broke right now, and fuck knows where all my money went from this paycheck!*

fuck me **1.** rude slang An exclamation of frustration or exasperation. *Ugh, I can't believe I got a parking ticket tonight. Fuck me!* **2.** vulgar slang An invitation to have sexual intercourse with the speaker.

fuck my life rude slang An expression of one's frustration with a situation gone awry. It is often abbreviated "FML." *Did I really leave my wallet at home? Ugh, fuck my life.*

fuck (one's) brains out vulgar slang To have sexual intercourse many times, usually within a certain time frame (such as one day or night).

fuck the dog rude slang To make a serious mistake. A more vulgar

version of the saying "screw the pooch." *Oh boy, I really fucked the dog when I submitted those budget reports full of errors.*

fucked by the fickle finger of fate vulgar slang Very unlucky; going through an unfortunate turn of events. *I'd like to have some good luck for once, I'm tired of being fucked by the fickle finger of fate.*

fucked over rude slang Mistreated or put in an unfavorable position. *I got fucked over once again this year and didn't get a bonus at work!*

fucking hell rude slang An exclamation of surprise or frustration. *Fucking hell, your house is enormous! I can't seem to get a raise no matter what I do, fucking hell!*

fuddy-duddy 1. noun Someone who is old-fashioned or crotchety. *Brenda's friends call her an old fuddy-duddy because she never stays out past 9 o'clock at night.* 2. adjective Old-fashioned or crotchety. *You look a little fuddy-duddy. You don't have to get so dressed up, we're just going to the movies.*

fudge packer Derogatory slang for a homosexual man.

fudge the issue To dodge or avoid doing something. The phrase often has a connotation of deceit. *The finance department is fudging the issue for now, but once news reaches the CEO, they will have to admit whatever they did to make these figures so impressive. I know you didn't do any of the chores I assigned you, and you can't fudge the issue any longer!*

fuel the fire(s) To do or say something to make an argument, problem, or bad situation worse; to further incense an already angry person or group of people. *The debate was going poorly for the senatorial candidate, and his strikingly uncouth comments simply fueled the fires. Revelations of the CEO's massive retirement package fueled the fire for consumers already furious over the company's dubious financial dealings.*

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full circle Back to an original state or position. Often used in the phrase

"come/go full circle." *I started out as an excellent student, and now that my grades are starting to improve again, I feel like I've come full circle. The college's admission has been down in recent years, but we are determined to go full circle and restore the school to its former glory.*

full-court press **1.** A strategy in basketball in which the defensive team applies pressure on the offensive team across the entire court. *We were down by 15, so we ran a full-court press and started to create some turnovers.* **2.** By extension, an aggressive or increased effort to win or accomplish something. *Congress pulled out a full-court press in an effort to get the bill passed.*

full English Short for "full English breakfast," a traditional breakfast meal in England typically consisting of fried eggs, tomato, mushrooms, bacon, sausage, and fried bread or hash browns. Primarily heard in UK. *After a long night out at the pubs, there's nothing like a full English the next morning to get you back into shape.*

full-fledged **1.** Fully developed or accomplished in a particular area. *Sean has really become a full-fledged athlete during his high school career, and I think it's something he'll continue in college.* **2.** Having achieved the full status of one's title. *After so many years of schooling, I can barely believe that I'm now a full-fledged doctor!*

full marks **1.** Literally, the highest possible score or mark that one can achieve on a given exam, test, assignment, or course of study. *All her hard work paid off when she received full marks on her final exam.* **2.** By extension, full and proper credit or praise for someone's action, remark, or achievement. Typically followed by the prepositions "to" or "for." Primarily heard in UK. *Full marks to Joanna for her outstanding work on the merger. Though they lost, you've got to give the team full marks for their tremendous effort.*

full of bull See [be full of bull](#).

full of life Vibrant; energetic; spirited. *Elise is so full of life that you can't help but have a good time when you're with her. If anyone is going to go door-to-door for our cause, I think it should be Izzie, since she's so bubbly and full of life—everyone will love her.*

full of piss and vinegar Having an abundance or excessive amount of boisterous, youthful energy, enthusiasm, or rowdiness. *Although we came out*

into the match full of piss and vinegar, our team just didn't have the skill necessary to beat our cross-town rivals. It took having kids of my own to remember how full of piss and vinegar a child can be at 6 AM.

full plate A schedule or workload that is filled to capacity with obligations, tasks, or problems. *I'd love to help you but I have a full plate right now. The new president is certainly going to have a full plate when he gets into office.*

full-tilt boogie **1.** adverb At the highest capacity or most extreme rate possible; rapidly, recklessly, or with full abandon. *When I first bought the car, it was a total hunk of junk; but after a few months of work, it's now running full-tilt boogie. When the police showed up, everyone darted full-tilt boogie out of the house.* **2.** noun An extreme level of performance, capacity, or energy. *We've reached a full-tilt boogie in the office, with everyone working extra hours to get the project off the ground.*

full to the brim Completely full; teeming; having no room to spare. *I've got so many meetings and deadlines these days that my schedule is full to the brim! Her mind was full to the brim with ideas for her new book. I felt full to the brim after my grandmother's Thanksgiving meal.*

full to the gills Completely full; teeming; having no room to spare. *I've got so many meetings and deadlines these days that my schedule is full to the gills! Her mind was full to the gills with ideas for her new book. I felt full to the gills after my grandmother's Thanksgiving meal.*

full whack **1.** adverb At the highest, fullest, or maximum capacity or effect. *Our servers have been running full whack ever since we released our online multiplayer game.* **2.** noun The highest, fullest, or maximum amount, capacity, or effect. *They had turned the stove on to full whack without telling us, and we ended up burning our roast. John always pays the full whack for the newest technology.*

funnies **1.** The section of a newspaper containing comic strips. *The junk in the politics section is almost as silly as the stuff in the funnies.* **2.** Comic strips, especially those printed in a newspaper. *Though he had a Masters in Fine Art, he paid his bills by drawing funnies for the local paper.*

funny farm Derogatory slang for a psychiatric hospital or mental health facility. *If I don't take a vacation soon, I'll be headed to the funny farm.*

funny feeling An intuition or premonition about something; a sense of foreknowledge about a situation, condition, or set of circumstances. *I have a funny feeling that this meeting isn't going to end in our favor. I have this funny feeling that I've met this person before. I'm worried about our relationship. I got this funny feeling when I was talking to her last night.*

funny in the head Mentally unsound. *I would steer clear of that guy, he seems a little funny in the head. My uncle is always saying the strangest things, and if you didn't know him, you'd think he was a little funny in the head.*

funny man **1.** A professional comedian. *Can you believe that famous funny man got his start at comedy clubs around here?* **2.** A person who is being humorous. Often used to indicate a lack of appreciation for the humor. *All right, funny man, stop joking around and get back to work! Oh, a funny man, huh? We'll see who's laughing when you get your grade.*

funny-peculiar or funny ha-ha A phrase used when the speaker is trying to determine if someone else used the word "funny" to mean "strange" or "humorous." *A: "That play sure is funny." B: "Do you mean funny-peculiar or funny ha-ha?"*

funny stuff **1.** Foolish, unruly, and/or mischievous behavior. *Knock off the funny stuff, the boss will be here any minute!* **2.** Irregular, unusual activity, often illegal or illicit in manner or scope. *I suspect there's some funny stuff going on with that company's accounts.*

fussy as a hen with one chick Extremely anxious and overprotective. *A: "I can't believe your curfew is only nine o'clock." B: "Yeah, my mom can be fussy as a hen with one chick sometimes."*

FWB See [friend with benefits](#).

G

gag for See [be gagging for \(something\)](#).

gag for it See [be gagging for it](#).

gag order A court order prohibiting public reporting of or commentary on a current judicial case by the media or members of the press. *Unfortunately, due to a gag order, we can't provide any more details about the murder trial until it is finished.*

gain entrance To enter a place or location upon acquiring permission or a means of access. *After getting the security guard's attention, we were able to gain entrance to the building.*

gain ground **1.** To advance toward a desired location. *We need to start gaining ground if we want to get back to camp before sunset. The enemy forces are beginning to gain ground, and they're expected to reach the capital sometime tomorrow.* **2.** By extension, to make progress or obtain more success, popularity, importance, or acceptance. *The opposition to vaccinating children, while still a definite minority, has been gaining ground in recent years. No one thought our fast food chain would do well in such a saturated market, but we've started gaining ground!*

gain ground against (something) In finance, especially regarding currency, to increase in value in comparison to something else. *With Europe's economy still struggling to recover, the US Dollar continued to gain ground against the Euro on Friday.*

gain ground on (someone or something) **1.** Of an opponent or enemy, to advance toward someone or something's position. *The enemy forces are gaining ground on us. We need to move out! With the finish line only meters away, the runner turned back to see his rival gaining ground on him.* **2.** To encroach on the success or popularity of someone or something; to advance or prosper at the expense of someone or something else. *The fledgling social media website has been gaining ground on the leading platforms in recent months. The underdog candidate's grassroots campaign helped her gain ground on her opponent, making this election much closer*

than anyone would have anticipated.

gain the upper hand To come to be in a position of advantage, power, and/or control (over someone, something, or some situation). *We've been doing everything we can for your father, but I'm afraid the cancer is gaining the upper hand. The home team gained the upper hand when their opponents' star quarterback went out with an injury.*

gala affair A grand, lively, and festive social event. *The company pulled out all the stops for the CEO's retirement party, turning the event into a gala affair.*

gall and wormwood Strong feelings of bitterness and resentment. ("Gall" is bile and "wormwood" is a bitter plant.) *Ever since I lost the election for school president, I only feel gall and wormwood when I think of my unworthy opponent.*

gallery gods The people seated in the highest seats in the theater. *I'm so nervous to take the stage tonight—I hope I don't get heckled by the gallery gods! Oh boy, we're going to be gallery gods in these terrible seats!*

game face 1. A figurative or literal facial expression denoting a mental attitude of determination or resolve in the face of an imminent and difficult task, activity, or workload. *The thesis committee is going to be merciless, so be sure to have your game face on when you go in to defend your dissertation. I could tell by the steely look in her eyes that Janet had her game face on for the match. 2. An expression of stoicism intended to mask one's emotions or intentions. *John put his game face on as soon as I started to break up with him, so I can't really tell how he took the news. The police are going to use every interrogation tactic they know to get you to confess, so be sure you've got your game face on when they come.**

The game is not worth the candle. The outcome, product, or returns of this activity or undertaking are not worth the time and resources that it requires. An allusion to gambling by candlelight, a significant expense at one point in time. If the winnings were not sufficient, then they didn't warrant the needless use of a candle. *The local council considered the construction of a new power grid throughout the county, but because it would cost millions and only marginally increase efficiency compared to the current infrastructure, they decided that the game wasn't worth the candle.*

a game of hide and seek See [hide and seek](#).

a game of musical chairs A situation in which people or things are moved, shuffled, or rearranged from one position to another. *After the boss resigned, it was a regular game of musical chairs in the company to figure out who would take over for whom. It's been a game of musical chairs trying to create enough space in the living room for Alex's birthday party this weekend.*

game plan A carefully considered strategy. *My game plan to secure employment in my field includes gaining as much hands-on experience as I can and obtaining a few more certifications before the end of the year.*

game, set, match A phrase said at the end of a tennis match (which consists of games and sets) that can be used humorously in any situation in which someone is victorious or triumphant. *Game, set, match! Roger Federer is the winner! After a little intimidation, I knew I had her right where I wanted her in the negotiation—game, set, match.*

gandy dancer old fashioned A worker in a railway gang who lays and maintains railroad tracks. *My granddaddy worked as a gandy dancer building the first stretch of railroads across the state.*

gapers' block Traffic congestion due to drivers' attention being simultaneously diverted to something, such as a collision or animals on or near the road. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *They were able to move the wreckage well off the road to allow cars to pass, but there remained a gaper's block on the highway for the better part of the morning.*

garden variety A standard, unexceptional, or commonly found kind (of thing). *That's just your garden variety house spider; there's no need to be concerned about its bite.*

Garrison finish The end of a competition in which one participant comes from behind at the last minute to win. The phrase refers to US jockey Edward "Snapper" Garrison, who was known for securing such last-minute victories. *That race sure had a Garrison finish—one of the runners came all the way from fifth place to win!*

Gary Glitter The anus, when used in reference to anal sex. Primarily heard in US, Australia, South Africa.

gas guzzler A vehicle that consumes more than the average amount of gasoline during normal usage. *Every time the price of oil rises, people trade*

in their gas guzzlers for more fuel-efficient cars.

gasbag A person who speaks at too great a length, saying little of value and often with an air of pretentious authority. *Ah, quit prattling on about the government, you old gasbag! You don't know the first thing about politics.*

gaslighting The act of manipulating someone psychologically so that they begin to doubt their experience of reality. The phrase comes from the 1938 play *Gas Light*, in which the protagonist attempts to induce insanity in his wife by constantly questioning or doubting her reports of strange events, such as the dimming of the house's gas lights (which has in fact occurred and is related to the husband's nefarious activities). *Her husband must be gaslighting her because she suddenly doubts all the evidence that she's found of his indiscretions. The administration has been accused of gaslighting with its repeated attempts to spread disinformation.*

gatecrasher One who attends an event, such as a concert, sports match, or party, without being invited or paying to get in. *I don't mind gatecrashers coming to my parties, so long as they behave themselves. Due to the popularity of the show—and the limited amount of tickets—extra security was hired to keep any gatecrashers out of the concert.*

gather (one's) wits To try to calm oneself and think clearly and rationally. *Sir, you've just been in an car accident. Take a moment to gather your wits, then please tell us what happened. If your opponent starts badgering you during the debate, remember to gather your wits before responding.*

gathering clouds A sign of impending trouble or danger. (The "clouds" refer to storm clouds.) *There have been gathering clouds in the city for months—I'm nervous that a riot will erupt soon.*

gaze open-mouthed To stare intently at something or someone, often because one is awestruck or dumbfounded. *I couldn't help but gaze open-mouthed at the beautiful sunrise.*

gee whiz **1.** modifier (hyphenated and used before a noun) Especially enthusiastic or impressed; youthfully or naïvely optimistic or exuberant. *The film is sure to provoke some gee-whiz reactions from even the most cynical of spectators. A lot of people come into politics with some gee-whiz notions of changing the world.* **2.** modifier (hyphenated and used before a noun) Showily or gaudily impressive; amazing or astounding. *The film boasts a lot*

of gee-whiz effects but doesn't offer much else in the way of plot or character development. **3.** interjection An exclamation of any strong emotion, such as surprise, dismay, enthusiasm, exasperation, etc. *Aw, gee whiz, Mom! Can't I stay out and play for one more hour? Gee whiz guys, wasn't that show great?*

gen (someone) up on (something) To inform or educate someone about something; to give someone the required information about something. Primarily heard in UK. *The manager genned us up this morning on the status of the company.*

gen up on (something) To inform or educate oneself about something; to study up on something. Primarily heard in UK. *I'm going to have to gen up on my computer skills before starting this new job.*

gender bender **1.** One who dresses and/or behaves in the manner or style of the opposite sex. *Tom works as an accountant during the week, but he has a performance routine as a gender bender on the weekend.* **2.** One who challenges, denies, or explores the borders or limitations of gender identity, typically through means such as activism, transvestitism, academic discourse, etc., or a combination thereof. *Some of the leading academic gender benders are gathering this week for a summit on transgender rights.*

gender bending **1.** modifier (hyphenated and used before a noun) Literally, causing a change in the sexual assignment of a person or animal. *Scientists are developing a gender-bending chemical procedure to induce artificial hermaphroditism in insects.* **2.** modifier (hyphenated and used before a noun) Assuming the roles, appearance, or manner of the opposite sex. *This novel features a gender-bending protagonist who, at various stages in the story, moves between gender identities.* **3.** noun The discourse or practice of challenging, denying, or exploring the borders or limitations of gender identity, typically through means such as activism, transvestitism, academic discourse, etc., or a combination thereof. *Some of the leading academics in gender bending are gathering this week for a summit on transgender rights.*

generation gap The difference of opinions and attitudes, especially in relation to social changes and politics, that develop as each generation changes from the one before it. *Attitudes toward gay marriage reflects a clear generation gap on the issue today.*

genetic modification The act of altering the DNA of an organism.

Genetic modification of fruits and vegetables is a controversial practice.

geneva courage Alcohol-induced bravery or braggadocio. "Geneva" is a type of gin made in the Netherlands. *There goes Rich, picking a fight with someone at the bar. Looks like the geneva courage has kicked in! He thinks he's the smartest guy in the room when he's feeling some geneva courage.*

genie back in the bottle See [put the genie back in the bottle](#).

gentle giant Someone who is very large and strong but has a quiet and gentle nature. *At first, I was afraid of the big, burly man covered in tattoos, but when I saw him rescue that kitten from the tree, I realized he was just a gentle giant.*

a gentleman and a scholar Someone (usually a male, due to the gender implication of "gentleman") who is admirable or of high esteem. Although used sincerely as a compliment, it is generally bombastic and lighthearted in nature. *Thank you for helping me move into the new house, you are truly a scholar and a gentleman.*

a gentleman and a scholar See [a scholar and a gentleman](#).

gentleman of the four outs An upstart. The four "outs" in question (that the person is living without) are manners, money, credit, and wit. *I can't stand the young new partner at the firm—I can see that he's a gentleman of the four outs.*

gentleman's agreement A legally non-binding arrangement that is guaranteed only by a verbal or mutually understood agreement by the parties involved. *Though my father left me his entire estate in his will, I made a gentleman's agreement with my brother to share the wealth equally between us.*

gentleman's pact A legally non-binding arrangement that is guaranteed only by a verbal or mutually understood agreement by the parties involved. *Though my father left me his entire estate in his will, I made a gentleman's pact with my brother to share the wealth equally between us.*

German goiter A large distended belly, as might result from heavy consumption of beer. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *I'd like to run a marathon some day, but first I need to do something about this German goiter of mine.*

German virgin In poker, a starting hand of two nines. So called due to

"nine, nine" sounding like the German *nein, nein*, meaning "no, no." *Having been dealt a German virgin right off the bat, I was hoping for a third nine to be laid on the table.*

German wheel A prop, often featured in circus performances, that looks like a life-size hamster wheel. A performer is positioned in the middle and rotates it. *Come to the show, it'll be fun—there will be acrobats, trapeze artists, and people in German wheels!*

gerrup de yaard See [get up the yard](#).

get See [get \(one's\)](#).

get a bead on (someone or something) **1.** To aim at someone or something with the sights on a firearm. *I managed to get a bead on the enemy sniper but had to wait until I received the order to fire.* **2.** By extension, to focus one's attention on someone or something so as to deal with or attack him, her, or it. *The candidate got a bead on his opponent's poor political record during the debate. The president has pledged to get a bead on the growing problem of adolescent obesity.* **3.** To thoroughly understand, appreciate, or comprehend someone or something. *The team just has to get a bead on the severity of the cyber attack before we can implement any meaningful fixes. I couldn't understand him at first, but I'm finally starting to get a bead on my sister's boyfriend.*

get a big head To become arrogant or conceited; to assume an exaggeratedly high opinion of oneself. *Samantha got a big head after her book became a bestseller. I hope you don't get a big head from all the praise your parents heap on you.*

get a break **1.** To obtain or receive a fortuitous and beneficial opportunity. *I finally got a break when a big Hollywood producer asked me to audition for a part in the movie.* **2.** To receive special treatment or a favorable deal, especially regarding a reduced price on something. *Tenants in the city center will be getting a break on rental prices when the city council introduces a new rent-control scheme next year. You'll get a break on your car insurance if you don't get in any accidents while you're driving.* **3.** To obtain new information leading toward a solution to a given problem. *The detectives finally got a break when an anonymous caller tipped them off to the kidnapper's location.* **4.** To get relief from some difficulty or problem(s). *We're hoping to get a break from the drought with a little bit of rainfall this*

weekend. First, my car breaks down and then I lose my keys to the apartment —I just can't get a break today!

get a crush on (someone) To become romantically infatuated with someone, especially unbeknownst to that person. *I think I'm getting a crush on Tommy.*

get a dirty look (from someone) To receive a look of contempt, anger, or disgust (from someone). *I got a really dirty look from the man sitting next to me when I started talking about politics.*

get a fix (of something) To acquire a required or necessary amount of something, especially that which one is addicted to or compulsively seeks. *When I was a junkie, I would do just about anything in order to get a fix. I just can't get my day going until I get a fix of caffeine.*

get a (good/solid/sound/etc.) grasp of/on (something) To attain a firm, clear understanding or determination of something. *You will need to get a solid grasp of the material, as you'll all be tested on it next week. I'm trying to get a grasp on English, but I don't understand some of these idioms at all!*

get a hand on (something) 1. Literally, to place one's hand on something (as to grab it). *See if you can reach up and get a hand on that box on the top shelf.* 2. To find and/or come to possess something. *Let me know if you get a hand on their latest album, I can't wait to hear it.*

get a hand (with something) To receive assistance (with some task or activity). *Tommy has been having trouble with his math homework, so he's getting a hand from my brother-in-law. Could I get a hand with these boxes? They're too heavy to carry alone!*

get a leg up 1. To receive a physical boost or lift upward. *I think I can reach the roof if I can get a leg up from someone.* 2. To receive support, encouragement, or an added advantage. *Our after-school program is aimed to help students get a leg up in any subject they are having difficulty with. I wouldn't have been able to afford college if I hadn't gotten a leg up from my parents.*

get a leg up on (someone) To achieve or be in a position of advantage over someone else. *One must always be looking for ways to get a leg up on the competition if one wants to succeed in business. I've been*

practicing all summer long, and now I've finally gotten a leg up on Keith in tennis.

get a load off (one's) feet To relax and rest one's feet, especially by sitting down. (Usually said as a suggestion.) *You've been busy around the house all day. Go ahead and get a load off your feet for a while, and I'll fix dinner for tonight.*

get (a lot of) grief (from someone) To receive strong criticism, disapproval, or judgment (for something). *I got a lot of grief from my parents over my decision to pursue a degree in art rather than law or medicine. I'm going to get grief from my boss for that accounting error I made last week. John still gets a lot of grief for that time his pants fell down in the middle of class.*

get a lot of mileage See [get \(some kind of\) mileage out of \(something\)](#).

get (a lot of) stick (from someone) To receive strong criticism, disapproval, or judgment (for something). *I got a lot of stick from my parents over my decision to pursue a degree in art, rather than law or medicine. I'm going to get stick from my boss for that accounting error I made last week. John still gets a lot of stick for that time his pants fell down in the middle of class.*

get a lump in (one's) throat To have difficulty speaking as a result of feeling that one is about to cry due to an intense emotional response to something. *Though I was excited for my daughter to start her college experience, I still got a lump in my throat saying goodbye to her at the airport.*

get (a) mixed message(s) To receive a signal, message, or communication that has, or seems to have, multiple, ambiguous, or contradictory meanings. *I keep getting these mixed messages from my ex-girlfriend. I can't tell if she just wants to be friends, or if she's interested in getting back together. I've just been getting a mixed message from my boss lately about what he thinks of my performance so far.*

get (a) mixed signal(s) To receive a signal, message, or communication that has, or seems to have, multiple, ambiguous, or contradictory meanings. *I keep getting these mixed signals from my ex-girlfriend. I can't tell if she just wants to be friends, or if she's interested in getting back together. I've just been getting a mixed signal from my boss*

lately about what he thinks of my performance so far.

get a price on (one's) head To have an amount of money be offered as a reward for one's capture. *I'm sorry, but we can't travel with your brother any longer. He's got a price on his head, and it's too dangerous for the rest of us! I'll never be able to live peacefully in this town as long as I've got a price on my head.*

get a ribbing (from someone) To be teased or mocked, usually in a playful or non-malicious manner. *I always get a ribbing from my girlfriend for the bathrobe I wear around the house. Don't be offended if you get a bit of a ribbing when you start working here—our team has a fondness for poking fun at one another.*

get a room A sarcastic or humorous imperative used to tell a couple to cease displaying physical affection publicly (implying that they should rent a room in a hotel to continue in private). *My dad told me to get a room when he saw me kissing my boyfriend. Get a room, would you? No one needs to see two people tongue wrestling like that.*

get a say (in something) To have or attain an active and participatory role in making or influencing a decision about something. *The best thing about working for a smaller company is that it finally feels like everyone gets a say in how it should operate. You've decided to move the family to Alaska for a new job? Don't I get a say in the matter? We're all equals here, so everyone should get a say.*

get a sneck posset See [sneck posset](#).

get a voice (in something) To have or attain an active and participatory role in making or influencing a decision about something. *The best thing about working for a smaller company is that it finally feels like everyone gets a voice in how it should operate. You've decided to move the family to Alaska for a new job? Don't I get a voice in the matter? We're all equals here, so everyone should get a voice.*

get a wiggle on To move quickly; to hurry or hurry up; get a move on. *We'd better get a wiggle on if we want to be on time for our reservation.*

get a wink of sleep See [not get a wink of sleep](#).

get a wriggle on To go faster. *Those guys better get a wriggle on or we'll be moving boxes all day! I know we have to leave soon, so I'm getting a*

wriggle on!

get a yen for (something) To get a craving or desire for something. *Though I quit smoking years ago, I still get a yen for a cigarette from time to time. I'm getting a yen for something sweet—let's go out for ice cream!*

get (all) set To prepare for something. *Get set to see the best movie of your life! I have to go home early so I can get all set for our trip tomorrow.*

get along famously (with someone) To have an exceptionally good relationship (with someone); to get along very well (with someone). *I'm glad you finally got to meet my brother—I knew you two would get along famously. My grandparents have been married for over 50 years and they still get along famously!*

get anywhere To make progress. *Did you guys get anywhere in the negotiations today? Ugh, I'm not getting anywhere with my research right now.*

get around 1. To spread among a number of people, as of news, rumors, etc. *When news of this tax scandal gets around, your career in politics will be finished!* **2.** slang To have sexual intercourse with many different partners. *I'd practice safe sex with him if I were you—I hear he tends to get around.*

get ashes hauled See [get \(one's\) ashes hauled](#).

get ass See [get \(one's\) ass \(somewhere\)](#).

get back See [get \(someone's\) back](#).

get back on the horse (that bucked you) To return to or resume an activity that one has previously failed at, had difficulty with, or which has previously caused one harm. *I know you're discouraged after getting fired, but you need to get back on the horse that bucked you and start looking for work. I've been single for three years since my divorce, but now I think it's time to get back on the horse and start dating again.*

get back to (someone) To communicate with someone at a later time or date. *Tell Jill that I'll get back to her about that business proposal after the weekend. I'll have to get back you later, I'm just on my way out the door.*

get back to (someone) on (something) To communicate with someone at a later time or date regarding a specific issue. *Tell Jill that I'll get back to her on that business proposal after the weekend. John said he'll get*



back to you on buying the car once he's had a chance to talk to his wife.

get back up See [get \(someone's\) back up](#).

get behind me See [get thee behind me](#).

get bell rung See [get \(one's\) bell rung](#).

get bent An exclamation of dismissal, anger, annoyance, or exasperation toward someone or in response to what they are saying. A: "I need to borrow \$50 for my rent this month." B: "Get bent! You still owe me \$100 from last month!" You're such a jerk sometimes, why don't you just get bent!

get burned (by someone) **1.** To be scammed, swindled, or ripped off (by someone). *I can't believe I got burned by that guy—this car's a total lemon! I once had my identity stolen by someone posing as a bank manager on the phone. I'm never getting burned like that again!* **2.** To get into trouble (because of someone); to be caught or blamed (by someone). *My friend and I got burned by the police when we tried racing our cars down an empty street. I got burned for trying to help my girlfriend cheat during our exam, so now I have to retake the entire course.* **3.** To be verbally insulted (by someone). *Did you hear what she just called you? You got burned, man! I can't believe I just got burned by my little brother.*

get butt See [get \(one's\) butt \(somewhere\)](#).

get by **1.** To move past something, especially an obstacle or impediment of some kind. *Can you move those boxes? I need to get by with this cart. We just got by the traffic jam when another accident happened.* **2.** To live with the minimum amount of necessities required to survive; to barely make ends meet. *Ever since my husband lost his job, we've been just getting by.* **3.** To perform just well enough not to fail. *You'll be able to get by with these grades, but they certainly won't get you into your first choice school.* **4.** To pass unnoticed. *Quick, let's get by the guard before he wakes up! Wow, I can't believe you noticed that. Nothing gets by you, huh?*

get by balls See [get \(someone\) by the balls](#).

get by the short hairs See [have \(someone\) by the short hairs](#).

get canned To be summarily dismissed or ousted from employment; to be fired. *The new accountant got canned after a miscalculation cost the company hundreds of thousands of dollars.*



get changed To change one's clothes. *I can't wear my bikini to dinner—I need to get changed before we go to the restaurant! She's up in her room getting changed out of her uniform right now.*

get claws into See [get \(one's\) claws into](#).

get claws out See [get \(one's\) claws out](#).

get clock cleaned See [get \(one's\) clock cleaned](#).

get clued in (to something) To become familiar with or aware of the particulars of a situation, especially through inference, previous knowledge, or by being privy to inside information. *I spent the first day on the job getting clued in to the way the company operates. If you don't know who really runs the show around here, you need to get clued in and fast!*

get credit for (something) To receive praise, admiration, or acknowledgement for some task, achievement, or accomplishment. Often (but not always) used when someone is praised for something they did not actually do. *Even though Jenny did all the hard work on the project, Mary was the one who got credit for it. It's good to see Professor Wilson getting credit for her findings.*

get dander up See [get \(one's\) dander up](#).

get down See [get \(someone\) down](#).

get down See [get \(something\) down](#).

get down cold See [have \(something\) down cold](#).

get down pat See [have/get \(something\) down pat](#).

get down to work To begin being serious about something; to begin attending to business or work at hand. *I believe that everyone is present for the board meeting, so let's get down to work, shall we?*

get dues See [get \(one's\) dues](#).

get Dutch up See [get \(one's\) Dutch up](#).

get ears lowered See [get \(one's\) ears lowered](#).

get end away See [get \(one's\) end away](#).

get even with To exact revenge on someone. *This prank may seem elaborate, but I need to get even with my brother for dumping a bucket of*

water on me the other day. Sheila swore that she would get even with me after she figured out that I had started the rumor about her.

get finger out See [get \(one's\) finger out](#).

get finger out See [get \(one's\) finger out](#).

get fingers burned See [get \(one's\) fingers burned](#).

get fingers burned See [get \(one's\) fingers burned](#).

get fix See [get \(one's\) fix \(of something\)](#).

get foot in the door See [get \(one's\) foot in the door](#).

get freak on See [get \(one's\) freak on](#).

the get-go See [from the get-go](#).

get goose bumps To get bumps on one's skin where one's body hair stands on end as the result of an intense feeling of cold, nervousness, anxiety, excitement, or fear. *I got goose bumps watching that scary movie last night! Their concert was so amazing, I got goose bumps when they played their first song! It's so cold in here that I'm getting goose bumps.*

get goose flesh To get bumps on one's skin where one's body hair stands on end as the result of an intense feeling of cold, nervousness, anxiety, excitement, or fear. *I got goose flesh watching that scary movie last night! Their concert was so amazing, I got goose flesh when they played their first song! It's so cold in here that I'm getting goose flesh.*

get goose pimples To get bumps on one's skin where one's body hair stands on end as the result of an intense feeling of cold, nervousness, anxiety, excitement, or fear. *I got goose pimples watching that scary movie last night! Their concert was so amazing, I got goose pimples when they played their first song! It's so cold in here that I'm getting goose pimples.*

get gray hair from (someone or something) To be exceedingly worried, stressed, or upset by or about something or someone. *I'm getting gray hair from these kids screaming all day long. I'm going to get gray hair from my teenage daughter and all her wild behavior. I'm going to get gray hair from dealing with this stupid car breaking down all the time!*

get grief See [get \(a lot of\) grief \(from someone\)](#).

get hackles up See [get \(someone's\) hackles up](#).

get hand on something See [get a hand on \(something\)](#).

get hands dirty See [get \(one's\) hands dirty](#).

get hands on See [get \(one's\) hands on \(something\)](#).

get hands on See [get \(one's\) hands on \(someone\)](#).

get head around See [get \(one's\) head around \(something\)](#).

get head together See [get \(one's\) head together](#).

get hers See [get \(one's\)](#).

get herself in gear See [get \(oneself\) in gear](#).

get herself out of something See [get \(oneself\) out of \(something\)](#).

get herself out of something See [get \(oneself\) out of \(something\)](#).

get herself out of somewhere See [get \(oneself\) out of \(somewhere\)](#).

get high To achieve a state of mental euphoria, as from substance intoxication (most often in reference to marijuana). *After working a 10-hour shift, all I want to do is get high and watch TV. Who needs drugs? I get high from my two-hour run every day!*

get him by the balls See [get \(someone\) by the balls](#).

get him down See [get \(someone\) down](#).

get him off the hook See [get \(one\) off the hook](#).

get him out of a fix See [get \(someone\) out of a fix](#).

get him out of something See [get \(someone\) out of \(something\)](#).

get him out of something See [get \(someone\) out of \(something\)](#).

get him out of somewhere See [get \(someone\) out of \(somewhere\)](#).

get hit for six To be upset or overwhelmed, especially suddenly or unexpectedly. Primarily heard in UK. *I got completely hit for six by the news of my father's death.*

get hit on To be the object or target of someone's clear sexual interest and advances. *I'm so tired of getting hit on in bars by complete strangers! I think your dad was getting hit on at the show last night.*

get hitched To get married. *Did you hear? Bill and David got hitched last*

week!

get hold of the right end of the stick To understand something well or correctly. Primarily heard in UK. *I struggled with the reading at first, but now I think I've got hold of the right end of the stick.*

get hold of the wrong end of the stick To misunderstand something. *I was struggling with the reading before, but now I've definitely got hold of the wrong end of the stick.*

get hopes up See [get \(one's\) hopes up](#).

get hot under the collar To become angry. *I'm sorry I got hot under the collar just then, I have a hard time hearing criticism about my novel. I know you get hot under the collar at times like this, but please, stop yelling at me!*

get house in order See [get \(one's\) \(own\) house in order](#).

get in on 1. To become involved with, or participate in, some group, organization, or activity. *Let me know if you'd like to get in on our party this Saturday. Why don't you go get in on the fun with the other kids?* **2.** To be or become privy to special or secret information, among a select group. *I'm looking to get in on the hot trading tips in investment banking.*

get in (one's) hair To annoy someone, often by being in the way. *The kids are totally getting in my hair today, so I need you to watch them for a little bit. Don't get in my hair today because I don't have the patience for it!*

get in over (one's) head To become too deeply involved in or with a difficult situation, beyond the point of being able to control or cope with things any longer. *I've gotten in way over my head with this money laundering scheme—now the mob is threatening my family if I try to back out! I think I'm getting in over my head with Amy. She wants marriage, kids, and a house, and I'm just not ready for any of that!*

get in (someone's) face To confront and provoke someone, as in readiness to fight, berate, harass, or argue with him or her. *As we left the court, reporters kept getting in my face to ask me if I was guilty. Some guy got in my face last night at the bar, so I socked him in the eye.*

get in (someone's) good books To ingratiate oneself to someone; to curry favor with someone. *Flattery won't work; the only way of getting in his good books is through hard work.*

get in the last word To say the final words in an argument or discussion, especially one that decisively or conclusively ends it. *Everyone started shouting, trying to get in the last word, and the whole meeting just descended into chaos. David is so smug, making a point to get in the last word in every debate.*

get in touch (with someone) To initiate or establish contact or communication with someone *I tried getting in touch with you yesterday, but the office said you were out sick. Please get in touch as soon as you're back home!*

get in with (someone) To be or become involved or associated with a person or group of people; to be or become popular or friendly with a person or group of people. *I'm worried about Anne—I think she's gotten in with a rough crowd. Experience like that is sure to help you get in with the board of directors.*

get inside (someone's) pants crude To engage in sexual intercourse with someone. (Usually said of the intention or expectation.) *I've stopped going to the clubs around town; they're just filled guys trying to get inside your pants.*

get in(to) a rut To become seemingly trapped or stuck in a mundane, non-changing pattern of life, work, and/or personal behavior. *I had so many ambitions when I first graduated from college, but now I feel like I've gotten into a rut. We're getting in a rut—let's move abroad for the summer and shake things up!*

get in(to) a snit To become angry, agitated, or irritated. *John is always getting into a snit with his girlfriend over the silliest things. Don't get in a snit with me, I was trying to be helpful!*

get in(to) a stew To be or become angry, upset, agitated, anxious, or alarmed over something or someone. *John is always getting into a stew over his girlfriend's late nights out. Don't get in a stew with me, I was trying to be helpful! I always get into a stew when I have a big meeting with my managers.*

get in(to) deep water To put or find oneself in a dangerous, vulnerable, or troublesome situation or position, especially that which could be beyond one's abilities to resolve. *Anthony has been getting into deep water*

with his creditors; if he doesn't stop borrowing money, they're going to take everything he owns. I think I've gotten in deep water with this master's course—I don't know how I'll be able to keep up with all the work!

get in(to) hot water To provoke or incite anger, hostility, or punishment against oneself; to cause or encounter trouble or difficulty, especially that which will result in punishment or reprisal. *I got into a bit of hot water with Janice last night when she found out I'd been drinking all night. The senator has gotten into hot water with constituents over his callous remarks.*

get in(to) line 1. To become straight; to form into a line or row. *The teacher waited for her students to get into line before they walked to the auditorium. The cars all got in line after the traffic merged into a single lane.*

2. To conform, adhere to, or agree with that which is established or generally accepted, such as rules, beliefs, modes of behavior, etc. *You might have some wild ideas for the future, but you'll never get anywhere in this business if you don't start getting into line with your boss's expectations. We all tend to have revolutionary ideals in our youth, but we usually get in line with the general populace as we grow older.*

get into (one's) stride To become comfortable with something. *It took a few weeks, but I think I've finally gotten into my stride at my new job. I know that Rob has been struggling a bit since he joined the team, but I'm confident that he'll get into his stride soon enough.*

get in(to) (someone's) pants crude To engage in sexual intercourse with someone. (Usually said of the intention or expectation.) *I've stopped going to the clubs around town; they're just filled guys trying to get into your pants.*

get into the wrong hands To become acquired by people who were not supposed to have or know about the item in question. *Please keep this report to yourself, I don't want it to get into the wrong hands. If this information gets into the wrong hands, all our undercover agents will be in danger.*

get into trouble 1. To get into a bad or dangerous situation. *I think we might get into trouble if we try driving the car on that rickety bridge. If you ever get into trouble out in the water, wave both your arms so the lifeguard can see you.* **2.** To be reprimanded for something. *I am definitely going to get*

into trouble with my mom if she finds out that I broke the vase. If I'm not home by curfew, I will get into trouble with my parents.

get involved (in or with someone or something) 1. To establish an association, typically work related, with something or some organization. *Johnny's getting involved with a non-profit health clinic during his summer vacation. I've gotten involved in campaigns for a number of political candidates over the years.* 2. To become embroiled in some event, situation, or predicament. *I make it a point never to get involved in other people's personal affairs.* 3. To become emotionally, romantically, or sexually associated with someone. *I got involved with Georgina over two years ago, and we both couldn't be happier! You should never get involved with a co-worker or colleague—it can only lead to trouble.* 4. To become embroiled in the actions, plans, or developments of another person. *Your stupid schemes are going to cost me everything I have; I should never have gotten involved with you!*

get Irish up See [get \(someone's\) Irish up](#).

get it 1. To pick up, retrieve, or receive something. *I paid for her present online, but I need to go get it from the store. A: "The baby knocked her bottle onto the ground." B: "Don't worry, I'll get it."* 2. To understand or comprehend something. *I've read this chapter three times, but I'm just not getting it. You might want to slow down your lectures, I don't think the rest of the class gets it.* 3. To answer the telephone or door. *I hear the doorbell ringing—would you mind getting it?* 4. To pay for something, especially for or on behalf of someone else. *Don't worry about dinner tonight, I've got it. I'll get it, you put your money away.* 5. To receive a severe reprimand, scolding, retaliation, or punishment. *Oh man, I'm going to get it from my parents when they find out I wrecked the car! You little punk, you're going to get it if you ever show your face around here again!*

get it down See [get \(something\) down](#).

get it down cold See [have \(something\) down cold](#).

get it down pat See [have/get \(something\) down pat](#).

get it in the neck To receive a very severe rebuke, scolding, or punishment for one's actions. Primarily heard in UK. *Boy, I really got it in the neck for screwing up the Lawson account. I'm lucky I didn't lose my job! I'm really going to get it in the neck if my parents notice this dent in the car!*

get it over with See [get \(something\) over with](#).

get it over with An exhortation to do something quickly (typically because it is unpleasant). *I know you have to draw blood, so go ahead, get it over with! It looks like you have some bad news for me, so just tell me what it is—get it over with.*

get it through head See [get \(something\) through \(someone's\) head](#).

get it up vulgar slang Of a man, to achieve, have, and/or maintain an erection of the penis. *Many associate erectile dysfunction with old age, but in truth, men of all ages can have trouble getting it up for myriad reasons.*

get it wrong See [get \(something\) wrong](#).

get jollies See [get \(one's\) jollies](#).

get juices flowing See [get \(one's\) juices flowing](#).

get just deserts See [get \(one's\) just deserts](#).

get kicked to the curb To be discarded, abandoned, or dismissed (as from employment) due to being unwanted, obsolete, or redundant. *I can't believe that I got kicked to the curb after 20 years of hard work for that company! I think it's about time for this old computer to get kicked to the curb. I heard Jenny's new boyfriend has already gotten kicked to the curb. Easy come, easy go!*

get knickers in a knot See [get \(one's\) knickers in a knot](#).

get knickers in a twist See [get \(one's\) knickers in a twist](#).

get knocked out cold To be rendered unconscious, as by a physical blow, medication, or other means. *I had a shot at a championship boxing title, but I got knocked out cold in the semi-finals. I hope I don't get knocked out cold by this painkiller the doctor gave me. Sam drank a bit too much on her 21st birthday and got knocked out cold by 10 PM.*

get lost in translation Of a word or words, to lose the full subtlety of meaning or significance when translated from one language to another, especially when done literally. *My friend tried explaining a few French idioms to me, but I'm afraid they got lost in translation. It's amazing how much gets lost in translation in the subtitles of foreign films.*

get lowdown See [get the lowdown \(on someone or something\)](#).

get lumps in our throats See [get a lump in \(one's\) throat](#).

get marching orders See [get \(one's\) marching orders](#).

get marching orders See [get \(one's\) marching orders](#).

get miffed To become angry, agitated, or irritated. *John always gets miffed over the traffic on his way to work. Don't get miffed with me, I was trying to be helpful! I got so miffed when I found out I was being audited that I threw my plate across the room.*

get mileage See [get \(some kind of\) mileage out of \(something\)](#).

get mine See [get \(one's\)](#).

get mixed message See [get \(a\) mixed message\(s\)](#).

get mixed signal See [get \(a\) mixed signal\(s\)](#).

get monkey up See [get \(one's\) monkey up](#).

get more than (one) bargained for To receive more than one anticipated or face an unexpected outcome in a given situation, especially that which is unfavorable or difficult to manage. *I got more than I bargained for when I took on this job as a dishwasher—my manager has me doing just about every menial task in the restaurant! Jason thought it would be easy getting a job after college, but he got more than he bargained for trying find one in today's economy.*

get myself in gear See [get \(oneself\) in gear](#).

get myself out of something See [get \(oneself\) out of \(something\)](#).

get myself out of something See [get \(oneself\) out of \(something\)](#).

get myself out of somewhere See [get \(oneself\) out of \(somewhere\)](#).

get natted **1.** To be struck in the testicles. *Poor Jack got natted by the soccer ball in the middle of practice last night.* **2.** To become intoxicated with drugs; to get high. Primarily heard in UK. *This area is filled with scumbags getting natted in the alleys.*

get off-kilter **1.** To become out of equilibrium; to become not straight, level, or aligned properly; to be in a state of chaos or confusion. *Between my divorce, the death of my best friend, and the financial troubles at work, it seems like everything in my life has gotten off-kilter recently. John got a little off-kilter after being knocked in the head in football practice earlier.* **2.** To

stop working correctly or properly; to be or become out of order; to be out of w(h)ack. *It sounds like your car's engine has gotten a bit off-kilter. I'd recommend taking it to a mechanic before you go for any long drives.*

get off light 1. To have or face less difficulty than would normally be the case. (Shortening of "get off lightly.") *Next to some graduate students' horror stories of the hours upon hours of work they have to do for their programs, I feel like I got off quite light with mine! Last summer, we seemed to have endless rain, but we got off light this year.* **2.** To face less severe punishment than might be expected, or to escape punishment entirely. (Shortening of "get off lightly.") *I hope you realize you got off light. If your uncle—the senator—hadn't intervened, you'd be in jail right now. In the end, we only had to pay a small fine for the damage, so I'd say we got off pretty light!*

get off lightly 1. To have or face less difficulty than would normally be the case. *Whereas some graduate students tell horror stories of the hours upon hours of work they have to do for their programs, I feel like I got off quite lightly with mine! Last summer, we seemed to have endless rain, but we got off lightly this year.* **2.** To face less severe punishment than might be expected, or to escape punishment entirely. *I hope you realize you got off lightly. If your uncle—the senator—hadn't intervened, you'd be in jail right now. In the end, we only had to pay a small fine for the damage, so I'd say we got off pretty lightly!*

get off on (something) mild vulgar slang To be or become particularly excited by or enthusiastic about something, especially in, or likened to, a sexual manner. *It seems like Kaya gets off on the power of her new corporate management role. I don't know why you get off on going to the gym every day—it just seems like a chore to me!*

get off (one's) back To stop bothering someone about something. *Would you please get off my back? I'm not going to the interview, and that's final! My uncle has finally gotten off my back about helping him out at the hardware store, thank goodness.*

get off (one's) case To stop bothering someone about something. *Would you please get off my case? I'm not going to the interview, and that's final! My uncle has finally gotten off my case about helping him at the hardware store, thank goodness.*

get off (one's) high horse To stop acting as if one is better than other

people; to stop being arrogant or haughty. *Sam is never going to make friends here until he gets off his high horse and stops acting like he knows more than all of us. You're just an intern, so get off your high horse and do this filing, like I asked you to.*

get off scot-free To escape from some predicament, accusation, or wrongdoing without incurring any penalty or punishment; to be acquitted of all charges for some crime or crimes. *It sickens me that all these bankers who ruined our economy get off scot-free, while millions of people have suffered as a result. Due to an error in the filing of evidence by police, the suspect ended up getting off scot-free.*

get off scot-free To escape punishment for a crime or wrongdoing; to be acquitted of charges for a crime. *Mark's wealthy senator uncle influenced the jury, and he ended up getting off scot-free. My younger sister caused endless trouble as a child, but because she was the baby of the house, she usually got off scot-free.*

get off the pot See [\(do something\) or get off the pot](#).

get off to a false start To make a failed, impaired, or underdeveloped beginning at something. Taken from racing, when a participant begins before the starting signal has been given. *The small nation has gotten off to a few false starts since gaining independence, but it is now starting to find some economic and political stability. We knew the company was getting off to a false start, but unfortunately, there was no way to put things on hold once the wheels were in motion.*

get off track 1. Literally, to lose one's bearings or course of direction. *It was only after an hour or so that we realized that we had somehow gotten off track during the storm.* **2.** By extension, to lose sight of or be distracted from one's goal(s); to become unfocused; to stray from the central topic, issue, or subject at hand. *I tried to keep everyone's attention on the few key issues that needed to be addressed, but we kept getting off track with general complaints and asinine suggestions. We wanted to have the product released by the early spring, but we got off track with a number of technical issues.*

get off with (someone) 1. Literally, to disembark (e.g., from a vehicle, elevator, etc.) with someone. *I ran into George on the bus and decided to get off with him at his stop in town.* **2.** slang To have an amorous or sexual encounter with someone. Primarily heard in UK. *We weren't at the party for*

more than 30 minutes when Jake got off with some guy he'd just met. I heard Janet got off with one of her co-workers.

get on like a house afire Of two or more people, to enjoy one another's company very much from the start and become good friends at once. (Used when people are meeting for the first time.) *I can't wait for you to meet Mark, I just know the two of you will get on like a house afire! I was worried about my university friends meeting my new girlfriend, but everyone got on like a house afire.*

get on like a house on fire Of two or more people, to enjoy one another's company very much from the start and become good friends at once. (Used when people are meeting for the first time.) *I can't wait for you to meet Mark, I just know the two of you will get on like a house on fire! I was worried about my university friends meeting my new girlfriend, but everyone got on like a house on fire.*

get on (one's) hobby-horse To frequently or incessantly talk or complain about a subject, topic, or issue in which one is excessively interested. *Ah, here we go again. Once grandpa gets on his hobby-horse about the government, there's no stopping him!*

get on (one's) wick To irritate or annoy one. Primarily heard in UK. *The kids are really getting on my wick today with their constant fighting. I'm not trying to get on mom's wick, but every little thing seems to bother her today.*

get on (someone's) bad side To be or become displeasing to someone; to do something that provokes someone's anger, contempt, or dismissal. *The superintendent is a powerful woman in the school district, so be sure to not to get on her bad side. I'm afraid I may have gotten on your friend's bad side with my off-color remarks.*

get on (someone's) good side To become the object of someone's favor; to do something that causes someone to be pleased. *The superintendent is a powerful woman in the school district, so be sure to get on her good side. I'm hoping to get on John's good side with this cake I baked for him.*

get on the bad side of (someone) To be or become displeasing to someone; to do something that provokes someone's anger, contempt, or dismissal. *Be sure not to get on the bad side of the superintendent— she's a powerful woman in the school district. I'm afraid I may have gotten on the*

bad side of your friend with my off-color remarks.

get on the end of (something) In sports, to connect with the ball, puck, hurley, etc., after it has been in motion, as during a pass. *The striker's positioning in front of the goal was excellent, but she just couldn't get on the end of the wide cross from her teammate.*

get on the good side of (someone) To become the object of someone's favor; to do something that causes someone to be pleased. *Be sure to get on the good side of the superintendent—she's a powerful woman in the school district. I'm hoping to get on the good side of John with this cake I baked for him.*

get on the horn 1. To make use of or speak (to someone) on the telephone. *Don't disturb me, kids, I'm on the horn to your father at the moment. After our dreadful meal that night, I was on the horn to the manager the very next morning.* 2. dated To become lustful or sexually excited, especially of a man; to have an erection. *Sarah became quite embarrassed when she noticed that her date was getting on the horn in the middle of the movie.*

get on the wrong side of (someone) To be or become displeasing to someone; to do something that provokes someone's anger, contempt, or dismissal. *Be sure not to get on the wrong side of the superintendent—she's a powerful woman in the school district. I'm afraid I may have gotten on the wrong side of your friend with my off-color remarks.*

get on with it To proceed with a given action, intention, or pursuit, especially after a delay, distraction, or pause of some kind. *We've been talking about development strategies for weeks now, can't we just get on with it already? I've been waiting for the concert to start for 30 minutes—I wish they'd get on with it. You keep repeating yourself. Get on with it!*

get on with (something) To proceed with some action, intention, or pursuit, especially after a delay, distraction, or pause of some kind. *Go and get on with your homework—you've played enough video games for one afternoon. I've been waiting for the concert to start for 30 minutes—I wish they'd get on with it.*

get one down See [get \(someone\) down](#).

get (one) off the hook To free one from the responsibility of having to

complete some task; to help one to avoid something. *Thank you for getting me off the hook for Saturday—I was dreading having to babysit at 6 AM on my day off! Can you please tell mom that you broke the vase and get me off the hook?*

get (one's) **1.** To receive the due punishment (for something) that one deserves. *Don't worry about those stool pigeons, we'll make sure they get theirs when the time is right. She cheated off me during the test? Oh, she'll get hers, alright!* **2.** To become wealthy or financially successful. *After growing up in poverty, Jim was determined to get his no matter what it took.*

get (one's) ashes hauled slang To engage in sexual activity, especially intercourse; to achieve sexual release or gratification. Also phrased as "haul one's ashes." *After six months at sea, everyone onboard was anxious to get their ashes hauled.*

get (one's) ass (somewhere) Impolite To go someplace, especially directly, promptly, or with great haste (often implying that there will be consequences if one does not). *You'd better get your ass to class this minute! We decided to get our asses home before our parents grounded us.*

get one's back up See [get \(someone's\) back up](#).

get (one's) bell rung To receive a violent blow or injury, especially to the head and as might stun, concuss, or incapacitate. *Sean got his bell rung by some guy in the bar last night after insulting his girlfriend. No wonder you keep getting your bell rung with the way you hassle people.*

get (one's) butt (somewhere) To go someplace, especially directly, promptly, or with great haste (often implying that there will be consequences if one does not). *You'd better get your butt to class this minute! We decided to get our butts home before our parents grounded us.*

get (one's) claws into To exert one's influence over another person. *Bobby's new girlfriend must have gotten her claws into him—have you seen the way he's dressing these days?*

get (one's) claws out **1.** Literally, of an animal, to prepare for an attack or for defense by protracting or displaying its claws. *I hate my neighbor's cat, it always gets its claws out when I go near it.* **2.** By extension, to become particularly aggressive, especially in preparation for a confrontation. (Most often said of a woman.) *Jenny had her claws out after she found out Mary*

had been spreading rumors about her in school.

get (one's) clock cleaned To be thoroughly trounced, defeated, or beaten up. *I got my clock cleaned by that guy in the bar last night. Our team needs to practice more—we got our clocks cleaned last game!*

get (one's) dander up To become annoyed or angry. *Don't get your dander up with me—I'm just trying have a conversation here. I know I got my dander up a bit last night, so I understand why you're avoiding me.*

get (one's) dues 1. To receive the appropriate payment for services or work one has completed. *After intense negotiations, rural farmers will finally be getting their dues from the local government.* **2.** To give someone that which they deserve, which can be a reward or retribution, depending on the situation. *Don't worry about those stool pigeons, we'll make sure they get their dues. After all her hard work, I really hope Mary finally gets her dues.*

get (one's) Dutch up To make one angry. *Please calm down, I didn't mean to get your Dutch up. This whole situation gets my Dutch up so much—it's amazing that I haven't screamed at the whole staff today.*

get (one's) ears lowered To get a haircut, especially to a length that reveals one's ears. *Ah, I see you got your ears lowered. It looks good! I'm thinking of getting my ears lowered—my hair's just too long in this hot weather.*

get (one's) end away slang To have sexual intercourse. Primarily heard in UK. *I think I'll be getting my end away on my date tonight.*

get (one's) finger out slang To work harder; to stop dawdling. Primarily heard in UK. *Come on, man, pull your finger out and get some research done today!* A: "Did you finish your paper?" B: "Yeah, I finally pulled my finger out and got it done."

get (one's) finger out To cease stalling or procrastinating and do something at once. Primarily heard in UK, Ireland. *I've had my learner's permit for nearly two years, I need to get my finger out and get my driver's licence already! I wish Mary would get her finger out about choosing the florist she wants for the wedding.*

get (one's) fingers burned To suffer an unpleasant or ruinous consequence (especially the loss of money) for some action, often such that one becomes unwilling or uneager to do it again. *During the boom times,*

countless would-be investors put everything they owned into shady investment deals, and most of them ended up getting their fingers burned.

get (one's) fingers burned To suffer an unpleasant or ruinous consequence (especially the loss of money) for some action, often such that one becomes unwilling or uneager to do it again. *During the boom times, countless would-be investors put everything they owned in shady investment deals, and most of them ended up getting their fingers badly burned.*

get (one's) fix (of something) To acquire a required or necessary amount of something, especially that which one is addicted to or compulsively seeks. *When I was a junkie, I would do just about anything in order to get my fix. I just can't get my day going until I get my fix of caffeine.*

get (one's) foot in the door To have a chance to do something that could lead to further opportunities. The phrase is often used to refer to employment. *An internship might not sound very interesting, but it's a great way to get your foot in the door at this company.*

get (one's) freak on 1. To have sexual intercourse or a sexual experience. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *I can always hear my neighbors getting their freak on next door—it's so embarrassing!* **2.** To dance, especially in a wild, crazy, or uninhibited manner. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *Come on everybody, get out on the dance floor and get your freak on!* **3.** To party, especially in a wild, crazy, or uninhibited manner. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *I can't wait for your house party this weekend—I really need to get my freak on!* **4.** To act or behave in a wild, crazy, or uninhibited manner. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *Jeff really got his freak on last night after a few too many beers.*

get one's hackles up See [get \(someone's\) hackles up](#).

get (one's) hands dirty 1. To do hard work, often manual labor. *There is nothing more rewarding to me than getting my hands dirty in my garden. I really appreciate you guys getting your hands dirty and helping us move.* **2.** To be involved in something illegal or unseemly. *Uncle Pete has been avoiding us ever since we discovered that he gets his hands dirty working for the mob. No one can know about my police record—I don't want people to think that I still get my hands dirty.*

get (one's) hands on (someone) To touch or grasp someone, often with the threat of violence. *Oh, once I get my hands on you, you'll take back*

what you said!

get (one's) hands on (something) To acquire something, usually a physical object. *I need to go to the library and get my hands on this book for my research paper. It took years, but I've finally gotten my hands on this very rare Beatles recording!*

get (one's) head around (something) To understand something that is challenging or confusing. *It took a while, but I've finally gotten my head around this chapter in my calculus textbook. Wait, you two are dating now? It's going to take a little while for me to get my head around that!*

get (one's) head together To organize one's thoughts, often with the aim of regaining one's calm. *I really need to get my head together before I go into the board meeting. A: "Susie seemed really stressed this morning." B: "I think she's fine now—she went for a walk and got her head together."*

get (one's) hopes up To become excited at the prospect of something happening. Often used in the negative. *Sadie has gotten her hopes up about going to the carnival tonight, so I think she'll be disappointed if we don't go. Don't get your hopes up about seeing Aunt Jen this weekend—I hear she's having car trouble.*

get one's Irish up See [get \(someone's\) Irish up](#).

get (one's) jollies To seek out, indulge in, or enjoy something fun or pleasurable. The term usually hints at a certain degree of perverse satisfaction. Primarily heard in UK. *The restless teenagers got their jollies by throwing rocks at passing cars.*

get (one's) juices flowing To become inspired to greater creativity, productivity, or energy, or to cause such a feeling in someone. *I've been having trouble getting this essay started—I just need to get my juices flowing. I find that a good run first thing in the morning always gets my juices flowing for the day ahead. We've been sitting here for an hour with nothing written, so let's play a few word games to get our juices flowing.*

get (one's) just deserts To receive that which one deserves, especially a punishment of unfavorable outcome. (Note: the phrase is often misspelled as "just desserts," due to the pronunciation of "deserts" being the same as "desserts" in this context.) *The CEO cheated his clients out of nearly \$4 million, but he got his just deserts when he was stripped of everything he*

owned and sent to prison for life.

get (one's) knickers in a knot To become overly upset or emotional over something, especially that which is trivial or unimportant. Primarily heard in UK. *Ah, don't get your knickers in a knot, I'll have the car back by tomorrow morning! In my opinion, people are getting their knickers in a knot over this election.*

get (one's) knickers in a twist To become overly upset or emotional over something, especially that which is trivial or unimportant. *Ah, don't get your knickers in a twist, I'll have the car back by tomorrow morning! In my opinion, people are getting their knickers in a twist over this election.*

get (one's) marching orders 1. To receive a command or direction to advance, progress, or move on. *We are waiting to get our marching orders from the project leader before we begin development of the next iteration of the software. Bill had been living in his parents' house for nearly a year without working when he finally got his marching orders to move out.* 2. To receive a notice of dismissal from one's employment. *After messing up that account, I'm terrified that I'm going to get my marching orders any day now. Daniel got his marching orders for arriving to work drunk.*

get (one's) marching orders To be dismissed from employment or to be ordered to leave or move on from a place. An allusion to a military command of deployment. *After messing up that account, I'm terrified that I'm going to get my marching orders. Bill had been living in his parents' house for nearly a year without working when he finally got his marching orders out of there.*

get (one's) monkey up To make one angry. *Please calm down, I didn't mean to get your monkey up. This whole situation gets my monkey up so much—it's amazing that I haven't screamed at the whole staff today.*

get (one's) own back To take or get revenge upon a person or group of people, especially as a means of recompense or personal satisfaction for a slight or previous setback; to avenge oneself. *Jonathan bullied me mercilessly at school, but I eventually got my own back when I bought out his father's business and became his boss. Our ground troops may have been outgunned by the insurgents, but we'll get our own back when we begin the airstrikes.*

get (one's) (own) house in order To put into order or resolve one's

own personal problems or business affairs. *The president and his administration sorely need to get their house in order, or they may not live to see a second term in office. Jim should go about getting his own house in order before he starts criticizing how I live my life!*

get (one's) (own) way To get or have what one wants; to have things done according to one's personal preference or desires. *If Tommy doesn't get his way, he'll start having a tantrum that could last all night. Samantha always has to get her own way when it comes to dividing responsibilities for group assignments.*

get (one's) panties in a bunch To become overly upset or emotional over something, especially that which is trivial or unimportant. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *Ah, don't get your panties in a bunch, I'll have the car back by tomorrow morning! In my opinion, people are getting their panties in a bunch over this election.*

get (one's) panties in a knot To become overly upset or emotional over something, especially that which is trivial or unimportant. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *Ah, don't get your panties in a knot, I'll have the car back by tomorrow morning! In my opinion, people are getting their panties in a knot over this election.*

get (one's) panties in a twist To become overly upset or emotional over something, especially that which is trivial or unimportant. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *Ah, don't get your panties in a twist, I'll have the car back by tomorrow morning! In my opinion, people are getting their panties in a twist over this election.*

get (one's) priorities straight To focus one's attention, energy, or concern on that which is most and truly important, usually implying that one has not done so up to that point. *After a month of drinking and partying and totally neglecting my studies, I realized that I needed to get my priorities straight if I wanted to graduate from college. John took a little time off from work to get his priorities straight.*

get (one's) shirt out To become angry or make one angry. *I'd steer clear of the boss today, if I were you—something in the meeting got his shirt out, and now, he's yelling at everyone he sees. Can you please be patient and not get your shirt out so easily?*

get (one's) shit together 1. slang To organize one's belongings. *Dude,*

get your shit together—I trip over something of yours at least once a day! Get your shit together—we have to leave in five minutes and you don't want to forget anything! 2. slang To start to make progress in one's life. A: "Did you hear that Drew plans to go to college in the fall?" B: "Wow, he's really gotten his shit together since being arrested last year!" I really need to get my shit together before I'm old and gray with no accomplishments to my name.

get (one's) shorts in a knot To become overly upset or emotional over something, especially that which is trivial or unimportant. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *Ah, don't get your shorts in a knot, I'll have the car back by tomorrow morning! In my opinion, people are getting their shorts in a knot over this election.*

get (one's) signals crossed To have a misunderstanding or miscommunication with someone else. *I'm sorry I'm late, I thought we were getting here at 8—we must have gotten our signals crossed. My mom and I got our signals crossed, and now there's no one here to babysit the kids.*

get (one's) skates on To hurry up or move faster. *Timmy, get your skates on, or we'll be late to the party! If these guys don't get their skates on, we'll be here moving boxes all day.*

get (one's) thinking cap on To begin thinking or considering very carefully and seriously (about something), often to solve a problem. *OK, fellas, if we all get our thinking caps on, I'm sure we can come up with a way to earn enough money to go to the baseball game this weekend.* A: "Well, boss, what do you think we should do?" B: "Just let me get my thinking cap on for a minute."

get (one's) tits in a wringer rude slang To become angry or upset. *Look, don't get your tits in a wringer—I barely bumped your car.*

get (one's) walking papers To be dismissed from employment or to be ordered to leave or move on from a place. *After messing up that account, I'm terrified that I'm going to get my walking papers. When Bill came home drunk for the fourth night in a row, he finally got his walking papers from his wife.*

get (one's) wires crossed 1. Of oneself, to be or become confused, mistaken, or mentally disordered (about something). An allusion to telephone lines being wrongly connected and thus disrupting calls. *I'm sorry for*

bringing you the wrong order, sir, I've been getting my wires crossed all day! Wow, it sounds like you really got your wires crossed about how to process that shipment! **2.** Of two or more people, to have a miscommunication between one another, resulting in a mistake or misunderstanding. *I'm sorry about all the confusion regarding the contract, Bob; it looks like we got our wires crossed somehow. I think Mary and Robert's fight is really just the because they got their wires crossed.*

get (oneself) in gear To prepare oneself to do something. *I know you said you would take out the trash, but get yourself in gear and do it already! I really need to get myself in gear and finish writing this paper—it's due tomorrow!*

get (oneself) out of (something) To escape or extricate oneself from a troublesome, difficult, unpleasant, or burdensome situation or circumstance. *Even though the economy has recovered significantly, many are still finding it hard to get themselves out of the cycles of poverty and debt. With John growing increasingly dependent on alcohol, William decided that he needed to get out of the relationship.*

get (oneself) out of (something) To escape or extricate oneself from a troublesome, difficult, unpleasant, or burdensome situation or circumstance. *Even though the economy has recovered significantly, many are still finding it hard to get themselves out of the cycles of poverty and debt. With John growing increasingly dependent on alcohol, William decided that he needed to get out of the relationship.*

get (oneself) out of (somewhere) To escape, emerge from, or leave some place. *The air was so insufferably stuffy inside that I had to get myself out of the house and go for a walk. We have to get ourselves out of here before the whole building collapses!*

get onto **1.** To step aboard a mode of transportation (such as a train or airplane). *I think you'll feel better once we've gotten onto the plane and are headed for Hawaii. As soon as I got onto the train, the conductor announced a delay.* **2.** To figure out that someone is doing something in secret. *Keep your voice down, we don't want mom to get onto us! The police are here—somebody's gotten onto us!*

get ours See [get \(one's\)](#).

get out from under (someone or something) To escape or

extricate oneself from a troublesome, difficult, or burdensome person, situation, or circumstance. *Having lost his job in the factory, George didn't know how he was going to get out from under all his debt. I can't wait to go to college and get out from under my controlling parents.*

get out of See [get \(someone\) out of \(somewhere\)](#).

get out of See [get \(someone\) out of \(something\)](#).

get out of See [get \(something\) out of \(someone\)](#).

get out of See [get \(someone\) out of \(something\)](#).

get out of See [get \(something\) out of \(something\)](#).

get out of a fix To escape from or work one's way out of some troublesome, difficult, or dangerous position or situation. *My brother always gets out of fixes with the law because our father goes down and pays the police to let him go. I really got out of a fix at work when Jonathan offered to help me finish the report.*

get out of a fix See [get \(someone\) out of a fix](#).

get out of Dodge See [get \(the hell\) out of Dodge](#).

get out of doing (something) To evade or avoid having to do some task. *Dillon tried to get out of going to school by pretending to be sick. Don't think you can get out of doing your chores that easily!*

get out of here **1.** interjection An exclamation of surprise, disbelief, and/or incredulity. *Sally's brother is dating my cousin? Get out of here! You just won the lottery? Get out of here!* **2.** verb To leave or depart from a specific place. Also used as a command to do so. *I think we'd better get out of here, things are starting to look a little bit rough. Get out of here, you hooligans!*

get out of jail free card **1.** (sometimes hyphenated) Something that will immediately resolve or relieve an undesirable situation, especially that which results in no or minimal consequences. A reference to the board game Monopoly, in which this card allows players to leave the jail space without missing a turn. *I'm afraid there's no get out of jail free card when it comes to your taxes—you either pay them, or you pay the fine. Jonathan used his father's position in politics as a get-out-of-jail-free card to help get his drunk driving charge dismissed.* **2.** (sometimes hyphenated) Something that allows



or is used as an excuse for poor decisions, results, standards, behavior, etc. *Just because a book is part of a highly regarded series doesn't mean it has some get out of jail free card allowing it to be formulaic and poorly written.*

get out of kilter **1.** To become out of equilibrium; to become not straight, level, or aligned properly; to be in a state of chaos or confusion. *Between my divorce, the death of my best friend, and the financial troubles at work, it seems like everything in my life has gotten out of kilter recently. John got a little out of kilter after being knocked in the head in football practice earlier.* **2.** To stop working correctly or properly; to be or become out of order; to be out of w(h)ack. *It sounds like your car's engine has gotten a bit out of kilter. I'd recommend taking it to a mechanic before you go for any long drives.*

get out of the road **1.** Literally, to move off of a road. Primarily heard in UK. *We'd better get out of the road, there's an ambulance screaming toward us.* **2.** By extension, to move out of the way of someone or something. Usually issued as a command. *Hey, Mike! Get out of the road, would ya? I'm trying to move these crates!*

get out while the getting is good To depart, escape, or extricate oneself from some place or situation before conditions worsen or it becomes impossible, too problematic, or too dangerous to do so. *With stock prices in the company threatening to plummet, we decided to get out while the getting is good. We heard that they'll be sealing the border soon, so we're getting out while the getting's good.*

get out! interjection An exclamation of surprise, disbelief, and/or incredulity. *Get out! You're going to write me up just because I was five minutes late? You just won the lottery? Get out!*

get outside (of) (something) To fully and heartily consume food or a beverage. *I'd love to get outside of a fat, juicy steak right about now. I can't wait to finish work and get outside a few pints.*

get outta here **1.** interjection An exclamation of surprise, disbelief, and/or incredulity. (Colloquial contraction of "get out of here.") *Sally's brother is dating my cousin? Get outta here! You just won the lottery? Get outta here!* **2.** verb To leave or depart from a specific place. Also used as a command to do so. (Colloquial contraction of "get out of here.") *I think we'd better get outta here, things are starting to look a little bit rough. Get outta*

here, you hooligans!

get over it (set phrase) Move on; accept things the way they are; don't be concerned by or with something that is in the past or can't be changed. *Look, I'm going to marry him whether you want me to or not. Get over it! She left you over three years ago, get over it already!*

get over (something) **1.** To recover or heal from some physical or mental ailment. *It took her nearly four months to get over that bout of pneumonia. I'd love to play rugby again, but I've been getting over a broken ankle.* **2.** To accept, feel better about, move on from, or come to terms with something, especially that which has already been established or has happened in the past. *John is still getting over his divorce, so he's been a little distant at work. I don't think I'll ever get over losing my job like that. You need to get over the fact that I'm moving to Indonesia next month.* **3.** To overcome or find the solution to a problem, obstacle, or difficulty. *We've had to get over a lot of technical setbacks, but our new website is finally up and running.*

get over with See [get \(something\) over with](#).

get own back See [get \(one's\) own back](#).

get own house in order See [get \(one's\) \(own\) house in order](#).

get panties in a bunch See [get \(one's\) panties in a bunch](#).

get panties in a knot See [get \(one's\) panties in a knot](#).

get panties in a twist See [get \(one's\) panties in a twist](#).

get physical **1.** Of a situation, to be or become inclined toward or characterized by sexual physical contact. *We dated for a couple of months before things got physical. I was having a great time with her, but I got nervous when it started getting physical.* **2.** Of a hostile situation, to escalate from a verbal confrontation to outright violence. *If the kids start to bicker, you should try to separate them before they get physical. I'm used to them yelling at each other, but I was shocked when the argument got physical.*

get pissed off To become very disgruntled, angry, or outraged. *John got so pissed off when he found out that someone else had been given the promotion instead of him. There's no point in getting pissed off over a bad grade on your exam. Just study harder next time!*

get played like a fiddle To be skillfully manipulated by someone to suit their own needs, ends, or benefits. *I got played like a fiddle by that travelling salesman. Now what am I going to do with all this junk that he convinced me to buy? Can't you see that his flattery is totally insincere? You're getting played like a fiddle!*

get plugged into (something) To become directly or very closely involved in, attuned to, or enthusiastic about something. *Friends have gotten me plugged into the work of various performance artists around the city. It wasn't until college that I really got plugged into the heavy metal scene.*

get PO'd To become very disgruntled, irritated, angry, or outraged. ("PO'd" being a euphemistic abbreviation of "pissed off.") *John got so PO'd when he found out that someone else had been given the promotion instead of him. There's no point in getting PO'd over a bad grade on your exam. Just study harder next time!*

get priorities straight See [get \(one's\) priorities straight](#).

get pulse racing See [get \(someone's\) pulse racing](#).

get pulses racing To be very thrilling, exhilarating, or exciting. *You could feel it in the air that the singer's performance was getting pulses racing. She has an intense, smoldering stare that gets pulses positively racing.*

get ready To prepare for something. *Get ready to see the best movie of your life! I have to go home early so I can get ready for our trip tomorrow.*

get-rich-quick (used as a modifier before a noun) Of or characterized by generating a large sum of money quickly and (typically) without requiring much effort or energy. *Jenny's always coming up with some get-rich-quick scheme to lift us out of this dinky little town. Always be wary of anyone who tries to sell you some get-rich-quick idea—usually the only person getting rich is the salesman.*

get rid of (someone or something) To discard, eliminate, or become free from something or someone. *We finally got rid of your younger brother, he's so annoying! Would you please get rid of that filthy couch already?*

get right See [get \(something\) right](#).

get right with (someone) To redress or atone for one's wrongdoings or transgressions against someone. *I mistreated a lot of people at the height of my addiction, and I've been trying to get right with them ever since I got clean. You need to get right with God if you want to have any hope of getting into heaven.*

get ripped to shreds **1.** To be severely or thoroughly criticized, upbraided, or condemned. *A: "Have you heard anything about this movie we're about to see?" B: "Well, it got ripped to shreds by critics, but I still think it's going to be great." I hear John's getting ripped to shreds at his performance review tomorrow.* **2.** To be utterly or severely damaged, ruined, or thrown into disarray. *Enjoy the tranquility and order of your house now, because once you have kids it's going to get ripped to shreds. Sarah got ripped to shreds in her first match as an amateur boxer.*

get round To spread among a number of people, as of news, rumors, etc. *When news of this tax scandal gets round, your career in politics will be finished!*

get round (someone) **1.** To persuade someone about something or persuade someone to do something, especially through the use of charm, flattery, or cajolery. *If we play up the department's excellent productivity for the day, we might be able to get round the boss to let us take the afternoon off. I don't mind if you go for an ice cream, but you'd better get round your father first.* **2.** To evade or circumvent the authority of someone. *We'll have to find a way to get round the accountant if we want this tax scheme to work.*

get round (something) To solve, overcome, avoid, or circumvent some difficulty, problem, or obstacle. *We got round the overheating problem by installing an additional air vent. Many people try to get round their taxes in one way or another, but most of them end up paying even more in fines.*

get round to (doing something) To eventually find time to do some task, or to come to something or some task after a certain length of time. *Do you think you could finally get round to cleaning your room today? It's a pigsty in there! I have so many books that I don't know how I'll get round to each one!*

get set See [get \(all\) set](#).

get shirt out See [get \(one's\) shirt out](#).

get shit together See [get \(one's\) shit together](#).

get shorts in a knot See [get \(one's\) shorts in a knot](#).

get sick **1.** To be or become ill or generally unwell. *I got really sick last week and had to miss several days of work. You're going to get sick in this cold weather if you don't bundle up!* **2.** To become nauseated, sometimes to the point of vomiting. *I'm getting sick driving around all these winding mountain roads. After drinking an entire bottle of vodka, Jim got sick all over his shoes.* **3.** To become repelled or disgusted by something. *I get sick thinking about how much we have to pay for our medical insurance.*

get signals crossed See [get \(one's\) signals crossed](#).

get skates on See [get \(one's\) skates on](#).

get some **1.** slang To engage in sexual activity. *I'm a little bit tired of going to parties with Janet—she just spends the entire night trying to get some. How'd the date go last night? Did you get some?* **2.** slang To become involved in a violent altercation. *Why don't you come get some if you think you're so tough! More than wanting to defend his country, Jake joined the army so that he could get some.*

get some action **1.** slang To engage in sexual activity. *I'm a little bit tired of going to parties with Janet—she just spends the entire night trying to get some action. How'd the date go last night? Did you get some action?* **2.** slang To become involved in a violent altercation, especially in warfare. *More than wanting to defend his country, Jake joined the army so that he could get some action.*

get some air To revive or reinvigorate oneself by breathing in the air outside. *Bob: "You alright, Steve? You look a little unwell." Steve: "Yeah, I just need to get some air, I think." It's nice to go out hiking on the weekends and get some fresh air!*

get (some kind of) mileage out of (something) To use something to a certain degree or extent. The phrase, which is used with variable intensifiers (a lot of, much, more, a little, etc.) to denote how much, is an allusion to the mileage of an automobile as an indicator of the longevity of its usefulness. *The president has gotten a lot of mileage out of his tax cuts as a platform for his re-election campaign. One way to cut down on spending is to buy clothes you're sure you'll get mileage out of. I'm afraid you won't get*

much mileage out of this old computer anymore.

get some rays To spend some time in the sun (often with goal of tanning). *We're supposed to have nice weather this afternoon, so why don't we go to the beach and get some rays? I'm really glad I got some rays on vacation—I was so pale before!*

get some tail slang Typically of a man, to have sexual intercourse or engage in sexual activity with (usually) a woman. *I'm a little bit tired of going to parties with Steve—he just spends the entire night trying to get some tail. How'd the date go last night? Did you get some tail?*

get (someone) by the balls vulgar To gain complete control or dominance over someone; to have someone at one's mercy. *With all that evidence against you, I'd say the police have got you by the balls. Sometimes, I think Mark's wife has got him by the balls.*

get (someone) down To cause someone to feel saddened, depressed, discouraged, or dejected. *The thought of working for a faceless corporation really gets me down. His rejection from Harvard has really gotten Stephen down.*

get (someone) out of a fix To help someone avoid or escape from some troublesome, difficult, or dangerous position or situation. *My father's always having to go down to the courthouse to get my knuckle-headed brother out of some fix or another. Thanks so much for helping me finish that report the other day—you really got me out of a fix!*

get (someone) out of (something) To rescue, remove, or extricate someone from a troublesome, difficult, unpleasant, or burdensome situation or circumstance. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *I hope my friend finds a way of getting me out of this stupid dinner party. You can't always rely on your parents to get you out of trouble with the law.*

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get someone out of something See [get \(oneself\) out of \(something\)](#).

get someone out of something See [get \(oneself\) out of \(something\)](#).

get someone out of somewhere See [get \(oneself\) out of \(somewhere\)](#).

get (someone) out of (somewhere) To evacuate, rescue, or remove someone from something or some place. *We have to get them out of there before the whole building collapses! Your friend is getting belligerent—you'd better get him out of here.*

get (someone's) back To be willing and prepared to help or defend someone; to look out for someone in case they need assistance. *Don't worry about those thugs, buddy. I'll get your back if they ever come bother you again. You can always rely on your parents to get your back.*

get (someone's) back up To become or cause to become angry, hostile, defensive, or irritable. *John got his back up when his parents brought up the subject of college. Election season always gets my dad's back up.*

get someone's bell rung See [get \(one's\) bell rung](#).

get (someone's) hackles up To become or cause to become angry, hostile, defensive, or irritable. *John got his hackles up when his parents brought up the subject of college. Election season always gets my dad's hackles up.*

get (someone's) Irish up To become or cause to become angry, hostile, defensive, or irritable. *John got his Irish up when his parents brought up the subject of college. Election season always gets my dad's Irish up.*

get (someone's) pulse racing To excite, thrill, or exhilarate someone. *You could feel it in the air that the singer's performance was getting everyone's pulse racing. Her quick, sultry glances from across the room got my pulse racing.*

get (something) down **1.** To be or become proficient at (doing) something. *I know the music is difficult to play, so you just have to keep practicing until you get it down. After years of working in data entry, I've got Excel spreadsheets down.* **2.** To eat or drink something. *I'm just going to get this burger down before I head out the door. Here, get this tea down. It will help your nerves. I don't know how I managed to get that medicine down, it tasted awful!* **3.** To commit something to writing; to write something down.

Here, get my number down. You can call me anytime you like. I always try to get my dreams down as soon as I wake up, or else I forget them altogether.

get something down cold See [have \(something\) down cold](#).

get something down pat See [have/get \(something\) down pat](#).

get (something) out of (someone) To evoke, illicit, obtain, or wrest something from someone. *I tried getting a response out of him, but he's totally incoherent. That extortionist is trying to get even more money out of me!*

get (something) out of (something) To derive, obtain, or extract something from something else. *I hope you get a lot of good experience out of your internship here. We're going to get a lot of money out of this deal, you know.*

get (something) over with To do, finish, or accomplish something—especially that which is difficult, unpleasant, or undesirable—as promptly or quickly as possible so as to no longer have to think about or deal with it. *I absolutely hate getting blood drawn, so let's just get in there and get it over with! I'm looking forward to getting my final exams over with so I can relax and enjoy my summer break.*

get (something) right To do, understand, or answer something accurately and/or correctly. *I sure didn't get ace the exam, but I think I got quite a few right. You'll save yourself a bunch of work if you just get it right the first time.*

get (something) through (someone's) head To make someone or oneself acknowledge, accept, or understand something. *Look, just get it through your head: we're moving, and there's nothing that's going to change that now. I don't know how else to get it through her head that I want to break up.*

get (something) under (one's) belt **1.** To get something to eat or drink. *Once I get some proper food under my belt, I'll be ready to tackle any work you can throw at me! My father could become quite nasty whenever he got a bit of booze under his belt. That's why he gave up drinking.* **2.** To get some achievement, accomplishment, or record attributed to one's career or reputation. *The legendary batter had gotten more than 2000 runs under his belt by the time he retired. As a pilot in training, it's always a relief to get*

your first real landing under your belt. **3.** To learn or master something. *Once he got the proper technique under his belt, Jacques had no problem finishing the project on his own.*

get (something) wrong To do, understand, or answer something inaccurately and/or incorrectly. *I sure didn't ace the exam, but I hope I didn't get too many wrong. Take your time—you'll just end up making more work for yourself if you get it wrong the first time. That electrician got the wiring wrong, and now nothing in the house will turn on!*

get stick See [get \(a lot of\) stick \(from someone\)](#).

get stuck in To begin doing something at once and with energy and/or enthusiasm. Primarily heard in UK. *My mum bought me this book for my birthday, and I got stuck in straight away. The boss sent me the details for the new project and told me to get stuck in.*

get stuck into (something) To begin doing something at once and with energy and/or enthusiasm. Primarily heard in UK. *Sorry I was late, I got stuck into this new book I'm reading. The new intern really got stuck into her work here. The boss is even considering offering her a permanent position.*

get taken in (by someone or something) **1.** To be fooled, swindled, cheated, or beguiled (by someone or something). *It galls me how many people get taken in by companies' claims that "the customer matters most." You spent \$1,000 on some cure-all pill you bought off the Internet? How could you get taken in like that?* **2.** To be adopted, looked after, or given foster care (by someone or something), often in an unofficial or informal manner. *At this shelter alone, nearly 200 abused animals get taken in each year. My younger brother and I got taken in by our aunt and uncle after our parents were arrested.*

get taken to task (by someone) To be scolded, rebuked, reprimanded, or criticized (by someone). *I got taken to task by the headmaster for disrupting class again. It's not entirely fair that the bankers are the only ones getting taken to task for the economic collapse, when a great many politicians are to blame as well.*

get taken to the cleaners (by someone) **1.** To have a lot or all of one's money taken, swindled, or cheated from one (by someone). *I got taken to the cleaners by the IRS after they found out I hadn't been declaring my freelance work on my tax returns. I don't mind you going to some poker*

tournament with your friends, just don't get taken to the cleaners or anything.

2. To be soundly defeated or bested; to lose by a wide margin. *The young team's inexperience is showing on the field today, as they're getting positively taken to the cleaners by the veteran squad.*

get the air 1. To be spurned, jilted, or rejected by someone, especially a lover or romantic interest. *Samantha has had a broken heart ever since she got the air from Rebecca.* **2.** To be summarily dismissed or ousted, as by an employer. *The new accountant got the air after a miscalculation cost the company hundreds of thousands of dollars.*

get the bum's rush 1. To be hastily and forcefully removed from a place. Likened to the ejection of a vagrant (a "bum") from a place. Primarily heard in US, Canada, South Africa. *We got the bum's rush out of the bar after Joe started drunkenly insulting the bartender.* **2.** To be peremptorily or abruptly dismissed, due to a failed or rejected plan, idea, or performance. Primarily heard in US, Canada, South Africa. *I brought up the possibility of reducing managerial pay to other employees, but that idea quickly got the bum's rush.*

get the business 1. To be subjected to harsh treatment, teasing, mockery, or verbal harassment. *The youngest players on the team always get the business from the older ones. The defendant got the business from protesters gathered outside the court.* **2.** To receive a severe scolding, punishment, or rebuke. *I know I'm going to get the business when my boss finds out I lost our most lucrative account. Johnny got the business from his parents after he broke the living room lamp.*

get the can To be summarily dismissed or ousted from employment; to be fired. *The new accountant got the can after a miscalculation cost the company hundreds of thousands of dollars.*

get the crap kicked out of (someone) To be struck or assaulted violently and severely. It should not be used in polite conversation. *I hear Jonathan got the crap kicked out of him last night. You'd better tread carefully or you're going to get the crap kicked out of you.*

get the elbow 1. To be spurned, jilted, or rejected by someone, especially a lover or romantic interest. *Samantha has had a broken heart ever since she got the elbow from Rebecca.* **2.** To be summarily dismissed or ousted from employment; to be fired. *The new accountant got the elbow after a*

miscalculation cost the company hundreds of thousands of dollars.

get the fright of (one's) life To experience an extreme and sudden sensation of shock, surprise, or fear. *I got the fright of my life when I noticed someone standing right behind me. Mary got the fright of her life as the car ahead of her swerved across traffic.*

get the gist To understand the central, essential, or general matter of something, such as an argument, speech, concept, process, etc., without being proficient in the more specific details. *A: "Did you understand what she was saying?" B: "My Japanese isn't great anymore, but I think I got the gist of it." Bob: "Are you sure you understand what's involved?" Steve: "Yeah, yeah, I get the gist."*

get the go-ahead To receive permission to proceed with some action or task. *We're just waiting to get the go-ahead from our managers before we release the latest software update.*

get the green light To receive permission to proceed with some action or task. Likened to the green light of a traffic signal. *We're just waiting to get the green light from our managers before we release the latest software update.*

get (the hell) out of Dodge To leave or depart from a place, especially quickly or with marked urgency. A reference to Dodge City, Kansas, the clichéd setting of cowboy and western films from the early to mid-1900s. *It looks like things are getting pretty tense in here, let's get out of Dodge! With our creditors becoming increasingly aggressive, we decided to just get the hell out of Dodge and leave it all behind.*

get the knack of To learn how to do something competently or well after a certain period of practice or development. *Wow, you're really getting the knack of playing piano! I've been seeing a tutor to help me with my math homework, and I think I'm starting to get the knack of it.*

get the lowdown (on someone or something) To receive or find out specific or comprehensive details about someone, something, or some situation. *See if you can get the lowdown on what the boss is planning to do about the company's falling profits. My sister wants to get the lowdown on Geoffrey before she goes on a date with him. There's been a shakeup in the company's upper management, but we won't know how we're affected until we get the lowdown from the boss.*

get the memo 1. Literally, to receive a short message containing information, especially in an office or workplace. *Did you get the memo the boss sent around? We're supposed to meet for a team-building exercise after lunch.* 2. By extension, to become aware of or informed about a situation, especially one that most or many other people know about already. Often used in or with a negative. *Johnny's been dating Sam for over a month now? I guess I didn't get the memo. You're surprised that a giant corporation values its profits over environmental concerns? Didn't you get the memo?*

get the royal treatment To receive extravagant treatment or elaborate attention and care. *At our spa, we make sure all our customers get the royal treatment. By signing up with us, your website will get the royal treatment from our team of professional web developers!*

get the runaround To receive unclear, misleading, incomplete, or evasive information, especially in a response to a question or request. *I always get the runaround when I call the telephone company to explain all these extra charges. The reporter tried to get a clear answer from the senator regarding her stance on immigration, but he just got the runaround.*

get the shakes To tremble or shake involuntarily, as due to fear, unease, anxiety, or a reaction to (or withdrawal from) a substance, such as caffeine, drugs, or alcohol. *I've been doing public speaking for ten years, but I still get the shakes before going out in front of a large audience. I'm trying to get sober and haven't had a drink in four days, but I've been getting the shakes something fierce.*

get the stick To be punished or reprimanded in some way. Physical violence is usually not involved, despite the phrasing. *Boy, we really got the stick from Professor Adams after he heard us talking during his lecture. We're definitely going to get the stick from the boss if we hand this report in late.*

get the third degree To be interrogated, scrutinized, or questioned intensely or thoroughly by someone. *My boyfriend is so controlling that I always get the third degree if I go anywhere or see anyone without him. I got the third degree from the police regarding my whereabouts during the crime.*

get the time To become free to do something; to have a period of time in which to do something. *I'm sorry for not mowing the lawn, I just never got the time. When you get the time, please look over these reports and make sure*

they are correct.

get the upper hand To come to be in a position of advantage, power, and/or control (over someone, something, or some situation). *We've been doing everything we can for your father, but I'm afraid the cancer is getting the upper hand. The home team got the upper hand when their opponents' star quarterback went out with an injury.*

get the vapors old fashioned Typically of a woman, to be about to faint or feel as though one might. *My goodness, with all this excitement, I do feel as though I am getting the vapors!*

get the weather gage of (someone or something) To have an advantage over someone else. This phrase refers to the strategic advantage of a ship positioned on its enemy's windward (or weather gage) side. *We've gotten the weather gage of them, lads! Load the cannons and fire!*

get (the) what for To be thoroughly and intensely punished, rebuked, scolded, or berated. *I got the what for from my parents last night for taking the car without permission. I got what for from the boss when I lost the company that big account.*

get the whetstone To be a liar. In the Middle Ages, the whetstone was bestowed upon the winners of lying contests. *A: "Kim said that I'm most talented guy in the play!" B: "Boy, she gets the whetstone then! You can't even sing on key!"*

get the wrong idea (about someone or something) To develop a belief or impression (about someone or something) that is untrue, incorrect, or has been misinterpreted or misunderstood. *I feel like I need to explain my actions, or you'll end up getting the wrong idea about me. Now don't get the wrong idea or anything, but I think we should spend a little bit of time apart. Whoa, I think you've gotten the wrong idea about tonight—this wasn't supposed to be a date or anything like that!*

get thee behind me A phrase used to rebuke temptation. The full Biblical phrase is "Get thee behind me, Satan." *You know I'm on a diet, and you're offering me ice cream? Get thee behind me!*

get theirs See [get \(one's\)](#).

get there To reach or attain one's goal(s); to be successful in some endeavor. *I know it's a long way to the championship, but we'll get there if we*

keep working hard! Don't stress out about finding a job, you'll get there eventually. I don't completely understand the material, but I'm getting there.

get thinking cap on See [get \(one's\) thinking cap on](#).

get this show on the road To promptly begin or get something started. *Sorry for the delay, folks. I think we're ready to get this show on the road. It's about time they got this show on the road!*

get through head See [get \(something\) through \(someone's\) head](#).

get tied up To be or become detained or delayed by someone, something, or some task. *Sorry I'm late! I got tied up in a meeting at work and couldn't leave. I was on my way to see a movie but got tied up talking to Pete on the way there.*

get tits in a wringer See [get \(one's\) tits in a wringer](#).

get to grips with (someone or something) To begin or make an effort to understand, accept, and deal with a difficult or problematic person, thing, or situation. *I should have the report ready for you by this afternoon, I just need to get to grips with this new software update first. I've tried, but I just can't get to grips with Amy, she's totally out of control!*

get to the heart of (something) To discover, determine, and/or understand the essential, core, or most important aspect(s) of some issue, problem, or topic at hand. *Don't worry ma'am, we'll get to the heart of the matter of your daughter's disappearance. After two hours tinkering with your computer, I think I've gotten to the heart of the problem. Her latest novel really gets to the heart of what it means to be human.*

get torqued off To become particularly irritated, frustrated, or exasperated (by something). *It's no use getting torqued off over the professor's teaching style; you just have to adapt and do as well as you can. I got pretty torqued off when I heard that yet another local grocery store was being bought out by the huge supermarket chain.*

get turfed To be ejected, evicted, or otherwise forcibly removed (from someplace). Primarily heard in UK. *The drunkard got turfed after he started a fight with another customer in the bar. I just found out that we're getting turfed at the end of the month because the landlord wants to move back into the house himself.*

get turfed out To be ejected, evicted, or otherwise forcibly removed

(from someplace). Primarily heard in UK. *The drunkard got turfed out of the bar after he started a fight with another customer. I just found out that we're getting turfed out at the end of the month because the landlord wants to move back into the house himself.*

get under belt See [get \(something\) under \(one's\) belt](#).

get under way To start. *Let's get under way here—you have an hour to complete the exam. I'm sure you can ask your question once the lecture gets under way.*

get-up-and-go The state or quality of having a given amount of positivity, energy, ambition, and/or determination. *That new intern we hired sure has a lot of get-up-and-go! You're going to need more get-up-and-go if you want to succeed in this business!*

get up on the wrong side of (the) bed To be in a particularly and persistently irritable, unhappy, or grouchy mood or state, especially when it is out of keeping with one's normal disposition. *I'm sorry I snapped at you earlier, I think I just got up on the wrong side of the bed today. Geez, the boss has been in a really bad mood all day. I guess he must have gotten up on the wrong side of bed!*

get up (one's) nerve (to do something) To muster or draw upon one's courage or resolve to do something. *I wanted to ask Mary Sue to the prom, but I never got up the nerve. I hope Jonathan finally gets up his nerve to ask his boss for a raise.*

get up steam 1. To gradually pick up or grow in strength, momentum, power, influence, etc. *Though few believed that the independence campaign would have a chance of succeeding, lately it's been getting up steam.* 2. To work or prepare to work hard; to draw upon reserves of energy, strength, resolve, etc., for a difficulty or challenge ahead. *We're going to have to get up steam if we want to win this game!*

get up the yard An exclamation of disbelief, annoyance, disagreement, dismissal, etc., akin in meaning to "get out of here." An Irish expression seemingly unique to Dublin. Primarily heard in Ireland. *Ah, here! Would you get up the yard! I'm not spending that much on a bleedin' computer.*

get up with the chickens To wake up at a particularly early hour, especially at or before sunrise (i.e., the hour when chickens wake). *No, thank*



you, I won't have another drink. I have to get up with the chickens tomorrow. Ma gets up with the chickens every day to prepare breakfast for the farmhands.

get us by the balls See [get \(someone\) by the balls](#).

get us down See [get \(someone\) down](#).

get us off the hook See [get \(one\) off the hook](#).

get us out of a fix See [get \(someone\) out of a fix](#).

get us out of something See [get \(someone\) out of \(something\)](#).

get us out of something See [get \(someone\) out of \(something\)](#).

get us out of somewhere See [get \(someone\) out of \(somewhere\)](#).

get used To become acclimated to or comfortable with something. *I took me a few months, but I've finally gotten used to my new job. I can't seem to get used to the plays my new team runs.*

get used to (someone or something) To be made familiar with or become habituated to someone or something. *I know Gregory can be a bit pretentious at times, but you get used to him after a while. I never could get used to driving on the other side of the road when I lived in England. Is she getting used to her new job?*

get vibrations To feel or get a sense of something intuitively. *I had gotten vibrations that it was going to rain, and sure enough it poured all night!*

get walking papers See [get \(one's\) walking papers](#).

get way See [get \(one's\) \(own\) way](#).

get weather gage of See [get the weather gage of \(someone or something\)](#).

get what for See [get \(the\) what for](#).

get what's coming (to one) To receive what one deserves. *Don't worry about those stool pigeons, we'll make sure they get what's coming. After all her hard work, I really hope Mary finally gets what's coming to her.*

get whetstone See [get the whetstone](#).

get wires crossed See [get \(one's\) wires crossed](#).

get wise (to someone or something) To find out, become aware of, more fully understand, and/or no longer be deceived (by something or someone). *I've been taking small supplies from the office for a long time, but I think the boss is getting wise. People are finally starting to get wise to the need for environmental protection.*

get wise to (someone or something) To become fully aware or cognizant of someone or something, especially if he, she, or it is suspicious, illegal, or malicious in nature or intention. *We'd better watch our step—I think the police are getting wise to us! I hope my brother doesn't get wise to my scheme to take over the company.*

get with it slang To understand or be knowledgeable of modern times, especially as relates to the contemporary trends, ideas, or fashions. (Usually said as a jocular or sarcastic imperative.) *Get with it, John, nobody wears their hat like that anymore! Lots of couples live together before they're married, Grandpa. Get with it!*

get with the times slang To understand or be knowledgeable of modern times, especially as relates to the contemporary trends, ideas, or fashions. (Usually said as a jocular or sarcastic imperative.) *Get with the times, John, nobody wears their hat like that anymore! Lots of couples live together before they're married, Grandpa. Get with the times!*

get wrong See [get \(something\) wrong](#).

get yours See [get \(one's\)](#).

get yourself in gear See [get \(oneself\) in gear](#).

get yourself out of something See [get \(oneself\) out of \(something\)](#).

get yourself out of something See [get \(oneself\) out of \(something\)](#).

get yourself out of somewhere See [get \(oneself\) out of \(somewhere\)](#).

ghetto bird A police helicopter, especially one that monitors or patrols through particularly impoverished areas of a city. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *I didn't sleep at all because of that damn ghetto bird hovering over our neighborhood all night long!*

ghost slang To ignore someone until they go away, rather than directly expressing one's disinterest, especially in virtual communications. This

phrase is often applied to failed love connections. *That guy I went out with last week kept texting me, but I just wasn't interested, so I had to ghost him.*

ghost of a chance A slight but unlikely possibility. *After I heard that a Harvard graduate applied for the same job I did, I knew that I didn't have a ghost of a chance of getting hired. Even though he knows he only has a ghost of a chance of winning the lottery, he still buys tickets every week.*

ghost town A town that has become permanently devoid of inhabitants, typically due to the disappearance of business or economic opportunities. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *The town rose up fast and furiously as prospectors flooded the area in search of gold, but when the last of the precious minerals was gone, those same people were as fast to depart, leaving a creaking old ghost town in their wake.*

the ghost walks An expression used in theater to explain that actors will perform because they have been assured of payment. The phrase possibly originated when an actor playing Hamlet's father (who appears in *Hamlet* as a ghost) refused to act unless he was paid. *The ghost walks today because we all just got paid!*

ghost writer A writer (usually a professional) who assists in the writing of something (such as a book or speech) without taking credit for it. A: *"I'm so impressed with the celebrity memoir I'm reading. I didn't expect this singer to be able to write so well!"* B: *"Yeah, she probably had a ghost writer!"* *Being the ghostwriter of some of the president's speeches is the greatest achievement of my life.*

ghostly presence An unspecified yet palpable and typically somewhat sinister presence, attendance, or existence. *Though the country had finally reached a period of peace, the ghostly presence of its violent past hung heavily on the minds of the citizens. The characters never discuss the absent father directly, but this very avoidance gives him a ghostly presence throughout the novel.*

GI can 1. A large trash receptacle made from galvanized iron (GI) used by the military during World War I. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *Our uniforms became so infested with lice after living in the trenches that we were all ordered to dump them into the GI cans at the edge of the encampment.* **2.** World War I military slang for a large German artillery shell. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *The first time you hear the blast it scares you half to*

death, but before long, the sound of GI cans dropping around you becomes part of the daily routine.

the gig is up See [the jig is up](#).

gild the pill To make something unpleasant seem appealing. *I knew that my daughter was not going to be happy to go the doctor, so I gilded the pill by reminding her about all the toys that are in the office.*

gilded cage A life of wealth and luxury but without true freedom, happiness, or contentment. *She married her husband because of his fortune, but her lonely life inside their mansion with a man she did not love quickly became a gilded cage.*

gimme (a) five! See [give me \(a\) five!](#).

ginger group A small group of people within a political party or organization who attempt to influence the other members of the group. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *The party was staunchly conservative until the ginger group slowly started shifting them to a more liberal stance on social issues.*

ginger knob vulgar derogatory A person, typically a man, with naturally red hair. Primarily heard in UK, Ireland.

ginger minge 1. vulgar derogatory A woman with naturally red hair (a reference to her pubic hair, where "minge" is vulgar slang for the vulva/vagina). Primarily heard in UK, Ireland. 2. vulgar derogatory The external genitals of a woman with red pubic hair. Primarily heard in UK, Ireland.

ginger minger derogatory slang A person with red hair who is considered unattractive. Primarily heard in UK, Ireland.

girl crush 1. A feeling of interest or admiration that one female has for another (usually in a non-sexual way). *I have a huge girl crush on this girl in my econ class. She has the best clothes and hair.* 2. The subject of such a feeling. *That actress is totally my girl crush. She's just so confident and beautiful.*

girl Friday A female assistant who is capable of many different types of tasks. Based on the term "man Friday," the term can be considered sexist. *I like to have my daughter be my girl Friday during "take your child to work" day. She's a better worker than some of my employees!*

girlboss A confident, capable woman who pursues her own ambitions instead of working for others or otherwise settling in life. (Despite the name, a girlboss does not necessarily have her own business.) The phrase was popularized by Sophia Amoruso, founder of the fashion company Nasty Gal. *Why are you still working in this dead-end job? You need to be more of a girlboss and take control of your life.*

give 110% To put forth the absolute maximum amount of effort or energy possible (i.e., even more than is usually required or seems possible). *We're going to have to give 110% if we want to get this project finished by the deadline. A win today secures our spot in the championship, so go out there and give 110%!*

give a bad time See [give someone a bad time](#).

give a basket To reject a fiancé; to refuse to get married. The phrase comes from an old German custom of leaving a basket on a former lover's roof. *I thought for sure that Denise and I were going to get married—I never expected her to give a basket to me in the end. I love Peter, but ultimately I had to give a basket to him because we just want different things in life.*

give a big head See [give \(someone\) a big head](#).

give a bit of curry See [give \(someone\) \(a bit of\) curry](#).

give a black eye to (someone or something) To make someone or something look bad; to damage one's reputation. *That food critic's negative review really gave a black eye to my restaurant.*

give a bloody nose See [give \(one\) a bloody nose](#).

give a bloody nose See [give \(one\) a bloody nose](#).

give a dingle See [give \(someone\) a dingle](#).

give a dog a bad name and hang him It is very difficult to lose or change a bad reputation. A: *"Ever since I failed my exam, my teacher sees me as a slacker, no matter what I do."* B: *"Well, give a dog a bad name and hang him, right?"*

give a fit See [give \(someone\) a fit](#).

give a go See [give \(something\) a go](#).

give a hand See [give \(one\) a hand](#).

give a hang See [not give a hang \(about something\)](#).

give a hard time See [give \(one\) a hard time](#).

give a lot of stick See [give \(someone\) \(a lot of\) stick](#).

give a man enough rope and he will hang himself If you give people the opportunity to do something wrong or detrimental to themselves, they will usually do it; one does not need to interfere to bring about someone's downfall. *Don't interrupt him with questions. Just let him keep talking and he'll incriminate himself. Give a man enough rope and he will hang himself.*

give a minute See [give \(someone\) a minute](#).

give a nudge See [give \(someone\) a nudge](#).

give a piece of mind See [give \(someone\) a piece of \(one's\) mind](#).

give a rat's arse See [not give a rat's arse \(about something\)](#).

give a rat's arse rude slang To care. Typically used in the negative as a dismissive phrase showing one's annoyance or lack of interest. Primarily heard in UK. *I don't give a rat's arse about how late your friends are allowed to stay out—you need to be home by 10 PM. I used to care about what those fools say, but I just don't give a rat's arse anymore!*

give a ribbing See [give \(someone\) a ribbing](#).

give a run for money See [give \(one\) a run for \(one's\) money](#).

give a second See [give \(someone\) a second](#).

give a second chance See [give \(someone\) a second chance](#).

give a shite See [not give a shite \(about something\)](#).

give a shite rude slang To care. Typically used in the negative as a dismissive phrase showing one's annoyance or lack of interest. Primarily heard in UK, Ireland. *I don't give a shite about how late your friends are allowed to stay out—you need to be home by 10 PM. I used to care about what those fools say, but I just don't give a shite anymore!*

give a sneck posset archaic To give a rejection, refusal, or cold reception. Primarily heard in UK. *Milton set to drinking in the town's tavern after his wealthy distant relations gave a sneck posset.*

give a sneck posset See [sneck posset](#).

give a taste of own medicine See [give \(one\) a taste of \(one's\) own medicine](#).

give a tuppence See [not give \(a\) tuppence](#).

give airs See [give \(oneself\) airs](#).

give all See [give \(something\) \(one's\) all](#).

give all See [give \(one's\) all](#).

give an arm and a leg (for something) To pay, give, or do whatever is necessary or required. *They had to give an arm and a leg for the lawyer they hired. I had to give an arm and a leg just to get an interview for the job.*

give an out See [give \(someone\) an out](#).

give and take **1.** noun (sometimes hyphenated) The exchange of mutual compromise or concession; negotiation, bargaining, and/or compromise. *There's always going to be some give and take when new legislation is introduced in politics. You won't get far in this business if you aren't willing to allow a little give-and-take with your competitors.* **2.** noun (sometimes hyphenated) Lively two-way discussion; the exchange of ideas or conversation. *The purpose of this meeting is to have a bit of give-and-take between employees and the management for ideas on the direction of the company.* **3.** verb To compromise or concede; to negotiate, bargain, and/or compromise. *You have to be willing to give and take when you enter politics, otherwise nothing will ever get done.* **4.** verb To engage in lively two-way discussion; to exchange ideas or conversation. *The university has set up an online forum so students are able to give and take with the administration.*

give another chance See [give \(someone\) another chance](#).

give any thought to See [give thought to \(something\)](#).

give anything (for something) To pay, give, or do whatever is necessary or required to acquire or achieve a thing for which one has an intense desire. *I'd give anything to live in Paris! I bet she'd give anything for a chance to go out with John.*

give away See [give \(oneself\) away](#).



give away the shop To pay or concede too much during a negotiation, exchange, or transaction. *Focusing on environmental concerns, the congressional candidate has accused his opponent of giving away the shop to corporate interests. You have to make your business attractively affordable, but you can't give away the shop or you'll never turn a profit. I hope you didn't give away the shop for that beat up old car.*

give away the store To pay or concede too much during a negotiation, exchange, or transaction. *Focusing on environmental concerns, the congressional candidate has accused his opponent of giving away the store to corporate interests. You have to make your business attractively affordable, but you can't give away the store or you'll never turn a profit. I hope you didn't give away the store for that beat up old car.*

give battle dated To engage in a fight, conflict, or confrontation. *The king's forces amassed at the ridge, preparing to give battle against the invading army. In this unforgiving world, you must be prepared to give battle for your ideals.*

give chapter and verse To provide full, specific, and authoritative information to support some quote, question, or issue at hand. Can also be used with similar verbs such as "offer," "cite," "quote," etc. It is a reference to quoting scripture. *Don't try to debate Sarah about physics. She'll give chapter and verse until you realize she's right. You can't be so vague if you want to convince me. You'll have to give chapter and verse.*

give color to (something) **1.** To add flourish or provide an interesting accompaniment to something. *Idioms and metaphors are just some of the things that give color to language.* **2.** To embellish or exaggerate something so as to give it the appearance of truth, credibility, or plausibility. *The defendant even bought used tickets to give color to his story of being at the opera when the murder took place.*

give credit See [give \(someone\) credit](#).

give credit to (someone) **1.** To give someone praise or recognition. *We must give credit to Samantha for getting the project finished on time. You have to give credit to John for the humility he shows regarding his financial success.* **2.** To grant or extend financial credit to someone. *The shop gave credit to us for the faulty television we bought last week. If the bank agrees to give credit to me, I'll finally be able to get my business up and running.*

give curry See [give \(someone\) \(a bit of\) curry](#).

give dues See [give \(one\) \(one's\) dues](#).

give ear to (someone or something) To listen carefully or pay close attention to someone or something; to give ample or due consideration to someone or something. *I want to assure you that city council is giving ear to all residents who want to lodge complaints. Give ear to what I'm telling you, because it may prove more important than you realize in the future.*

give enough rope See [give \(one\) enough rope](#).

give face See [give \(someone\) face](#).

give fits See [give \(someone\) fits](#).

give grief See [give \(one\) grief](#).

give Hail Columbia See [give \(one\) Hail Columbia](#).

give head See [give \(one\) \(one's\) head](#).

give head for the washing See [give \(one's\) head for the washing](#).

give heart failure See [give \(someone\) heart failure](#).

give heed to (something) To listen carefully or pay close attention; to give ample or due consideration. *You'd best give heed to his advice, or you might end up suffering the mistakes he made in the past. Give heed to your mother, she knows what she's talking about.*

give hell to To give someone a hard time by means of aggressive actions or attitude. *I'd avoid the boss today—he's giving hell to everyone.*

give her the bells and let her fly To release someone from something, often a job. The phrase comes from hawking—when an owner no longer needed a particular hawk, its bells would be removed, and it would be set free. *The new secretary hasn't taken one accurate message for me all week. At this point, I'm ready to give her the bells and let her fly.*

give herself airs See [give \(oneself\) airs](#).

give him enough rope and he'll hang himself If you give people the opportunity to do something wrong or detrimental to themselves, they will usually do it; one does not need to interfere to bring about someone's downfall. *Don't interrupt him with questions. Just let him keep talking and he'll incriminate himself. Give him enough rope and he'll hang*

himself!

give hostage to fortune To do or say something that could jeopardize future success or cause misfortune later on. *With the economy at such a precarious level at the moment, the president made it clear that he would take no action that would give hostage to fortune.*

give in 1. To collapse, crumble, or cave in. *We were able to get the kids out of the house before the roof gave in.* **2.** To submit, concede, or yield (to someone or something); to surrender or acknowledge defeat. *The king is foolish if he believes our rebellion will ever give in! Under the threat of a strike, the management gave in and agreed to reinstate annual pay increases for all employees.* **3.** To hand in, deliver, or submit (something). Primarily heard in UK. *Please give in your report by the end of the day.*

give in to (someone) To submit, concede, or yield to someone or something; to surrender or acknowledge defeat to someone or something. *The board of directors finally gave in to employees' demands for annual pay increases. John always gives in to his wife when it comes to financial decisions.*

give it a whirl To try something (often for the first time as a means of forming an opinion about it). *A: "Do you want to try driving my car, to see how you like it?" B: "Yeah, sure, I'll give it a whirl." I don't usually like hot tea, but it's so cold out that I gave it a whirl today.*

give it large 1. To engage in or seek out pleasurable, hedonistic activities with great enthusiasm or intensity, especially dancing, drinking alcohol, and using drugs. Primarily heard in UK. *After the stress of exams, we were all eager to go out and give it large on Friday night.* **2.** To verbally abuse, harass, or intimidate. Primarily heard in UK. *I know that you weren't happy with your meal, but you really went too far by giving it large to the poor waitress.* **3.** To boast or impress. Primarily heard in UK. *I'm not trying to give it large, but my monthly salary is more than you earn in a year!*

give it some stick To put forth a significant amount of time, energy, effort, or intensity into some task or action. *We're going to have to give it some stick if we want to beat them in the semifinals next week. Give it some stick on your exam tomorrow!*

give it the royal treatment See [give \(someone\) the royal treatment](#).



give it to (someone) To rebuke or scold; to verbally or physically punish or abuse. *Our parents really gave it to us for coming home late last night. The headmaster gave it to the students for their disruption during class.*

give leg bail To flee; to run away from something. *The officer tried to arrest me, but I gave leg bail and sprinted toward my house.*

give lowdown See [give \(someone\) the lowdown \(on something\)](#).

give me (a) five! A request to give the speaker a five, that is, to slap their (usually) raised hand with one's own, as in a show of congratulation or celebration. *I hear you aced your final exams! Give me five!*

Give me liberty, or give me death! A set phrase indicating stark and unyielding refusal to submit to authoritarian measures or domination. The phrase is attributed to American politician Patrick Henry (1736–1799) from a speech he made to the Virginia Convention in 1775, calling for Virginian troops to assist in the Revolutionary War. Any number of alternative nouns can be used in place of "liberty" as a means of humorously or hyperbolically highlighting one's extreme reluctance to part with it. *The government thinks it can censor our media, monitor our communications, and tax us to starvation without us putting up a fight. Well, I say to them, give me liberty, or give me death! Give me bacon or give me death!*

give myself away See [give \(oneself\) away](#).

give no quarter See [give \(someone\) no quarter](#).

give odds **1.** To offer a bet with favorable odds to the bettor (as by a bookmaker). *Bookmakers are giving odds that the company's new smartphone outsells its competitors 2:1.* **2.** To be completely sure of something. *I'll give odds that Jeremy tries to skip out on paying me back for dinner.*

give offense to To cause tension or displeasure. *I tried to choose my words carefully, but, due to the controversial subject matter, I feared that I would give offense to the committee no matter what I said.*

give one a bad time See [give someone a bad time](#).

give one a big head See [give \(someone\) a big head](#).

give (one) a bloody nose **1.** Literally, to cause someone's nose to

bleed, usually by striking them. *Johnny was expelled after he gave one of the boys in class a bloody nose. The dry air in Colorado always gives me a bloody nose when I come to visit.* **2.** To inflict a humiliating, frustrating, or resounding defeat on someone. *Everyone agreed that the political newcomer gave the Congressman a bloody nose during their first televised debate.*

give (one) a bloody nose 1. Literally, to punch or otherwise strike someone in the nose hard enough to cause it to bleed. *I'd stay away from that kid—he gave me a bloody nose just for looking at his bike!* **2.** To defeat something or someone, often temporarily. *All right, so you gave me a bloody nose in this week's meeting. I'm just going to do more research and come back stronger in the next one!*

give one a fit See [give \(someone\) a fit](#).

give (one) a hand 1. To help someone with something. *I hope that someone will give me a hand with these bags—there's no way I'll make it to the fifth floor on my own! No, Billy can't babysit, he's giving me a hand with my car today.* **2.** To applaud someone or something. *Wasn't that a great performance? Let's give them a hand, ladies and gentlemen!*

give (one) a hard time 1. To tease someone about something, often for one's own enjoyment. *I hate talking to Uncle Ned at family parties—he always gives me a hard time about being a poetry major. I'm pretty sure that Kevin likes Katie, so I keep giving him a hard time about it.* **2.** To treat someone harshly and make things difficult for him or her. *I think I've done a good job at work, but the boss keeps giving me a hard time—I don't think he likes me very much. Stop giving the interns such a hard time! They're doing the best they can.*

give one a minute See [give \(someone\) a minute](#).

give one a ribbing See [give \(someone\) a ribbing](#).

give (one) a run for (one's) money To challenge one's ability, fortitude, or patience. *Don't underestimate our opponents today—I think they'll give us a run for our money. Having an infant and a toddler sure is giving me a run for my money.*

give one a second See [give \(someone\) a second](#).

give one a second chance See [give \(someone\) a second chance](#).

give (one) a taste of (one's) own medicine To do something

(usually unpleasant) to someone who usually acts in the same way. *Bill is always excluding me from things, so I'm going to give him a taste of his own medicine and not invite him to my party. This team likes to play tough defense, so let's give them a taste of their own medicine and not give them any space to score.*

give one another chance See [give \(someone\) another chance](#).

give (one) enough rope If you give people the opportunity to do something wrong or detrimental to themselves, they will usually do it; one does not need to interfere to bring about someone's downfall. The full version is, "Give (one) enough rope, and (one) will hang (one)self." *Don't interrupt him with questions. Just let him keep talking and he'll incriminate himself. Give him enough rope and see what happens.*

give one fits See [give \(someone\) fits](#).

give (one) grief To criticize or tease someone. *Once my brother hears that I hit a parked car, he'll give me grief about it for years to come. I'm pretty sure that Kevin likes Katie, so I keep giving him grief about it.*

give (one) Hail Columbia To scold someone harshly. "Hail Columbia" is a euphemism for "hell." *My mom really gave me Hail Columbia when she saw my report card and found out that I was failing three classes.*

give one heart failure See [give \(someone\) heart failure](#).

give one hundred and ten percent See [give 110%](#).

give (one) Jesse To reprimand or punish someone. The phrase might refer to a "jesse," a strap used in falconry that was also used to strike poor performers of the sport. *I'll give you Jesse if you come home after curfew again this weekend!*

give (one) (one's) dues **1.** To give someone the appropriate payment for services or work that they have done. *After intense negotiations, the local government will finally be giving rural farmers their dues.* **2.** To give someone that which they deserve, which can be a reward or retribution, depending on the situation. *Don't worry about those stool pigeons, we'll be sure to give them their dues. After all her hard work, I really hope the company finally gives Mary her dues.*

give (one) (one's) head To let one do as one wishes; to grant one more freedom. *I'm so glad my parents gave me my head—now, I can finally*

stay out until midnight on the weekends! I'm giving you your head on this project, and I hope to see some real innovation with it.

give (one) (one's) walking papers To dismiss someone from a job or task. *I can't believe the boss gave me my walking papers after five years on the job! The new secretary hasn't taken one accurate message for me all week—I think it's time to give her her walking papers. Ben offered to help me clean out the garage, but he's been late every day, so I had to give him his walking papers.*

give (one) running shoes To end something abruptly with someone (thus forcing a hasty exit). *My boss gave me running shoes today—after five years on the job! I can't believe it. No, I gave my date running shoes—there was just no chemistry between us.*

give one stick See [give \(someone\) \(a lot of\) stick](#).

give (one) the bag **1.** To reject or abandon one's romantic partner abruptly. *I loved Mary so much and thought she loved me too—I never expected her to give me the bag and then move halfway across the country!* **2.** To dismiss someone from a job. *I can't believe the boss gave me the bag after five years on the job!*

give (one) the creeps To make one feel wary or uneasy due to eeriness or strange behavior. *I stay away from that old house on the corner, it gives me the creeps! Why is that guy just standing around and not talking to anyone? He's giving me the creeps!*

give (one) the heave-ho To dismiss or reject someone. "Heave-ho" refers to the literal lifting and tossing of an object; in this sense, it is used metaphorically. *I can't believe the boss gave me the heave-ho after five years on the job! A: "Did you hear that Liz broke up with Dan?" B: "Wow, I never expected her to give him the heave-ho!"*

give one the horn See [give \(someone\) the horn](#).

give one the lowdown See [give \(someone\) the lowdown \(on something\)](#).

give (one) the old heave-ho To dismiss or reject someone. "Heave-ho" refers to the literal lifting and tossing of an object; in this sense, it is used metaphorically. *I can't believe the boss gave me the old heave-ho after five years on the job! A: "Did you hear that Liz broke up with Dan?" B: "Wow, I*

never expected her to give him the old heave-ho!"

give (one) the pink slip To dismiss someone from a job. *I can't believe the boss gave me the pink slip after five years on the job! The new secretary hasn't taken one accurate message for me all week—I think it's time to give her the pink slip.*

give (one) the sack To fire someone from a job or task. *The new secretary is so rude—I need to give her the sack. I tried so hard to do a good job in Mrs. Smith's garden, but she gave me the sack anyway.*

give one the word See [give \(someone\) the word](#).

give one the works See [give \(someone\) the works](#).

give (one) what for To reprimand one. *I know my mom is going to give me what for for coming home after curfew—again. If your room isn't spotless in the next hour, I'm going to give you what for!*

give (one) what's coming (to one) To give someone that which they deserve, which can be a reward or retribution, depending on the situation. *Don't worry about those stool pigeons, we'll be sure to give them what's coming. After all her hard work, I really hope the company finally gives Mary what's coming to her.*

give (one's) all To put forth as much effort as one can muster. *I'm so disappointed that I gave my all and still lost the match. If you give your all studying for your exams, I'm confident that you'll get good grades.*

give one's all See [give \(something\) \(one's\) all](#).

give one's head a shake See [give your head a shake](#).

give (one's) head for the washing To submit passively to a reprimand, punishment, or some sort of mistreatment. *I knew I was getting home after curfew, and that my parents would be angry about it, so I just gave my head for the washing and didn't try to sneak in. Don't just give your head for the washing—tell him that he can't talk to you like that!*

give (one's) right arm A figurative phrase that highlights one's interest in or willingness to do something. A: *"I'm going to the concert on Saturday!"* B: *"Aw man, I would give my right arm to have tickets to that!"* I would give my right arm to get good grades like my sister.

give (one's) tuppence (worth) To share one's opinion, idea, or

point of view, regardless of whether or not others want to hear it. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *I find Jeff's husband a bit trying at times. He always has to give his tuppence, even when it's clear he knows nothing about what's being discussed. If I can just give my tuppence worth, I think the staff would really appreciate a bump in their pay, and productivity would increase as a result.*

give (one's) two cents To share one's opinion or point of view for whatever it may be worth, generally when it is unasked for. *I find Jeff's husband a bit trying at times. He always insists on giving his two cents whether we want his opinion or not! If I can just give my two cents, I think the staff would really appreciate a bump in their pay.*

give (one's) two cents' worth To share one's opinion or point of view for whatever it may be worth, generally when it is unasked for. *I find Jeff's husband a bit trying at times. He always insists on giving his two cents' worth whether we want his opinion or not! If I can just give my two cents' worth, I think the staff would really appreciate a bump in their pay.*

give (one's) two pennies (worth) To share one's opinion, idea, or point of view, regardless of whether or not others want to hear it. Primarily heard in UK. *I find Jeff's husband a bit trying at times. He always has to give his two pennies, even when it's clear he knows nothing about what's being discussed. If I can just give my two pennies worth, I think the staff would really appreciate a bump in their pay, and productivity would increase as a result.*

give (one's) two penn'orth To share one's opinion, idea, or point of view, regardless of whether or not others want to hear it. ("Penn'orth" is a contraction of "pennies' worth.") Primarily heard in UK. *I find Jeff's husband a bit trying at times. He always has to give his two penn'orth, even when it's clear he knows nothing about what's being discussed. If I can just give my two penn'orth, I think the staff would really appreciate a bump in their pay, and productivity would increase as a result.*

give (one's) twopence (worth) To share one's opinion, idea, or point of view, regardless of whether or not others want to hear it. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *I find Jeff's husband a bit trying at times. He always has to give his twopence, even when it's clear he knows nothing about what's being discussed. If I can just give my twopence worth, I think the staff would*

really appreciate a bump in their pay, and productivity would increase as a result.

give (oneself) airs To think or behave as though one is superior to others or better than one really is; to have or assume a pretentious or self-aggrandizing attitude. *I think John is really a decent fellow at heart, but I really wish he wouldn't give himself such airs about his writing abilities. Stop giving yourself airs, Mary, you're not some world-class actor—you're just an amateur like the rest of us!*

give (oneself) away To reveal or make known—usually unintentionally—something about oneself, such as one's actions, intentions, ideas, guilt, etc. *Margaret had been embezzling money from the corporate account for years, but she finally gave herself away when she claimed her two-month trip to Paris as a business expense. I wanted my acceptance to Harvard to be a surprise, but I gave myself away when I mentioned about moving in the autumn.*

give pap with a hatchet To act or seem as though one is doing something with good or kind intentions when, really, the opposite is true. To "give pap" means for a mother to comfort an infant with her nipple—an intentional juxtaposition with the sharp and dangerous "hatchet." *I thought Lauren wanted to be my friend, but then I found out she only invited me to sit at her table to make fun of me. Talk about giving pap with a hatchet!*

give place to To be replaced by something or someone else. *With that loss, we gave place to the team below us in the standings and found ourselves outside the playoff picture.*

give rein to (someone or something) To allow unchecked or unconstrained freedom to something or someone; to completely or freely indulge something or someone. *George would make a great businessman if he didn't give rein to his emotions like that. It's a sure sign that this company is failing if they're willing to give rein to the interns like this. You have a nasty habit of giving rein to your drinking.*

give running shoes See [give \(one\) running shoes](#).

give some stick See [give it some stick](#).

give some thought to See [give thought to \(something\)](#).

give somebody the stink eye See [give \(someone\) the stink eye](#).

give someone a bad time To tease, mock, or criticize someone, usually over some action, task, or achievement. *The coach really gave me a bad time when I missed that catch last night. I feel a little mean because I gave him such a bad time about his date last night.*

give (someone) a big head To cause someone to become arrogant, conceited, or have an exaggeratedly high opinion of him- or herself. *Having her book on the bestseller list is giving Samantha a big head. My parents have given John a big head with all the praise they heap on him for his accomplishments.*

give (someone) (a bit of) curry To berate, rebuke, or criticize (someone); to verbally or physically harass or assault (someone). A reference to the spiciness of curry, that is, making it "hot" for someone. Primarily heard in Australia. *Protesters gave the defendant a bit of curry as he left the courtroom in the evening. Don't be afraid to give curry back when you are being pushed around. The wife gave me curry when I showed up late.*

give (someone) a dingle To call someone on the telephone. *Give me a dingle after the movie, and we can meet somewhere for a drink.*

give (someone) a fit To cause someone to become upset, angry, or extremely annoyed. *It gives me a fit when I see cyclists weaving in and out of traffic like that!*

give (someone) (a lot of) stick To criticize, judge, or disapprove of someone (for something). *My parents gave me a lot of stick for my decision to study art in college, instead of law or medicine. I just know my boss is going to give me stick for that accounting error I made last week. The class still gives John a lot of stick for that time his pants fell down in the middle of an oral report.*

give (someone) a minute To allow someone or something a moment or brief period of time in which to do something. *Honey, this isn't what it looks like, just give me a minute to explain! Give the computer a minute to reboot so the updates can be properly installed.*

give (someone) a nudge To give someone a mild or gentle reminder, directive, or word of encouragement. *If your friends haven't already donated to our charity, give them a nudge this year to help in the fight against poverty. John is a good student, but sometimes I need to give him a little*

nudge to do his homework.

give (someone) a piece of (one's) mind To tell someone how one feels, often while expressing anger or frustration. *I had to give Sarah a piece of my mind after she left my car a mess for the third time this week. Boy, the boss really gave me a piece of his mind after that awful meeting.*

give (someone) a ribbing To tease or mock someone, usually in a playful or non-malicious manner. *My girlfriend always gives me a ribbing about the bathrobe I wear around the house. Don't be offended if the team gives you a bit of a ribbing when you start working here—they have a fondness for poking fun at one another.*

give (someone) a second To allow someone or something a moment or brief period of time in which to do something. *Honey, this isn't what it looks like, just give me a second to explain! Give the computer a second to reboot so the updates can be properly installed.*

give (someone) a second chance To allow someone another opportunity to do something or to prove their ability or worth. *I know I really messed up that last account, but please, give me a second chance! Although she was furious at John for his infidelity, she decided to give him a second chance. My professor gave me a second chance to complete my exams after she found out I'd been struggling with depression.*

give (someone) an out To provide someone with an excuse or a means of escaping (from something). *I know John is dreading going to his high school reunion, so I'm looking for a way to give him an out by the time it rolls around. They left a clause in the contract that would give them an out in case the deal went sour.*

give (someone) another chance To allow someone another opportunity to do something or to prove their ability or worth. *I know I really messed up that last account, but please, give me another chance! Although she was furious at John for his infidelity, she decided to give him another chance. My professor gave me another chance to complete my exams after she found out I'd been struggling with depression.*

give (someone) credit 1. To give someone praise or recognition. *We must give Samantha credit for getting the project finished on time. You have to give John credit for the humility he shows regarding his financial success.*

2. To grant or extend financial credit to someone. *The shop gave us credit for*

the faulty television we bought last week. If the bank agrees to give me credit, I'll finally be able to get my business up and running.

give (someone) face **1.** To show or treat (someone) with respect, honor, and dignity. The phrase is a translation from Cantonese and is used primarily in reference to Chinese people, culture, and business. *While working abroad in Hong Kong, I learned how important it is to give face to one's employer at all times. I always take care to give face to my husband at any opportunity.* **2.** vulgar slang To perform cunnilingus on a woman.

give (someone) fits To cause someone to become upset, angry, or extremely annoyed. *It gives me fits when I see cyclists weaving in and out of traffic like that!*

give (someone) heart failure To shock, frighten, or upset someone suddenly and to an extreme degree. Often used with "nearly," "almost," or some similar modifier. *Adrian almost gave his parents heart failure when he told them he was dropping out of college. You about gave me heart failure, sneaking up on me like that!*

give (someone) no quarter To offer (someone) no mercy, concession, indulgence, or leeway. *This match determines if we're heading to the finals of the tournament, so go out there and give them no quarter! Our boss gives no quarter when it comes to the standards our project must meet.*

give (someone) (one's) word To make a serious promise, assurance, or vow (to someone). *I give you my word that I will do everything in my power to have this matter resolved by next week. You gave your word that you'd be there, so don't even think about backing out now.*

give (someone) the air **1.** To spurn, jilt, or reject someone, especially a lover or romantic interest. *Jonathan has had a broken heart ever since David gave him the air.* **2.** To summarily dismiss or oust someone, such as an employee. *Management promptly gave the new accountant the air after his miscalculation cost the company hundreds of thousands of dollars. They'll give me the air if they ever find out I came into work drunk yesterday.*

give (someone) the back of (one's) hand **1.** To strike someone with the backside of one's open hand. *Son, I'll give you the back of my hand if you ever speak to your mother that way again.* **2.** To reject, snub, or rebuke someone; to display to someone a show of contempt, scorn, or rejection. *I'll give the back of my hand to anyone who says I'm not a good parent. He*

pleaded to be forgiven by his wife, but she merely gave him the back of her hand.

give (someone) the bird To raise one's middle finger (a rude gesture of anger or displeasure) at another person. The phrase "flip (someone) the bird" is also commonly used. *What are you giving me the bird for, I didn't even say anything insulting! I gave my brother the bird after he said that he'd never seen a worse basketball player than me.*

give (someone) the brush-off To reject, snub, ignore, or rebuff someone. *I thought Rebecca was a good friend until she gave me the brush-off at a party last weekend. Teachers have accused local politicians of giving them the brush-off regarding proposed cuts to pensions and school funding.*

give (someone) the bum's rush **1.** To hastily and forcefully remove someone from a place. Likened to the ejection of a vagrant (a "bum") from a place. Primarily heard in US, Canada, South Africa. *The bartender gave us the bum's rush after Joe started drunkenly insulting him.* **2.** To peremptorily or abruptly dismiss someone, due to a failed or rejected plan, idea, or performance. Primarily heard in US, Canada, South Africa. *The board of directors gave me the bum's rush when I suggested that managers should face a pay cut alongside the other employees.*

give (someone) the business **1.** To subject someone to harsh treatment, teasing, mockery, or verbal harassment. *The older players on the team are always giving younger players the business. Protesters gave the defendant the business as he left the court today.* **2.** To severely scold, punish, or rebuke someone. *I know my boss is going to give me the business when she finds out I lost our most lucrative account. Jimmy's parents gave him the business after he broke the living room lamp.*

give (someone) the can To summarily dismiss or oust someone from employment; to fire someone. *Management promptly gave the new accountant the can after his miscalculation cost the company hundreds of thousands of dollars. They'll give me the can if they ever find out I came into work drunk yesterday.*

give (someone) the chair **1.** To execute someone by electrocution by means of an electric chair. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *Some states will still give a prisoner the chair if they so choose.* **2.** In professional wrestling, to hit one's opponent with a metal folding chair, which is used as a

prop during the performance. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *I was shocked to find my kindly old grandmother screaming, "Give him the chair!" during a pro wrestling match on TV.*

give (someone) the elbow **1.** To spurn, jilt, or reject someone, especially a lover or romantic interest. *Jonathan has had a broken heart ever since David gave him the elbow.* **2.** To summarily dismiss or oust someone from employment; to fire someone. *Management promptly gave the new accountant the elbow after his miscalculation cost the company hundreds of thousands of dollars. They'll give me the elbow if they ever find out I came into work drunk yesterday.*

give (someone) the fig To insult another person, typically with a rude gesture called the "fig" or "fico" (in which someone puts the thumb between the first two fingers or in the mouth). *What are you giving me the fig for, I didn't even say anything insulting!*

give (someone) the fright of (someone's) life To cause someone an extreme and sudden sensation of shock, surprise, or fear. *I didn't see you standing there! You gave me the fright of my life! Seeing the car swerve right in front of her gave Mary the fright of her life.*

give (someone) the go-ahead To grant someone permission to proceed with some action or task. *We're just waiting for our manager to give us the go-ahead before we release the latest software update. Once she gives the go-ahead, I'll transfer your funds into the new account.*

give (someone) the green light To grant someone permission to proceed with some action or task. Likened to the green light of a traffic signal. *We're just waiting our manager to give us the green light before we release the latest software update.*

give (someone) the horn To cause someone to become lustful or sexually excited; to sexually arouse someone. *It's a little embarrassing to admit, but men in uniform totally give me the horn!*

give (someone) the length of (one's) tongue To voice one's opinion, often in an aggressive or abusive way. *I thought Paul was unhappy, but I did not expect him to lash out and give me the length of his tongue like that. I can't stand being around my mom when she starts giving us the length of her tongue.*



give (someone) the lowdown (on something) To provide someone with specific or comprehensive details about someone, something, or some situation. *Give me the lowdown on what the boss is planning to do about the company's falling profits. I'm waiting for my brother to give me the lowdown on Geoffrey before I go on a date with him. There's been a shakeup in the company's upper management, but we won't know how we're affected until the boss gives us the lowdown.*

give (someone) the royal treatment To treat someone or something extravagantly; to give someone or something elaborate attention and care. *At our spa, we give all of our customers the royal treatment. Give your website the royal treatment with one of our professional web development kits now!*

give someone (the) rundown To tell someone details about or a brief summary of a given event or situation. *Sorry I missed the meeting this morning—could you give me a rundown of what was discussed? Mary gave John the rundown on the championship match.*

give (someone) the shake To escape, slip away from, or rid oneself of someone. *The burglar was able to give the police the shake by ducking into a series of back alleys.*

give (someone) the shakes **1.** To cause someone's body to tremble or shake involuntarily, as due to fear, unease, anxiety, or a reaction to (or withdrawal from) a substance, such as caffeine, drugs, or alcohol. *Speaking in front of large groups of people always gives me the shakes. Tea is a great way to get a boost in the morning, and it won't give you the shakes the way coffee does. I'm trying to get sober and haven't had a drink in four days, but it's giving me the shakes something fierce.* **2.** To instill an intense sensation of fear, unease, or anxiety in someone; to intimidate someone to such a degree as might produce such a response. *The attorney for the prosecution is renowned for her fierceness, able to give even the most hardened criminals the shakes. The New Zealand rugby team always performs a traditional war dance called the "haka" before a match so as to give their opponents the shakes.*

give (someone) the stink eye To make a facial expression of unreserved disgust, contempt, disapproval, distrust, or general ill will toward someone. *Some guy across the bar has been giving me the stink eye since we*

came in. It must be something to do with my outfit. I must have done something wrong on Friday because the boss gave me the stink eye as soon as I came into work on Monday.

give (someone) the third degree To interrogate, scrutinize, or question someone intensely or thoroughly. *My boyfriend is so controlling, always giving me the third degree if I go anywhere or see anyone without him. The police gave me the third degree regarding my whereabouts during the crime.*

give (someone) (the) what for To punish, rebuke, scold, or berate someone thoroughly and intensely. *I told her a thousand times not to take the car without asking! Well, I'll give her what for when she gets home. The boss is quick to give you the what for if you make even a minor mistake.*

give (someone) the word To give an order, make a request, or expressly state a desire for someone to do something or undertake some task. *We're ready to begin writing the report whenever you are, so just give us the word, and we'll get going. If the President gives the word, the military could begin airstrikes as early as tomorrow morning.*

give (someone) the works To physically assault, harass, or rough up someone. *When John refused to pay protection money to the mafia, two of their goons took him outside and gave him the works.*

give someone their word See [give \(someone\) \(one's\) word](#).

give someone what is coming See [give \(one\) what's coming \(to one\)](#).

give (something) a go To try something, especially something with which one has little or no experience. *I need to get more exercise, so I'm going to give cycling to work a go. I know you've never done this kind of work before, but give it a go and see how you do.*

give something a minute See [give \(someone\) a minute](#).

give something a second See [give \(someone\) a second](#).

give (something) (one's) all To put forth or utilize the utmost of one's energy, effort, time, and/or resources (toward some activity or task). *It doesn't matter whether you win the race or not, just go out there and give it your all! I gave this company my all, and now you're telling me I'm fired? Even though she gave her all, her café just wasn't doing enough business to*

stay open.

give something some stick See [give it some stick](#).

give (something) thought To consider, reflect upon, or think hard about something. Often used with modifiers such as "any," "some," "a little," etc. *Have you given my proposal any thought? Moving to a foreign country for work is a huge step, so give it some thought.*

give (something) weight To consider something important or especially relevant. Often used with modifiers such as "much," "a lot of," etc. *Jonathan knew his parents never approved of his relationship with Michael, so when he decided to get married, he didn't give their objections much weight. Because you're a mentor here, your students are going to give your opinion a lot of weight.*

give stick See [give \(someone\) \(a lot of\) stick](#).

give thanks for small blessings To appreciate small or minor benefits, advantages, or opportunities one is afforded, particularly in the midst of an otherwise difficult, frustrating, or unfortunate situation or circumstance. *My car's air conditioning stopped working two hours into my cross-country road trip. The radio still works, though, so I suppose I should give thanks for small blessings. Our son's accident left him without the use of his right eye; we're just giving thanks for small blessings that he still has the use of his left one.*

give thanks for small mercies To appreciate small or minor benefits, advantages, or opportunities one is afforded, particularly in the midst of an otherwise difficult, frustrating, or unfortunate situation or circumstance. *My car's air conditioning stopped working two hours into my cross-country road trip across America. The radio still works, though, so I suppose I should give thanks for small mercies. Our son's accident left him without the use of his right eye; we're just giving thanks for small mercies that he still has the use of his left one.*

give the air See [give \(someone\) the air](#).

give the back of hand See [give \(someone\) the back of \(one's\) hand](#).

give the bag See [give \(one\) the bag](#).

give the bird See [give \(someone\) the bird](#).

give the brush-off See [give \(someone\) the brush-off](#).

give the bum's rush See [give \(someone\) the bum's rush](#).

give the business See [give \(someone\) the business](#).

give the can See [give \(someone\) the can](#).

give the chair See [give \(someone\) the chair](#).

give the creeps See [give \(one\) the creeps](#).

give the elbow See [give \(someone\) the elbow](#).

give the fig See [give \(someone\) the fig](#).

give the fright of life See [give \(someone\) the fright of \(someone's\) life](#).

give the go-ahead See [give \(someone\) the go-ahead](#).

give the green light See [give \(someone\) the green light](#).

give the heave-ho See [give \(one\) the heave-ho](#).

give the horn See [give \(someone\) the horn](#).

give the length of tongue See [give \(someone\) the length of \(one's\) tongue](#).

give the lowdown See [give \(someone\) the lowdown \(on something\)](#).

give the mitten To reject a suitor. *We had no chemistry on our date, so I had to give the mitten to him.*

give the nod to To indicate someone or something as one's choice or show one's approval of someone or something. *I gave the nod to Amanda because she is the most qualified candidate. Mom gave the nod to pizza for dinner!*

give the old heave-ho See [give \(one\) the old heave-ho](#).

give the pink slip See [give \(one\) the pink slip](#).

give the royal treatment See [give \(someone\) the royal treatment](#).

give the sack See [give \(one\) the sack](#).

give the shake See [give \(someone\) the shake](#).

give the shakes See [give \(someone\) the shakes](#).

give the stink eye See [give \(someone\) the stink eye](#).

give the third degree See [give \(someone\) the third degree](#).

give the wall To give someone else the safest place to walk (which, in earlier times, would have been the walled side of the street). *Thank you for giving the wall to me, good sir. I hate walking along such dangerous streets!*

give the what for See [give \(someone\) \(the\) what for](#).

give the word See [give \(someone\) the word](#).

give the works See [give \(someone\) the works](#).

give themselves airs See [give \(oneself\) airs](#).

give themselves away See [give \(oneself\) away](#).

give thought See [give \(something\) thought](#).

give thought to (something) To consider, reflect upon, or think hard about something. Often used with modifiers such as "any," "some," "a little," etc. *Have you given any thought to my proposal? Marian gave some thought to the company's excess costs and determined that the number of employees had to be reduced for them to survive.*

give tongue To bark or cry out, as of a dog in pursuit. *Once the dog gave tongue, we knew we had found the evidence we'd been looking for.*

give tongue to To articulate; to give voice to something. *I had to finally give tongue to my frustrations with Meg always borrowing my car and returning it with no gas.*

give tuppence See [give \(one's\) tuppence \(worth\)](#).

give tuppence See [not give \(a\) tuppence](#).

give two cents See [give \(one's\) two cents](#).

give two cents' worth See [give \(one's\) two cents' worth](#).

give two pence See [not give twopence](#).

give two pennies See [give \(one's\) two pennies \(worth\)](#).

give two penn'orth See [give \(one's\) two penn'orth](#).

give two pins See [not give two pins \(about something\)](#).

give twopence See [give \(one's\) twopence \(worth\)](#).

give up the cause To concede or surrender a fight, battle, or confrontation; to relinquish or renounce one's stance on something. *The ferocity of their warriors is unmatched; even in the face of certain death, they will never give up the cause. Facing widespread opposition, the administration has been forced to give up the cause on tax reform.*

give walking papers See [give \(one\) \(one's\) walking papers](#).

give weight See [give \(something\) weight](#).

give what for See [give \(one\) what for](#).

give what is coming See [give \(one\) what's coming \(to one\)](#).

give word See [give \(someone\) \(one's\) word](#).

give your head a shake An imperative to reevaluate one's ideas, behavior, actions, etc., or to begin acting or thinking sensibly. Primarily heard in Canada. *You need to give your head a shake if you really think ghosts exist. Give your head a shake, John—no one is going to pay for a service they already get for free.*

glad tidings Favorable, beneficial, or happy news. Usually used with the verbs "give" or "bring." *The union leader brought glad tidings to the striking workers that their demands for pay increases had been accepted by the company's management.*

glamor puss A physically attractive woman who is overly concerned with her appearance. Primarily heard in US, Australia. *I never was much of a glamor puss in high school. I always preferred wearing jeans and sneakers instead of dresses and high heels.*

glamour girl A physically attractive woman who is overly concerned with her appearance. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *Robert is never seen in public without some glamour girl on his arm.*

glass ceiling A societal barrier that prevents women and minorities from advancing in the workplace. *Many people believe that a glass ceiling exists within the tech industry because not many women hold prominent positions in the field.*

glass-half-empty (used as a modifier before a noun) Of or characterized by a generally pessimistic worldview. *Mark is such a glass-half-empty kind of guy that he will find a way to see even the best situation in a negative light.*

glass-half-full (used as a modifier before a noun) Of or characterized by a generally optimistic worldview. *Rebecca has such a glass-half-full mentality that even when her company went bankrupt she simply saw it as a learning experience for the future.*

the glass is half empty The situation is generally worse or less hopeful than might otherwise be perceived. *Even in the best of times, Mark always maintains a view that the glass is half empty.*

the glass is half full The situation is generally better or more hopeful than might otherwise be perceived. *Rebecca has such a cheery personality that even when her company was nearly bankrupt she believed that the glass was half full.*

the glass of fashion and the mold of form A much-admired person. In Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Ophelia refers to Hamlet as such. *Look at that socialite—she is just the glass of fashion and the mold of form.*

gleam in (one's) eye **1.** A facial expression that denotes happiness, amusement, or knowledge of a secret. *Just when Rita thought all hope was lost, Jared got a gleam in his eye that told her he had a plan to get them both out of that sticky situation.* **2.** A hope or plan that is not yet in existence. *You were not even a gleam in your mother's eye when that photo was taken.*

glimmer of hope A minute indication that something may improve, succeed, or turn out for the best in the end. *Fans clung to a glimmer of hope that their team might score a last-minute touchdown to tie the game. Although peace talks have broken down between the two warring countries, there remains a glimmer of hope that a truce of some kind can still be salvaged.*

glint in (one's) eye(s) **1.** A brief and subtle expression in one's eye(s) indicating a hidden or secret emotion, agenda, idea, plan, etc. *She said that she was happy for both of them, but I knew by the glint in her eye that she despised Mark's new girlfriend. My father, with a glint in his eyes, told me that I would get the best present after the party was over.* **2.** A person or thing that has been planned or discussed but has not yet come into being. *Jonathan says he's going to write the great American novel, but it's just a glint in his eye at this point. I knew your parents back when you were just a glint in their eyes.*



glory hole vulgar slang A hole in a bathroom stall through which anonymous sexual acts take place.

glove money dated A monetary tip (with the purported intention of helping the servant who receives it to buy gloves). *Be sure to give the maid glove money before you leave the estate.*

glut on the market Something that is not in great demand because it is abundantly available. *Mobile phones are a glut on the market these days, which is why they're so affordable.*

glutton for punishment A person who continues to do things whose consequences they find difficult or unpleasant. *I couldn't wait to finish college, but I soon found myself in grad school. I must be a glutton for punishment. Why does George keep getting detention? Is he a glutton for punishment?*

gnaw (at) (someone's) vitals To greatly or deeply trouble someone; to affect in someone an intense feeling of anguish or despair. *Seeing the suffering of so many people overseas gnawed at her vitals day and night, so she decided to join the Red Cross so she could finally help in some way.*

go 2-40 See [go two-forty](#).

go a-begging To become or remain unused, unclaimed, unfilled, or unwanted, especially a job or product. *You'd think in this economy that we could fill the IT Director position immediately, but the job has gone a-begging. After the price of corn plummeted, half our supply has just been going a-begging in the storage silo.*

go abroad and you'll hear news of home Once one is no longer at home, one becomes more interested or invested in news of home and family as it circulates second-hand. A: *"Are you sure that Sir Gregory is selling the estate?"* B: *"Indeed. Go abroad and you'll hear news of home, my good man."*

go against (someone or something) 1. To oppose, disagree with, or compete against someone or something. *I can't take money from a charity like that, it goes against all of my core principles. You'll be going against a state champion in the next match, so you'll have to give it everything you've got!* 2. To be or signal a disadvantage or undesired outcome for someone or something. *The senator's uncouth comments are certain to go against him in*

his re-election campaign. Though we thought we had an airtight legal argument, but the court case ultimately went against us.

go against the flow To do, think, and/or believe things that are different or contrary to those of the majority of people. *All these kids think they are going against the flow, but they're really all dressed the same!*

go against the stream To act or behave in opposition or contrary to what is generally understood, assumed, practiced, or accepted. *I had to go against the stream to get the company to adopt more eco-friendly habits, but I think it will be worth it in the long run.*

go all out To put forth the utmost amount of energy, effort, enthusiasm, and/or resources (toward some task or action). *You'll be going against a state champion in the next match, so you'll have to go all out if you want to beat her! The company went all out for Sam's retirement party, making it a gala affair and sparing no expense.*

go along for the ride To attend some event or participate in some activity without playing an active or central role in the proceedings. *John's receiving an award for his work overseas tonight, so I thought I'd go along for the ride. I'm going along for the ride to my friends' book club meeting later to see if I want to become a member.*

go along to get along To conform to general expectations so as not to disrupt or endanger one's sense of security or belonging. *Jake had a pretty comfortable job and life, so he was happy enough to simply go along to get along.*

go amok **1.** To behave or run around in a wild, unruly, out-of-control manner; to be or become crazy or chaotic. *We tried to have some organized games for the kids, but they all started going amok as soon as they got here. The villagers were cleaning up debris for days after the bulls went amok through the streets.* **2.** To become bad or go awry; to get out of control; to go haywire. *This whole operation has gone amok. I don't know how we can be expected to finish by the deadline under these conditions.* **3.** dated To rush around in a violent, murderous frenzy. (Note: This is the phrase's original specific meaning, taken from Malay. "Amok" also has an older alternative spelling, "amuck.") *Fueled by alcohol and cocaine, Dave went amok when his wife told him she'd been seeing someone else. Luckily, a neighbor called the police when they heard such a commotion.*

go amuck **1.** To behave or run around in a wild, unruly, out-of-control manner; to be or become crazy or chaotic. *We tried to have some organized games for the kids, but they all started going amuck as soon as they got here. The villagers were cleaning up debris for days after the bulls went amuck through the streets.* **2.** To become bad or go awry; to get out of control; to go haywire. *This whole operation has gone amuck. I don't know how we can be expected to finish by the deadline under these conditions.* **3.** dated To rush around in a violent, murderous frenzy. (Note: This is the phrase's original specific meaning, taken from Malay. "Amuck" is an older alternative spelling of "amok," which is preferred today.) *Fueled by alcohol and cocaine, Dave went amuck when his wife told him she'd been seeing someone else. Luckily, a neighbor called the police when they heard such a commotion.*

go and (do something) To be so foolish, negligent, unfortunate, or thoughtless as to do something. "Go and" in this sense is used as a modifier to express or intensify a negative sentiment regarding the action. *You can have a few cookies as a snack, but don't go and spoil your appetite for dinner! I had the money in my pocket to cover rent for this month, but I went and spent it all at the bar.*

go apeshit **1.** rude slang To be or become wildly or uncontrollably angry. *My parents went totally apeshit when they found out I'd wrecked the car! Now, don't go apeshit or anything, but I've decided to move to Canada.* **2.** rude slang To be or become extremely excited or enthusiastic (about something). *I've never understood that pop star's popularity, but kids just go apeshit over her music.*

go (a)round in circles To waste one's time and energy engaging in trivial, aimless, or futile activities and failing to make any progress as a result. *I tried to get an outline drafted for my thesis, but my ideas were so jumbled in my head that I just kept going round in circles. The committee spent all afternoon trying to come up with a new PR proposal, but they went around in circles the whole time.*

go around Robin Hood's barn To take a long, indirect route. A: *"What took you guys so long to get here?"* B: *"Well, rather than just going through town, our esteemed driver went around Robin Hood's barn instead!"*

go at each other tooth and nail To fight, battle, or compete against each other with great ferocity, vigor, and intensity. *The incumbent president*

and his opponent went at each other tooth and nail in the televised debate last night. The rioters and police have been going at each other tooth and nail all night long.

go at it **1.** To engage in or undertake something with great energy, enthusiasm, or vigor. *I think you need a break from that assignment—you've been going at it for the last three hours! When John returned to teaching, he went at it with a renewed sense of purpose and excitement.* **2.** slang To engage in sexual intercourse. *I can hear my neighbors going at it almost every night—it's so embarrassing!*

go at it hammer and tongs To do something or perform some task with tremendous fervor, determination, energy, or forcefulness. An allusion to the force with which a blacksmith strikes metal using a hammer and tongs. *What started as a minor disagreement has escalated into a heated argument, and the two have been going at it hammer and tongs ever since. I need to go at this paper hammer and tongs if I want to keep my A in the class.*

go at one another tooth and nail To fight, battle, or compete against one another with great ferocity, vigor, and intensity. *The incumbent president and his rival went at one another tooth and nail in the televised debate last night. The rioters and police have been going at one another tooth and nail all night long.*

go at (someone) **1.** To physically attack someone with great ferocity or hostility. *Watch out for that bull in the back field—he'll go at you if you get too close. John went at the burglar with a knife to defend his family.* **2.** To criticize, berate, or verbally harass someone at length and/or with great intensity. *At the international summit, the foreign ambassador went at the president, demanding an explanation for the recent espionage allegations.*

go at (something) To engage in or undertake something with great energy, enthusiasm, or vigor. *I'd been going at the report for two days straight when my computer suddenly crashed and wiped out half my work!*

go back to To have a history or existence that extends to a certain period of time in the past. *Our organization's ties with this community go back to when the town was first settled in 1837. My Irish heritage goes back to when my great-great-great grandfather married the daughter of a wealthy Irish landowner.*

go back to square one To go back to the very first stage of

something; to be returned to an initial starting point. *We'll have to go back to square one if the government pulls our funding on this project. I lost all my data when the computer crashed, so I'm afraid I'm going back to square one.*

go batshit **1.** rude slang To become uncontrollably or unreasonably irrational; to act in a wildly irrational manner. *The drivers in this country seem to go completely batshit if there's even a little bit of snow on the ground. If they get too much sugar, the kids start going batshit and start running around the house screaming.* **2.** rude slang To become wildly or uncontrollably angry. *My parents went totally batshit when they found out I'd wrecked the car! Now, don't go batshit or anything, but I've decided to move to Canada.* **3.** rude slang To become extremely excited or enthusiastic (about something). *I've never understood that pop star's popularity, but kids just go batshit over her music.*

go batshit crazy **1.** rude slang To become uncontrollably or intensely irrational; to act in a wildly irrational manner. *The drivers in this country seem to go completely batshit crazy if there's even a little bit of snow on the ground. If they get too much sugar, the kids start going batshit crazy and start running around the house screaming.* **2.** rude slang To become wildly or uncontrollably angry. *My parents went totally batshit crazy when they found out I'd wrecked the car! Now, don't go batshit crazy or anything, but I've decided to move to Canada.* **3.** rude slang To become extremely excited or enthusiastic (about something). *I've never understood that pop star's popularity, but kids just go batshit crazy for her music.*

go begging To be available for one to take or claim. *If that cake is going begging, I'll take a few pieces home with me. We can't let these antiques from Aunt Judy go begging—here, take a vintage lamp.*

go belly up **1.** To break or malfunction; to die, fall apart, or cease to work. ("Belly up" is sometimes hyphenated.) *Sorry, Mark, I'd love to give you a lift to the airport, but my car has gone belly up on me again. It looks like our co-op might be going belly-up if we aren't granted a license for our communal work premises.* **2.** By extension, to have a poor, undesired, or ruinous outcome; to fail completely or not come together at all. *We were all set to have our picnic on Saturday, but the weather went belly up and we had to cancel at the last minute. The merger deal between the two companies went belly-up when it came to light that one of the CEOs had been dodging tax obligations for several years.*

go between the bark and the tree To be overly involved in someone's personal matters—often those of a married person or couple. *You shouldn't spend so much time alone with Elaine—she is a married woman, and you're going between the bark and the tree! You know far too much about their relationship and have definitely gone between the bark and the tree now.*

go between the moon and the milkman To flee overnight, so as to avoid pursuit (often by creditors). The moon represents the night, and the milkman the morning. Primarily heard in Australia. *Looks like Joe went between the moon and the milkman. He was here after dinner but he's gone this morning.*

go blue 1. To become very cold. *You kids be sure to wear your scarves outside, you'll go blue if you don't!* **2.** Of a U.S. state, county, district, or Congressional district, to have the majority of people vote for a Democratic candidate in a given election. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *With Ohio having gone blue, the Democrats look poised to reclaim the presidency.*

go bonkers 1. To be or become wild, restless, irrational, or crazy; to act in such a way. *The drivers in this country seem to go completely bonkers if there's even a little bit of snow on the ground. Don't give the kids too much sugar or they'll end up going bonkers! We thought taking our family vacation in a tiny cottage out in the country would be a nice break from city life, but we all went a bit bonkers after a few days.* **2.** To be or become very angry or upset. *My parents went bonkers when they found out I'd taken the car without asking. Now, don't go bonkers or anything, but I've decided to move to Canada.* **3.** To be or become extremely excited or enthusiastic (about something). *I've never understood that pop star's popularity, but kids just go bonkers for her music.*

go by the wayside To be discarded, ignored, rejected, or set aside in favor of other considerations or more urgent matters. *With the war in the Middle East intensifying, the president's plan for environmental reform has increasingly gone by the wayside.*

go co-op Typically said of an apartment building that has become a cooperative (or "co-op")—a building in which residents do not own property but rather own shares in the corporation that owns the building. *I can't believe that our building is going co-op—I might need to move.*

go dotty **1.** To become somewhat eccentric, odd, or mentally unbalanced. *Jackson started going dotty after spending a month by himself in his cabin.* **2.** To become forgetful or absent-minded, especially due to senility or old age in general. *Grandpa's been going a bit dotty lately, I don't know if he can take care of himself anymore.* **3.** To become very excited or enthusiastic (about something). *I've never understood that pop star's popularity, but kids just go dotty over her music.*

go down **1.** To lower, sink, or fall. *We need to get home before the sun goes down! Police are still investigating the site where the private plane went down last night. Stocks in the company have gone down for the third straight week in a row.* **2.** To occur, happen, or unfold, as of an event or action. *We need to figure out what went down here before we can press any charges.* **3.** To be accepted, tolerated, or acknowledged. *I don't think my business proposal went down too well with the board members. How do you think the news will go down with your parents?* **4.** vulgar slang To perform oral sex.

go down (a/the) road To act, behave, or do things in a particular way or manner. *Everyone fears Stephen is going down the road to alcoholism just as his father did.*

go down on (someone) vulgar slang To perform oral sex on someone.

go down the drain To fail; to be ruined or destroyed; to be squandered or wastefully discarded. *My father's company is now going down the drain because of the incompetent new CEO. All of our savings have gone down the drain ever since Jack had his little gambling spree in Las Vegas.*

go down the pan To fail; to be ruined or destroyed; to be squandered or wastefully discarded. Primarily heard in UK. *My father's company is now going down the pan because of the incompetent new CEO. All of our savings have gone down the pan ever since Jack had his little gambling spree in Las Vegas.*

go down the pan To fail or be completely and irreversibly wasted, lost, or destroyed. Primarily heard in UK. *In an instant, we saw all our hopes for our business go down the pan.*

go down the rabbit hole To enter into a situation or begin a process or journey that is particularly strange, problematic, difficult, complex, or chaotic, especially one that becomes increasingly so as it develops or unfolds.

(An allusion to *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll.) *Owning your own business is a huge responsibility that not everyone is prepared for. Are you sure you're ready to go down the rabbit hole? I've stayed away from drugs and alcohol since coming to college. I have an addictive personality, so I decided to just avoid going down that rabbit hole altogether. Overhauling the current tax legislation is a rabbit hole I don't think this administration should go down at this point.*

go down the toilet To fail; to be ruined or destroyed; to be squandered or wastefully discarded. *My father's company is now going down the toilet because of the incompetent new CEO. All of our savings have gone down the toilet ever since Jack had his little gambling spree in Las Vegas.*

go downtown **1.** Literally, to go to the central part of a city. *Let's have a few drinks at home first; we can go downtown later on.* **2.** To go to prison; to be arrested. *John went downtown after being caught drunk driving.* **3.** vulgar slang To perform oral sex.

go for a horizontal jog To engage in sexual intercourse. *My brother spends his weekends cruising the bars around town in hopes of going for a horizontal jog.*

go for a song To be sold for a very (and perhaps surprisingly) low price. *Wow, I can't believe they let so many things at their yard sale go for a song. I would have marked up the prices a bit.*

go for a spin (to some place) To go for a brief, leisurely drive (to some place). *Hey Noah, fancy going for a spin to the grocery store with me? Jenny just got a new car for her birthday, so I think we're going to go for a spin after school.*

go for it To put forth the necessary effort or energy to do or pursue something, especially in the face of any doubt or trepidation. Often used as words of encouragement. *Sam: "I'm thinking of asking Dave out on a date, but what if he says no?" Mike: "Just go for it, dude! You'll never know unless you ask!" I knew I wouldn't win the marathon, but I still went for it with everything I had.*

go for (someone) **1.** To physically attack someone with great ferocity or hostility. *Watch out for that bull in the back field—he'll go for you if you get too close. John went for the burglar with a knife to defend his family.* **2.** To criticize, berate, or verbally harass someone at length and/or with great

intensity. *The foreign ambassador went for the president at the international summit, demanding an explanation for the recent espionage allegations.* **3.** To like or be attracted to someone romantically or sexually. *He's not really my type—I don't usually go for guys with blonde hair. I tend to go for bookish girls who would rather read a book than stay out all night at a club.*

go for (the) gold To pursue or attempt to achieve the very best possible outcome or reward from some activity, task, or endeavor. A reference to winning a gold medal at a competition, especially for athletics. *You have to go for the gold in every aspect of your business if you want to be successful.* *John: "I'm off to compete in the pie-eating contest." Doug: "Go for gold!"*

go for the throat To engage in an aggressive attack against someone without holding back or showing any mercy; to attack the most vulnerable part of someone. The phrase is usually (though not always) understood as referring to a non-physical attack. Similar to the phrase "go for the jugular." *This is politics, and the candidates aren't going to play nice during the debate—they're going to go for the throat any chance they get. If you tangle with him, don't expect a fair fight—he'll go for the throat.*

go from zero to hero To change an outcome, one's situation, or oneself from being particularly unsuccessful, negative, unfortunate, or unpopular to being especially successful, positive, fortunate, or popular. *After his parents won the lottery, John went from zero to hero in his high school overnight. With computer programming becoming an increasingly in-demand skill, many who might have been picked on in high school are now going from zeros to heroes.*

go full circle To return to the original position, situation, or attitude where things began, especially after a long or circuitous series of changes. *After dreaming of a career in politics as a young child, and then spending her college years as a staunch dissident of the government, Carrie has gone full circle and now serves as her state's representative in Congress. At the novel's end, the character's journey goes full circle to the childhood home where everything started to go wrong.*

go full circle To return to the original or a similar position, situation, or circumstance where one or something started. *After the banking sector brought on the economic collapse through lack of federal oversight, things seem to be going full circle as politicians begin to call for deregulation of the*

industry once again. *I used to work in various kitchens during college to support myself, but now I've gone full circle and am the head chef of my own restaurant.*

go full-tilt boogie See [full-tilt boogie](#).

go Galt To reduce, restrict, or cease one's work or productivity as a means of social protest against increased marginal tax rates, limits on tax deductions, or the use of tax income for purposes one finds morally objectionable. Taken from the name John Galt, a character in Ayn Rand's novel *Atlas Shrugged*. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *Living abroad, I only have to pay U.S. taxes if my income exceeds \$95,000 a year, so I'll just go Galt if I ever come close to earning that amount.*

go gathering orange blossoms To look for a wife. The phrase refers to the frequent use of orange blossoms as wedding decorations symbolizing the bride's innocence. *I'm quite certain that Sir Andrew went to town to go gathering orange blossoms, so we'd best get ready for a wedding!*

go-getter A highly motivated and ambitious person. *We want interns who are go-getters, not timid kids who need to be told what to do.*

go halvesies slang To share something, especially the cost of something, in equal proportion between two people. *You wanna go halvesies on the bill? I don't feel like cooking tonight, let's go halvesies on a pizza instead.*

go halves To share the cost of something equally between two people. *We each had about the same amount to eat and drink, so let's go halves on the bill. I'm pretty broke, but I'll go halves with you on a bottle of wine.*

go hammer and tongs See [go at it hammer and tongs](#).

go hang yourself Used as a rude imperative to indicate one's disapproval, apathy, or disdain regarding someone's words, thoughts, or actions. *If you really think it's your prerogative to tell me how to run my business, then you can go hang yourself for all I care. She can go hang herself if she thinks I'm going to come into work on a Saturday.*

go hard or go home slang If you don't put forth effort, then you might as well stop trying. *This is a tough team we're playing today, so you need to go hard or go home, rookies! My motto to keep me motivated at the gym is "go hard or go home."*

go hard with (someone) To be difficult, problematic, or unpleasant

for someone; to be to someone's disadvantage, harm, or misfortune. *It will go hard with John if he doesn't realize that Tommy is only interested in him for his money. It's going to go hard with us if the government cuts our funding any further.*

go her one better See [go you one better](#).

go her own way See [go \(one's\) \(own\) way](#).

go her way See [go \(someone's\) way](#).

go in for (something) **1.** To enjoy or be enthusiastic about something. *Thank you for the invitation, but I don't really go in for experimental jazz.* **2.** To engage or participate in something. *I went in for cycling to work at the beginning of the summer, and I haven't been healthier!* **3.** To enter into a competition. *She's decided to go in for an ultramarathon this spring.*

go in search of the golden fleece To embark on an adventure, often one that is very dangerous or challenging. In Greek mythology, Jason and the Argonauts went on a quest to find the golden fleece of a winged ram. *The fossil hunters' descent into the cave is like the modern version of going in search of the golden fleece!*

go in with good cards To undertake something with the anticipation of success for good reason (like a player in a card game who has been dealt a favorable hand of cards). Primarily heard in US, UK. *I studied so hard for this exam that I feel like I'm going in with good cards for once. Since I play golf with the CEO, I feel like I'm going in with good cards for this interview.*

go in with (someone) To join or combine with a person or group of people to form a partnership or union. *She went in with her childhood friend to open an organic bakery in their neighborhood. The Democrats and the Republicans have gone in with one another to form a truly bipartisan bill.*

go into (one's) shell **1.** To retreat into one's mind or otherwise isolate oneself so as to avoid undesirable thoughts, situations, or interactions with people. *After getting mugged I went into my shell and didn't speak to anyone for nearly a week. I'm not good around large groups of people; I usually just go into my shell and wait until I can be alone. Don't go into your shell because you don't want an argument—talk to me and let's discuss the problem!* **2.** To act in a reserved and/or defensive manner. *The team went into their shells after half time, trying to protect a slim lead. The senator went into*



his shell when reporters tried to question him about allegations of tax fraud.

go light on (someone) To treat someone delicately, gently, or leniently; to not criticize, punish, or berate someone too harshly. *Ah, go light on Bill, it's only his first day in the office.*

go light on (something) To use something sparingly; to use less of something than normal. *I hope this horror movie goes light on the gore. I'll have the salad, but please go light on the dressing.*

go like lightning To move very quickly. *Come on, kids, go like lightning out to the car, or else we're going to be late!*

go like the wind To move very quickly. *Come on, kids, go like the wind out to the car, or else we're going to be late!*

go mad 1. To become insane or mentally unstable. *All this noise in the house, day in, day out—I feel like I'm going mad! She went mad at the sight of her child lying lifeless on the cot.* **2.** To do something excessive or without hesitation or restraint. *I decided to go mad and buy both the dresses I liked.* *A: "Do you mind if I eat your leftover pizza?" B: "Sure, go mad."* **3.** To reach an extreme or excessive level or degree. *The president's new cabinet is made up entirely of her old friends and former classmates—it's cronyism gone mad!*

go missing To disappear. *My diamond earrings have gone missing, and I want the entire staff to be interrogated!* *A: "How did the dog go missing?" B: "I don't know, he must have wiggled under the fence in the backyard."*

go moggy 1. To become insane, mentally imbalanced, or crazed. Primarily heard in South Africa. *I'm going moggy living in this shack all by myself!* **2.** To become extremely excited or enthusiastic (about something). Primarily heard in South Africa. *I've never understood that pop star's popularity, but kids just go moggy over her music.* **3.** To act or do something wildly, excessively, and/or without restraint. Primarily heard in South Africa. *We all went a bit moggy after our exams, hitting the bars every night for a week straight.*

go nuclear 1. To use nuclear weapons, as by the military, often considered a last resort. *I'm worried about the repercussions if our military officials decide to go nuclear.* **2.** In the US Senate, to pursue a course of action allowing the majority party to end filibustering with a simple majority,

rather than the usually required supermajority of 60%. *Senators could, however, go nuclear and approve this nomination.* **3.** To behave wildly. *You only turn 21 once, so I plan to go nuclear at my birthday party this weekend!* **4.** To aggressively express one's anger. *When mom finds out you dented her brand-new car, she's going to go nuclear!* **5.** To take drastic action. *Whoa, calling the CEO about this issue is definitely going nuclear—let's see what we can do on our own first.*

go off at score 1. To have an enthusiastic or spirited start to something. *The musician went off at score, launching immediately into a madcap arrangement of tunes that got the audience right out of their seats.* **2.** To speak or behave in an impetuous and impulsive manner. *I very nearly went off at score to tell her how ignorant such a viewpoint is, but I decided to hold my tongue instead.*

go off in a huff To leave in an angry, belligerent, or vexed mood. *Don't go off in a huff like that, it was only a joke! Mary went off in a huff after her wife criticized her cooking.*

go off-kilter 1. To become out of equilibrium; to become not straight, level, or aligned properly; to be in a state of chaos or confusion. *Between my divorce, the death of my best friend, and the financial troubles at work, it seems like everything in my life has gone off-kilter recently. The economies of nearly every country in the world went off-kilter after the economic collapse.* **2.** To stop working correctly or properly; to be or become out of order; to be out of w(h)ack. *It sounds like your car's engine has gone a bit off-kilter. I'd recommend taking it to a mechanic before you go for any long drives.*

go off (one's) dot To become crazy or mentally unsound; to become extremely foolish or foolhardy. *I'm going to go off my dot if I have to hear that blasted song once more! I think Jane's grandmother has gone off her dot lately. You must have gone off your dot if you think that's a good idea!*

go off (one's) rocker To become crazy or mentally unsound; to become extremely foolish or foolhardy. *I'm going to go off my rocker if I have to hear that blasted song once more! I think Jane's grandmother has gone off her rocker lately. You must have gone off your rocker if you think that's a good idea!*

go off the handle To become uncontrollably angry; to lose control of one's temper. *It's a shame the candidate allowed himself to go off the handle*

like that during the debate, as it undermines a lot of the really solid arguments he'd been making up to that point. I know you're upset, but there's no point going off the handle like that. It was just an honest mistake.

go off the rails **1.** To go into a state of chaos, dysfunction, or disorder. *Our project has started going off the rails ever since the manager up and quit last month.* **2.** To become crazy, eccentric, or mentally unhinged; to begin acting in an uncontrollable, inappropriate and/or socially unacceptable manner. *My youngest son started going off the rails shortly after getting into drugs in high school.*

go off the reservation **1.** To go or act outside the bounds of control, propriety, or acceptance of a given group. The phrase refers to the forced relocation of Native Americans to Indian reservations in the United States. Because of this origin, the phrase can be considered offensive or inappropriate. *The youths in this area are going off the reservation more and more these days, disregarding anything they see as a form of authority.* **2.** To think or act differently or contrary to the accepted norm. *The vice president seems to have gone off the reservation regarding his views on legalizing marijuana.*

go on a rampage To cause great destruction, disruption, or chaos; to behave very violently or aggressively. *Many ancient artifacts were destroyed while enemy forces went on a rampage in the holy city. Our teacher was going on a rampage this morning, screaming at the kids for their misbehavior.*

go on and on To continue or speak for a tedious or exasperating length of time. *That film was so stupid, and it just went on and on—I thought it would never be over! My date kept going on and on about his charity work, never even asking what I do for a living.*

go on relief To begin receiving assistance, financial or otherwise, from publicly or privately funded agencies (most often government-run) due to a certain level of hardship, poverty, or need. *It was really disheartening having to go on relief these past six months, but it was the only thing that kept our family afloat after I lost my job. Some people are very critical of those who have gone on relief for extended periods of time.*

go on relief To begin receiving assistance, financial or otherwise, from publicly or privately funded agencies (usually run by the government) due to

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go on the dole To begin receiving assistance, financial or otherwise, from publicly or privately funded agencies (usually run by the government) due to a certain level of hardship, poverty, or need. *It was really disheartening having to go on the dole these past six months, but it was the only thing that kept our family afloat after I lost my job. Some people are very critical of those who have gone on the dole for extended periods of time.*

go on the game To begin engaging in prostitution; to have or begin having sex for money. (Used especially in reference to women.) *A large number of prostitutes go on the game from a young age as the victims of sex trafficking.*

go on the offensive To begin attacking someone or adopting an aggressive attitude or position as a means of gaining a pre-emptive advantage. *If you don't go on the offensive as soon as the debate starts, your opponent is going to walk all over you! Every time Mike and I start to fight, he immediately goes on the offensive and won't listen to my side of things.*

go on the rampage To cause great destruction, disruption, or chaos; to behave very violently or aggressively. *Many ancient artifacts were destroyed while enemy forces went on the rampage in the holy city. Our teacher was going on the rampage this morning, screaming at the kids for their misbehavior.*

go on the rocks To suffer financial hardship, often suddenly. *I went on the rocks pretty soon after I lost my job. You need to make sound financial decisions to keep your company from going on the rocks.*

go on the sick list To become ill or unwell; to become indisposed due to poor health. *Jim went on the sick list over a month ago. If he doesn't get better soon, we're going to have to replace him!*

go on tick To purchase something on credit. "Tick" is short for "ticket," a note that showed one's debt (although this practice is less common today). Primarily heard in UK. *I had to go on tick for a bunch of last-minute purchases because I've already spent so much on this trip! Well, if you need groceries and won't get paid for another week, just go on tick.*

go on welfare To begin receiving assistance, financial or otherwise, from publicly or privately funded agencies (usually run by the government) due to a certain level of hardship, poverty, or need. *It was really disheartening having to go on welfare these past six months, but it was the only thing that kept our family afloat after I lost my job. Some people are very critical of those who have gone on welfare for extended periods of time.*

go one-on-one with (someone) In some form of competition, especially sports, to compete directly against an individual person (even in a team sport). *I'm glad I put in extra time at the gym this week because the coach has me going one-on-one with the biggest player on their team! The candidate who was trailing in the polls tried to go one on one with the frontrunner during the debate by ignoring the other politicians on stage.*

go (one's) (own) way To proceed, act, or do things in a direction or manner as one so chooses or desires, especially as is distinct, separate, or different from that of others. *After meeting resistance with her partner about how the business should be run, she decided to go her way and open her own law firm. Tom doesn't have a huge amount of friends, but I've never worried about him; he just likes to go his own way in life, and that's fine by me.*

go online 1. To become active or begin operating. *Hundreds of new factories are slated to go online over the next year, which will bring a much-needed boost to the economy.* 2. To log onto and use the Internet. *I'm going online to see what movies are showing tonight.*

go out for (something) 1. To try to become a participant in something; to try out for something. *I hear Tim's going out for the football team this year!* 2. To go some place to eat a particular kind of food. *I don't feel like cooking, let's go out for Chinese tonight instead.*

go out like a light To fall asleep quickly. *I didn't even hear you come in last night—I was so tired that I went out like a light as soon as my head hit the pillow.*

go out of kilter 1. To be or become out of equilibrium; to become not straight, level, or aligned properly; to be in a state of chaos or confusion. *Between my divorce, the death of my best friend, and the financial troubles at work, it seems like everything in my life has gone out of kilter recently. The economies of nearly every country in the world went out of kilter after the economic collapse.* 2. To stop working correctly or properly; to be or become

out of order; to be out of w(h)ack. *It sounds like your car's engine has gone a bit out of kilter. I'd recommend taking it to a mechanic before you go for any long drives.*

go out of (one's) mind 1. To become wild, irrational, senseless, or insane. *She went out of her mind at the sight of her child lying lifeless on the cot. All this noise in the house, day in, day out—I feel like I'm going out of my mind!* 2. To become extremely excited or enthusiastic (about something). *I've never understood that pop star's popularity, but kids just go out of their minds for her music.*

go out on a high note To finish, complete, or leave (something) at a successful, impressive, or climactic point. *I know we've had quite a few losses this season, but let's win this last game and go out on a high note! After winning the Oscar, he decided to go out on a high note.*

go out on the tiles To go to bars, clubs, parties, etc., and have an enjoyable time, often to the point of excess. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *When I was in university, I would go out on the tiles nearly every night. There's nothing I enjoy more than getting together with my friends on a Friday and going out on the tiles!*

go out with a bang To finish or cease doing something in a spectacular, great, or exciting manner. *He really went out with a bang, scoring a touchdown at the very last second of the game! The whole point of celebrating New Year's Eve is so the previous year can go out with a bang!*

go (out) with (someone) To date someone. A: *"I hear that Kevin is going out with Katie—is that true?"* B: *"Yeah, they're a couple now." I'm going with Brad, so you better stop flirting with him!*

go out with the boys To go and socialize somewhere with a group of exclusively male friends. *I love my girlfriend and all, but sometimes, I just need to go out with the boys!*

go out with the girls To go and socialize somewhere with a group of exclusively female friends. *I love my boyfriend and all, but sometimes, I just need to go out with the girls!*

go over the hills and far away To go to some distant, remote point or location. *The foreign military that came in to quash the dictatorship have all gone over the hills and far away, leaving behind a country with little*

semblance of political order or stability. Each day, the men all go over the hills and far away to find work, meaning the women must raise the children and mind the homes on their own.

go play in (the) traffic Go away and leave me alone! What you are doing or saying is really irritating! *Jenny: "The experiment might work better if you actually knew what you were supposed to be mixing together." Steve: "You know what, Jenny? Why don't you go play in traffic?"*

go potty **1.** To become irrational, crazy, eccentric, or addlebrained. Primarily heard in UK. *I'll end up going potty if I have to work in this cubicle for one more day!* **2.** To become very excited or enthusiastic (about something). Primarily heard in UK. *People are going potty for the new art exhibit.* **3.** To urinate; typically said of, to, or by young children. *My three-year-old has started going potty all by herself!*

go pound salt To go and engage in pointless, menial efforts or labor. Used as an imperative to express disdain, contempt, or dismissal. A variant of the more common expression "go pound sand." *I can't believe Sam told his teacher to go pound salt. Where does that kid get such attitude? Charles, why don't you go pound salt instead of coming around here hassling me about my business?*

go pound sand To go and engage in pointless, menial efforts or labor. Used as an imperative to express disdain, contempt, or dismissal. *I can't believe Sam told his teacher to go pound sand. Where does that kid get such attitude? Charles, why don't you go pound sand instead of coming around here hassling me about my business?*

go red **1.** To redden in the face (blush), due to embarrassment, anger, or romantic stimulation. *She went red when her crush came up and talked to her. He hates the president so much that he goes completely red if you bring up the recent election.* **2.** Of skin, to become burned by the sun. *I forgot to wear a wide-brimmed hat on the hike, and my whole head went red. If I don't put on sunscreen before a day at the beach, I go completely red.* **3.** Of a US state, county, district, or Congressional seat, to have the majority of people vote for a Republican candidate in a given election. *With Ohio having gone red, the Republicans look poised to reclaim the presidency.*

go right To happen or unfold successfully, correctly, and/or fortuitously. *Nothing has gone right for Tom since his marriage to Anthony fell apart. If*

our plan goes right, we'll see a huge bump in sales by the end of the year.

go (right) through (one) like a dose of salts Of food, drink, or medicine, to be rapidly excreted from the body (as urine or feces) very soon after being ingested. A reference to the use of Epsom salts as a laxative. *I try not to drink more than one cup of coffee, it just goes right through me like a dose of salts! I love Indian food, but I eat it so infrequently that when I do, it goes through me like a dose of salts.*

go round in circles See [go \(a\)round in circles](#).

go scot-free To escape punishment for a crime or wrongdoing; to be acquitted of charges for a crime. *Mark's wealthy senator uncle influenced the jury, and he ended up going scot-free. My younger sister caused endless trouble as a child, but because she was the baby of the house, she usually went scot-free.*

go soak your head A dismissive phrase said to someone who the speaker is frustrated or annoyed with. A: *"And how many car accidents have you gotten into?"* B: *"Oh, go soak your head—I'm a great driver!"*

go soft To become overly lenient, easily manipulated, or apathetic; to lose strength or determination. *You used to be the toughest sheriff this town has ever had, but you've gone soft in your old age.*

go soft on (someone) To treat someone delicately, gently, or leniently; to not criticize, punish, or berate someone too harshly. *Ah, go soft on Bill—it's his first day in the office. You go too soft on those kids. They need more discipline or they'll get out of control!*

go (someone's) way **1.** Literally, to move or travel in the same direction as someone else. *I'm looking for a ride to Denver—are you going my way?* **2.** To proceed or unfold in a manner that is beneficial to someone or is in line with their plans or desires. *If the court's decision goes our way, we can expect a payout of nearly \$2 million. First, my car breaks down, then I lose the keys to my apartment—nothing's going my way today!*

go stir-crazy To become acutely anxious, restless, irritable, irrational, and/or depressed from remaining for too long in an unstimulating, confined, and/or isolated environment. "Stir" in this usage is a slang word for prison. *We thought taking our family vacation in a tiny cottage out in the country would be a nice break from city life, but we all went a bit stir-crazy after a*

few days. The doctor said I need to remain in bed as much as possible, but I'll go stir-crazy if I can't get out of the house at least once a day!

go strong To proceed energetically or successfully. *Grandpa is such an inspiration—he's 92 and still going strong with a more active social life than I have! Our marketing campaign is going strong this quarter, so I'm expecting a big bump in sales.*

(go) suck a egg An expression of anger, scorn, or disdain. Primarily heard in US, Canada. *Charles: "You never do any chores around the house, you just leave them for the rest of us!" Sam: "Oh, go suck a egg, Charles! I don't have to listen to your crap." I can't believe you told your teacher to suck a egg after she yelled at you.*

(go) suck a lemon An expression of anger, scorn, or disdain. Primarily heard in US, Canada. *Charles: "You never do any chores around the house, you just leave them for the rest of us!" Sam: "Oh, go suck a lemon, Charles! I don't have to listen to your crap." I can't believe you told your teacher to suck a lemon after she yelled at you.*

(Go) tell it/that to Sweeney! dated A scornful or incredulous response to a story or statement that one does not believe or finds ridiculous. *Chester: "You know, my dad used to play basketball with the President when they were both kids." Dave: "Ah, go tell it to Sweeney, Chester! Why do you tell such fibs?" A: "I bet you I could eat 20 hot dogs in less than half an hour!" B: "Tell that to Sweeney, pal!"*

(go) tell it/that to the marines! A scornful or incredulous response to a story or statement that one does not believe or finds ridiculous. *A: "You know, my dad used to play basketball with the president when they were both kids." B: "Ah, go tell it to the marines! Why do you tell such fibs?" A: "I bet you I could eat 20 hot dogs in less than half an hour!" B: "Tell that to the marines, pal!"*

go the way of (something) To follow the pattern seen with something else. It is most commonly used in phrases that emphasize decay and death, such as "go the way of the dinosaurs" and "go the way of all flesh." *What am I going to do with my cassette collection now that cassette tapes have gone the way of the dinosaurs? You keep smoking like that and you'll soon go the way of the dodo.*

go the way of the dinosaur(s) To become extinct, obsolete, old-

fashioned, or no longer in common use. *If we don't get climate change under control, we're going to see a number of animal species go the way of the dinosaurs. With the sudden ubiquity of smartphones, it seemed like wristwatches might be going the way of the dinosaur. Thankfully, such ignorant views about interracial relationships have largely gone the way of the dinosaurs.*

go their own way See [go \(one's\) \(own\) way](#).

go their way See [go \(someone's\) way](#).

go them one better See [go you one better](#).

go through a lean patch To experience or be in the midst of a period of failure, decline, or poor performance or results. *Her business has been going through a bit of a lean patch lately. If things don't pick up soon, she might have to close shop. Though the team has gone through a lean patch in recent years, they still have a very devoted fanbase.*

go through a phase To experience or be in the midst of a temporary period of change, development, or fluctuation. *I went through a phase of being obsessed with superhero movies this summer. Timothy has been really aggressive and demanding lately, but I think he's just going through a phase.*

go through a rough patch To experience or be in the midst of a period of trouble, difficulty, or hardship. *Her business has been going through a bit of a rough patch lately. If things don't pick up soon, she might have to close shop. Our marriage went through a rough patch after Frank lost his job, but now, we love each other more than ever.*

go through (something) with a fine-tooth comb To scrutinize something; to look at something very carefully. *We need to go through these files with a fine-tooth comb to find that missing paperwork. Make sure to go through your thesis with a fine-tooth comb before you hand it in—you don't want your advisors wading through proofreading errors, do you?*

go through-stitch To follow through or finish something. *My brother has a hard time sticking with the things he starts, but he seems to enjoy football—maybe he'll go through-stitch with it.*

go tits up 1. mildly vulgar slang To break or malfunction; to die, fall apart, or cease to work. (A play on the phrase "go belly up." "Tits up" is

sometimes hyphenated.) *Sorry, Mark, I'd love to give you a lift to the airport but my car's gone tits up on me again. It looks like our co-op might be going tits-up if we aren't granted a license for our communal work premises.* **2.** mildly vulgar slang By extension, to have a poor, undesired, or ruinous outcome; to fail completely or not come together at all. *We were all set to have our picnic on Saturday, but the weather went tits up and we had to cancel at the last minute. The merger deal between the two companies went tits-up when it came to light that one of the CEOs had been dodging tax obligations for several years.*

go to any length(s) To do anything necessary to accomplish or attain something. *I will go to any length to get an A in this class, professor—I'll clean your office, wash your car, anything! Go to any lengths you need to, just get me a reservation for this Saturday night!*

go to Canossa To become or make oneself humble; to do a penance or seek absolution for some wrong. A reference to Canossa Castle in Emilia Romagna, Italy, where Emperor Henry IV humbled himself before Pope Gregory VII in 1077 to have his excommunication lifted. *After the company completely bungled the contract, the CEO himself went to Canossa in an attempt to pacify the clients. Looks like we'll have to go to Canossa and ask the IT department to fix our computers again.*

go to (great) pains to (do something) To put forth a significant amount of time, energy, and effort to do or accomplish something. *I went to great pains to get this party organized, so don't make some lame excuse about not coming! I always go to pains to make sure my students understand the material in a comprehensive manner.*

go to heaven in a wheelbarrow To go to hell. The phrase might allude to the image of the devil pushing a person in a wheelbarrow. *This whole project is a disaster—it's all gone to heaven in a wheelbarrow.*

go to hell in a handcart To be in an extremely and increasingly bad or ruinous condition; to be on the inevitable path to utter failure or ruin. *With this new president in office, our country is going to go to hell in a handcart! After our funding was cut, our project went to hell in a handcart.*

go to it To begin a task, endeavor, job, etc., promptly and vigorously. *Go to it, then, and make sure you have the report finished before lunch! The team went to it at once, hoping to have preliminary results ready in a fortnight.*

go to Jericho Go away. *Oh, go to Jericho, you're annoying me here!*

go to (one's) glory euphemism To die. *I'm so sorry to be the one to tell you this, but Grandma went to her glory this morning.*

go to (one's) grave To die. *I'm just worried that you'll go to your grave angry at your sister.*

go to rack and ruin To fall into severe or total decay, degradation, or ruination, as from disuse or lack of upkeep. ("Rack" here is a variant spelling of "wrack," a now-archaic word meaning wreckage or destruction.) *It greatly pains me that my grandfather's estate has been left to go to rack and ruin. If only we'd been able to afford for someone to look after it for all these years. The neighbor's property has really gone to rack and ruin lately. I'm thinking about filing a complaint with the neighborhood association!*

go to the mattresses To enter into or prepare for a lengthy war, battle, or conflict; to adopt a combative or warlike position. While the true origin is uncertain, the phrase was popularized in English by *The Godfather* novel and films, where it referred to warring mafia families housing their soldiers in small, secure apartments to await orders. *While Republicans have shown some flexibility over other contentious issues, it looks as though they're ready to go to the mattresses over the issue of gun control. We'll go to the mattresses if that's what it takes to defend ourselves!*

go to the world obsolete To get married. The phrase was once used to highlight the difference between married and religious life. A: *"I must inform you that Lady Mary and Lord Michael have gone to the world."* B: *"And I was not invited to their nuptials?"*

go to wrack and ruin To fall into severe or total decay, degradation, or ruination, as from disuse or lack of upkeep. ("Wrack," a now-archaic word meaning wreckage or destruction, is also often spelled "rack.") *It greatly pains me that my grandfather's estate has been left to go to wrack and ruin. If only we'd been able to afford for someone to look after it all these years. The neighbor's property has really gone to wrack and ruin lately. I'm thinking about filing a complaint with the neighborhood association!*

go to! **1.** archaic An exclamation of surprise, disbelief, or protest. *Go to, my friend! Whence shall we find such a thing at this hour? Go to, you ask far more than I am able to pay!* **2.** archaic An imperative to begin or set forth. *Go*

to and deliver my message to the servants of this land.

go two-forty To move very quickly; to race. The phrase refers to a horse racing record of a mile completed in two minutes and 40 seconds. *I need to start going two-forty through this paperwork if I want to have it done by the deadline.*

go under the hammer To be put up for or sold at auction. *The banker's family estate had to go under the hammer to cover some of his mounting debt.*

go up in the world To elevate or improve one's social, political, and/or financial position in life; to become more successful than one was before. *You're only going to truly go up in the world if you make a point of rubbing elbows with those of a higher social standing. It's unsurprising how quickly Sarah has gone up in the world—her tenacity and determination are matched only by her intelligence and talent. The Robinsons really went up in the world after they won the lottery.*

go upstairs 1. Literally, to climb steps to reach a higher level of a building. A: "Where's Susie?" B: "Oh, she went upstairs to bed." *When you go upstairs, can you take the laundry basket with you?* 2. To go to someone higher in a hierarchy, like one's boss, to seek their authority for a decision or other purpose. *I'd go upstairs with that request—we don't have the authority to sign off on something like that.*

go viral To quickly and widely circulate on the Internet, as of a video, picture, or post. *I can't believe that video of our puppy lounging on a pool float went viral!*

go weak at the knees To become unsteady or flustered due to a strong emotional reaction to someone or something. *Hearing the news of my father's sudden death, I went weak at the knees and could barely remain standing. Just thinking about Samantha makes me go weak at the knees.*

go weak in the knees To become unsteady or flustered due to having a strong emotional reaction to someone or something. *Hearing the news of my father's sudden death, I went weak in the knees and could barely remain standing. Just thinking about Samantha makes me go weak in the knees.*

go wide 1. Of the eyes, to open considerably more, often in surprise. *My eyes went wide when I got my credit card bill and saw just how much I'm in*

debt. I felt my eyes go wide when Callie said that she had dumped her boyfriend. **2.** To miss the mark. Often used in sports. *My shot went wide of the net just as time expired, and, with that, we had our first loss of the season.*

go with See [go \(out\) with \(someone\)](#).

go without saying To be unambiguous, perfectly clear, or self-evident; to be already acknowledged, established, or accepted. *This should go without saying, but you will receive an automatic zero if you are caught cheating on the exam.*

go you one better I can or will outdo what you just said or did, or I am going to suggest something that surpasses it (referring to another person's efforts or accomplishments). *You might be proud of yourself for getting a trophy, but I can go you one better—I won first place! Letting everyone out early is good idea, but I'll go you one better—let's give them the day off!*

go your own way See [go \(one's\) \(own\) way](#).

go your way See [go \(someone's\) way](#).

goals slang Something that one aspires to be or have. Despite "goals" being plural, it is often used with singular subjects. *Her sleek, shiny hair is just goals. My mom and her college friends are seriously goals—they've been friends for 25 years!*

God See [\(oh\) \(my\) God!](#)

God almighty! An exclamation of surprise, shock, frustration, exasperation, anger, or annoyance. *God almighty! If we'd stopped the car one second later that train would have hit us! I know you've had a long day at work, but God almighty, is it too much to ask for you to take out the trash? God almighty, it's hot as the dickens out here!*

(God) bless you **1.** An phrase wishing good health to someone who has just sneezed. *God bless you! Do you need a tissue?* **2.** An expression of one's appreciation for another person. "God" is not usually mentioned in this usage. *A: "Here, I got coffee for you too." B: "Oh, bless you! I'm so tired today."*

God bless your pointy little head See [bless your pointy little head](#).

God forfend A phrase invoking God's protection to keep something from happening. Similar to the more common phrase "God forbid." *God forfend I*



get another ticket on my parents' car. I'll be grounded for a month!

God-given right A special privilege or authority bestowed upon someone by a higher power. *Many feel that the law prohibits something that is their God-given right.*

God helps those who help themselves God will assist people who are already putting forth effort toward something without relying solely on divine intervention. A: *"I'm really praying hard for an A on my exam."* B: *"You better start studying. God helps those who help themselves."*

God is in the detail(s) Any action or plan one undertakes should be done carefully and pragmatically; attention to small details will ultimately yield the greatest results. *Remember that God is in the detail, so make sure everything is in order before you begin.*

God knows 1. No one knows (except for God). *God knows how long it will take for my application to be processed.* A: *"How do you think you did on your exam?"* B: *"God knows!"* 2. It is absolutely true, certain, or definite that; it is obvious or clear that. *God knows I need to do well on this test or I can kiss my scholarship goodbye!*

God sends meat and the devil sends cooks God provides positive and useful things, but the devil only provides inferior things. Why "cooks" has a negative connotation is not clear; it's possible the cooks represent the notion of human folly corrupting God's perfect offerings (i.e. preparing the meat poorly and ruining it). *I'm used to taking the good with the bad. After all, God sends meat and the devil sends cooks, right?*

God willing and the creek don't rise rural If all goes as it should; if everything goes well. *We've had a lot of delays, but God willing and the creek don't rise, we should have the house finished before winter.* A: *"Do you reckon we'll have enough from this harvest to make ends meet?"* B: *"God willing and the creek don't rise."*

God works in mysterious ways A phrase acknowledging one's lack of control over a situation, especially if something strange or unexpected has happened, along with the possibility that some good may come from it. A: *"How are you doing since getting rejected from your dream school?"* B: *"Well, I'm trying to keep in mind that God works in mysterious ways, and I hope some good will come out of all of this."* *As Helen grieves the loss of her husband, I just keep reminding her that God works in mysterious ways.*

God's gift to man 1. Something or someone that is considered a benefit to all of mankind. *Artistic expression is truly God's gift to man. Jonathan has such an inflated ego, like he's God's gift to man or something.* **2.** Someone who is or is considered to be extremely attractive and/or irresistible to men. *Walking down the red carpet in a stunning black dress, she looked like God's gift to man.*

God's gift to mankind 1. Something or someone that is considered a benefit to all of mankind. *Artistic expression is truly God's gift to mankind. Jonathan has such an inflated ego, like he's God's gift to mankind or something.* **2.** Someone who is or is considered to be extremely attractive and/or irresistible to men. *Walking down the red carpet in a stunning black dress, she looked like God's gift to mankind.*

God's gift to women A humorous or derisive phrase used to describe a man who sees himself as very attractive and appealing to women. *Mark may think that he's God's gift to women, but I know that he hasn't been on a date in months! I can't stand these arrogant guys who keep coming up to me and acting like they're God's gift to women!*

God's green earth The entire planet; anywhere and everywhere. *Nowhere else on God's green earth will you find as good a deal as this!*

God's honest truth The absolute, unequivocal truth (i.e., as if spoken by God). *I'm sorry if such criticism offends you, but it's simply God's honest truth.*

God's honest truth The absolute, sincere, unadulterated truth. *I swear it wasn't me who broke the lamp, God's honest truth! I know I agreed to marry her, but the God's honest truth is that I'm not sure I really love her.*

going away 1. Traveling to a different place, usually on a vacation. *I'm going away next week, so I'll be out of the office.* **2.** adverb By a large margin. Used to describe winning by a large amount in sports or other competitions. *I missed the game last night, but I hear we put up a lot of points and won going away!*

a going concern A business, enterprise, or activity that has done well thus far and is expected to continue making a profit. *The odds weren't great setting up another café in town, but it has since become a going concern.*

the going thing The latest and most popular trend, fad, or fashion. *My*

son came home asking to have half his head shaved—apparently, that's the going thing these days!

gold digger A person who only pursues romantic relationships with wealthy partners for financial gain. *Scott's friends warned him that Tracy was a gold digger and was only interested in marrying him for his money.*

gold mine **1.** Literally, a mine where gold ore is found and excavated. Also written as "goldmine." *More than 500 workers have become trapped in a gold mine after a minor earthquake cause the mineshaft to collapse.* **2.** An enterprise, opportunity, or resource that is or has the potential to be extremely profitable. *The social networking site has since become a veritable gold mine, attracting millions of new users every month and generating staggering amounts of money from ad revenue. If we can secure the merger deal with the pharmaceutical giant in London, I'm sure it will prove to be a gold mine!* **3.** A person, place, or thing containing a plentiful amount of something valuable or desirable. *Who knew that my grandfather's attic would turn out to be a gold mine of priceless antiques? This database is a gold mine for anyone interested in medical research trials. Our professor is a gold mine of information about medieval French literature.*

gold-plate **1.** Literally, to coat something (usually a base metal) in a thin layer of gold. *I just don't understand why you would ever want—let alone need—to gold-plate your bathtub.* **2.** By extension, to incorporate unnecessary, superfluous, and/or overbearing refinements, additions, or embellishments into something. *Congress took what should have been a straightforward clean water initiative and gold-plated it into a cumbersome, overreaching, and wildly impractical mess of a bill. Knowing that the city council would be footing the bill, the architect tried to gold-plate the design for the new courthouse.*

gold-plated **1.** Literally, coated something in a thin layer of gold. *I just don't understand why you would ever want—let alone need—a gold-plated bathtub.* **2.** By extension, having or incorporating unnecessary, superfluous, and/or overbearing refinements, additions, or embellishments. *Congress took what should have been a straightforward clean water initiative and turned it into a cumbersome and wildly impractical gold-plated bill. The county council has been accused of wastefully using taxpayer money to create gold-plated infrastructure improvements to the city.*

gold standard **1.** Literally, a monetary standard where a currency's value is defined by an existing and fixed amount of gold. *There are many who believe that the country should return to the gold standard for a more secure means of issuing currency.* **2.** By extension, a well-established and widely accepted model or paradigm of excellence by which similar things are judged or measured. *Her research methodology in the late 1960s has since become the gold standard for drug trials today.*

golden age A period of or defined by outstanding excellence, quality, prosperity, or achievement. *This Halloween, we're having a marathon of all the monster movies from the golden age of cinema. Many people look back on the 1950s as some kind of golden age, completely ignoring or denying many of the deep-rooted social injustices that typified that time in America.*

golden boy Someone who is popular, admired, and successful. The term can imply that the individual's faults are overlooked. *Jake was the golden boy of the team, much to the chagrin of his teammates.*

golden duck In cricket, a batter's score of zero after being dismissed on the very first ball they face. *It's an embarrassing start for Egley, who leaves the pitch with a golden duck.*

golden goose A person, thing, or organization that is or has the potential to earn a lot of money for a long period of time. Taken from a folk tale of a goose that would lay a golden egg once a day, but was killed by its owner because he wanted all of its gold at once. *New carbon taxes have proved to be a golden goose for the government, providing a steady and much-needed source of revenue. College athletics, especially football, have always been a golden goose for universities, which earn significant sums from attendance at games and tournaments.*

golden handshake A large severance package given to an executive who leaves a company due to termination, corporate restructuring, or retirement. *The company's vice president received a \$500,000 golden handshake after being pressured to leave his position.*

a golden hello A sum of money paid to a new employee as a benefit for being recruited by a company. *He had such an impressive résumé that he was offered a sizeable golden hello for joining the company.*

a golden key can open any door Anything can be accomplished

with enough money. *Although the fancy hotel had been booked solid for months, Lori was able to reserve a room quite easily. A golden key can open any door.*

golden oldie A form of entertainment, especially a song, that was very popular in the past and is still enjoyed by many people. *I love listening to the golden oldies. It takes me back to a simpler time.*

golden parachute A large severance package given to an executive who is forced to leave a company due to a corporate merger or takeover. *Daniel refused to take the position unless the company added a golden parachute clause to his contract.*

golden rule The maxim that one should treat other people the way one would like to be treated, often expressed proverbially as "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." *My son wanted to steal the bike of a boy who stole his lunch money, so I told him that the only way to get along with people is to follow the golden rule.*

golden shower An act intended for sexual gratification in which someone is urinated upon by another person.

golden ticket A person, thing, quality, ability, or accomplishment that provides a reliable opportunity for great financial or personal success. *My programming experience is going to be my golden ticket out of this one-horse town. There was a time when a bachelor's degree was a golden ticket to finding a great career. These days, though, you need one to even get a job interview.*

golden touch The ability to earn a large amount of money or be very successful in any endeavor. From the Greek myth of King Midas, who was granted the ability to turn anything he touched into solid gold. *During the '80s, he owned half of Las Vegas, but in recent years, he seems to have lost his golden touch.*

golden years The years following one's retirement (generally after the age of 65). *After such a hectic career, I plan to spend my golden years gardening, reading, and living as tranquilly as possible.*

a goldfish bowl A place, situation, or environment in which one has little or no privacy. A reference to the (typically) spherical bowls in which pet fish are often kept, which can be seen into from all sides. *One of the prices of*

success for a pop star is having to live in a goldfish bowl under the scrutiny of the public eye. I feel like I'm in a goldfish bowl working at this new company, with all their security cameras posted everywhere.

golf widow A woman whose husband frequently absents himself from home so as to go and play golf. *I thought I would finally see more of John after his retirement, but I became a golf widow instead.*

gone moggy Having become completely broken, disorganized, or dysfunctional. Primarily heard in South Africa. *I think something's gone moggy with my computer—the screen keeps flashing on and off. The real estate market has gone completely moggy in recent years.*

goner A person or thing that is doomed or destined for failure. *If he jumps out of that plane and his parachute doesn't open, he's a goner. I'm a goner if my parents find out I dented the car.*

gong (one) To abruptly dismiss or stop someone who is in the middle of something. The 1970s TV show *The Gong Show* popularized the practice of halting a talent act by striking a gong. *I thought my presentation was going well, until the boss gonged me halfway through and wouldn't let me continue!*

a gong show A wild, chaotic, ridiculous, and/or disastrous event. Sometimes written as "gongshow." From the 1976–1978 television show *The Gong Show*, an amateur talent contest in which judges would end particularly bad acts by striking a giant gong. Primarily heard in Canada. *Did you go to that party last night? What a gong show! A: "How do you think you did on your exam?" B: "It was a total gong show. I'll be lucky if I even passed."*

a good At least. Used with numerical estimates. *I'm still a good 45 minutes away, so go ahead and start without me.*

good antennae See [have good antennae](#).

good as (one's) word Trustworthy, reliable, and will do what one has promised. *If Bob said he'll be here at nine, then he'll be here at nine—he's good as his word. I was worried that Ms. Alberts would forget about her promise of no homework over the weekend, but she was good as her word!*

a good beginning makes a good ending Being well-prepared and focused at the start of something often leads to success. *Keeping in mind that a good beginning makes a good ending, I worked really hard on my outline before I began my research paper.*

good books Favorable, kindly, or approving regard or treatment. Usually used in the phrase "in someone's good books" or some variation thereof. *John's been in my good books ever since he helped get me out of debt. I was out of Mary's good books for a while after I lost her cat.*

good-bye cruel world See [goodbye, cruel world](#).

good day A conventional, formal, and somewhat old-fashioned expression of greeting or farewell used during the daytime. *Good day, sir! What news do you have for me from our partners out east? I will not tolerate this sort of rudeness! I bid you good day!*

a good deal A large degree or amount, usually indefinite or intangible. *There's a good deal to be learned from listening to your elders. I own a good deal of books at home; they're starting to clutter up the place.*

good deal An acknowledgment that a situation or proposal is acceptable, pleasing, or fortuitous. *"I'll plan on coming around this Friday evening."* *"Good deal, buddy."*

good deed unpunished See [No good deed goes unpunished](#).

a good drunk 1. A person who is especially affable, joyous, humorous, or enjoyable to be around when under the influence of alcohol. *I was worried the morning after our big drinking session that I may have acted like a fool, but everyone assured me I was quite a good drunk.* 2. A particularly enjoyable or festive instance of being intoxicated from alcohol. *Once the wine began to flow, we all had a proper good drunk.*

good egg Someone who is known to be trustworthy and kind. *Joey's a good egg. He always makes time to help others in need.*

good enough for jazz Sufficient to suit the purpose(s) at hand without needing to be perfect. *There are still a few kinks to work out in how users' comments are displayed, but it's good enough for jazz at the moment.*

good enough to eat To have an extremely beautiful or aesthetically pleasing appearance. *She's really become a masterful artist, creating gorgeous paintings that are good enough to eat.*

good evening A conventional expression of greeting or, less commonly, farewell used around or after dusk. *Good evening, Mary, is your father home? I believe we've made great progress so far, and we shall resume in the*

morning. Good evening, gentlemen!

good for nothing Entirely without value; of no use whatsoever. (Hyphenated if used as a modifier before a noun.) *This junky old computer my dad gave me is good for nothing! That good-for-nothing son of mine has been doing nothing but lying on the couch for the past two months!*

good God! An oath expressing surprise, shock, frustration, anger, or annoyance. *Good God! If we'd stopped the car one second later, that train would have hit us! I know you've had a long day at work, but good God, is it too much to ask for you to take out the trash?*

good going An informal expression of praise for having done something well. (It can also be used sarcastically to mean the opposite.) *Mary: "Dad, I got an A+ on my midterm exam!" Bill: "Good going, sweetie!" Good going, Frank, now we're going to have to rebuild this entire model from scratch.*

good graces Favorable, kindly, or approving regard or treatment. Usually used in the phrase "in someone's good graces" or some variation thereof. *John's been in my good graces ever since he helped get me out of debt. I was out of Mary's good graces for a while after I lost her cat.*

good gracious A mild exclamation of surprise, alarm, dismay, annoyance, or exasperation. *Good gracious, look at the time! How is it nearly midnight already? Good gracious, Bill, would it kill you to take out the trash once in a while? Good gracious, that cyclist nearly hit me!*

good-hearted Kind, selfless, and/or caring. *My sister is so good-hearted—she's always volunteering at soup kitchens and trying to help the less fortunate. I couldn't help but smile when I saw my good-hearted little girl give her crying friend a hug.*

a good husband makes a good wife If a husband treats his wife well, she will treat him well in return. *I do the dishes because it gives Shannon much needed time to relax, and a good husband makes a good wife.*

a good Jack makes a good Jill If a husband treats his wife well, she will treat him well in return. *I do the dishes because it gives Shannon much needed time to relax, and a good Jack makes a good Jill.*

good job An informal expression of praise for having done something well. (It can also be used sarcastically to mean the opposite.) *Mary: "Dad, I got an A+ on my midterm exam!" Bill: "Good job, sweetie!" Good job,*

Frank, now we're going to have to rebuild this entire model from scratch.

the good life An especially comfortable, pleasurable, luxurious, and/or wealthy lifestyle. *Sitting in the sun, having a few drinks, eating great food, with no worldly stresses... this is the good life, eh? We've been living the good life since my wife's wealthy uncle left us his entire fortune.*

the good Lord willing and if the creek don't rise See ([the good](#)) [Lord willing and the creek don't rise](#).

a good many A large amount. *There were a good many people doing last minute shopping at the mall on Christmas Eve.*

good morning A conventional expression of greeting or, less commonly, farewell used during the morning (i.e., before noon). *Good morning, class. We'll begin by discussing the chapter I assigned you to read last night. He abruptly bid the gentleman good morning and walked briskly out of the room.*

good nature A kindly, affable, beneficent, and/or obliging propensity or personality. *Mark's good nature has made the death of my mother so much easier to bear. It was thanks to the good nature of my thesis supervisor that I felt so confident writing my dissertation. Margaret has such a good nature, always willing to lend a hand no matter what the task may be.*

good-natured Of or having a kindly, affable, beneficent, and/or obliging propensity, inclination, or personality. *Mark is so good-natured, always willing to lend a hand no matter what the task. We're always looking for good-natured individuals to act as mentors to our students with learning disabilities.*

good omen A sign, either real or imagined, of good fortune or a propitious outcome. *I saw a dove on my windowsill this morning; I'd say it's a good omen for the rest of my day. I think the way our conversation ended is a good omen for where our relationship is headed.*

good Samaritan A person who selflessly helps others, especially those in distress. Taken from a parable in the Bible in which a Samaritan man was the only person who stopped to help a man who was robbed and beaten. *Brad was hailed by the newspaper as a good Samaritan after he stepped in and helped a woman who was being robbed.*

a good scout An honest, affable, reliable, and trustworthy person. *Your dad's a good scout, you know that? He's helped me out of so many jams*

without even thinking twice.

a good sort **1.** An affable, charismatic, and dependable person. *I'm very fond of Tom, he's just a good sort all around.* **2.** slang A physically attractive woman. Primarily heard in Australia. *The politician has been widely criticized for calling the female journalist a good sort.*

a good spell **1.** A particularly fortuitous, beneficial, or productive period of time. *The star footballer was out with an ankle injury for the first half of the season, but she's had a pretty good spell so far since she's returned. We were lucky to have had a very good spell right before the recession, so our business was able to weather the storm a little better than others.* **2.** A reasonably or relatively long period of time. *Ireland is world-renowned for its cold, rainy climate, but we've had a good spell of sunshine and warmth this summer. You'll have a good spell of hard work ahead of you, but you'll get paid very well at the end.*

good things come in small packages Often the things that have the most value or quality are small; the size of something does not always properly indicate its value. *Experiencing the love of a baby is really life-changing. It's so true that good things come in small packages.*

good things come to those who wait Patience is often rewarded. A: "Mom, when can I have my birthday present?" B: "Good things come to those who wait, honey." *When investing, it pays to be patient. Remember that good things come to those who wait.*

good time prison slang An amount of time that is deducted from an inmate's prison sentence due to good behavior. *He hoped that by dedicating himself to his studies he might be granted a bit of good time and let out of jail early.*

good-time Charlie An affable, lively, and entertaining man who is often or always seeking pleasure or a good time. *I was something of a good-time Charlie back in college, always ready to party. I had a lot of friends and a great time, but I didn't get very good grades as a result.*

a good time was had by all cliché Everyone had fun. *The bachelorette party was so much fun! A good time was had by all.*

a good turn An action that is beneficial to another person in some way. *Angela did me a good turn by sharing her notes with me while I was out sick*

from school.

a good value 1. Literally, that which has a high quality, quantity, or worth but is offered at a low or reasonable price; a bargain. *\$1.50 for a sirloin steak? What a good value!* 2. An affable, charismatic, and/or entertaining person. Primarily heard in Australia. *John's a good value, he's so much fun to have at parties.*

a good voice to beg bacon Used to mock someone's voice as being strange, unpleasant, or inadequate (e.g., for singing). Bacon, being a dietary staple in older times, was often used as a metaphor for financial stability or wealth; having the voice of one who must "beg bacon," then, means having a harsh voice, like someone who is undernourished. *Did you hear the way that singer was screeching last night? I'm glad we didn't stay too long, he had a good voice to beg bacon.*

good wine needs no bush An item of good quality needs no advertisement. Establishments like inns and pubs used to hang ivy and flowers to tell travelers that wine was available inside. *The product I've invented is so excellent that it needs no ad campaign, just as good wine needs no bush.*

a good word for everybody A friendly, amiable, and positive regard for one and all. *He was my favorite professor, always a smile on his face and a good word for everybody.*

good works Acts, actions, or efforts that are charitable, generous, kind, or philanthropic. *Thanks to the good works of volunteers like Sarah, our organization has been able to reach out to thousands of families in need across the state.*

goodbye, cruel world cliché An exclamation, note, or statement made immediately prior to one's death, especially by suicide. *We felt as though we never had closure after Tom committed suicide. We never even knew he was contemplating taking his own life, and his note merely said "Goodbye, cruel world." The gunslinger lay on the ground, bleeding into the dust. "Goodbye, cruel world," he gasped with his last breath. And with that, he perished.*

goodness gracious A mild exclamation of surprise, alarm, dismay, annoyance, or exasperation. *Goodness gracious, look at the time! How is it nearly midnight already? Goodness gracious, Bill, would it kill you to take out the trash once in a while? Goodness gracious, that cyclist nearly hit me!*

goodness gracious me A mild exclamation of surprise, alarm, dismay, annoyance, or exasperation. *Goodness gracious me, look at the time! How is it nearly midnight already? Goodness gracious me, I'll never get this report finished on time!*

goodness knows 1. No one knows. (A variant of "God knows.") *Goodness knows how long it will take for my application to be processed. A: "How do you think you did on your exam?" B: "Goodness knows!"* 2. It is true, certain, or definite that; it is obvious or clear that. *Goodness knows I need to do well on this test, or I can kiss my scholarship goodbye!*

goodness me A mild exclamation of surprise, alarm, dismay, annoyance, or exasperation. *Goodness me, look at the time! How is it nearly midnight already? Goodness me, I'll never get this report finished on time!*

goodnight Irene A phrase used to show one's shock or dismay. "Goodnight Irene" is the title of a 1930s folk song by Huddie "Lead Belly" Ledbetter. Primarily heard in US. *Well, goodnight Irene—I never expected so many people to come to a party for me! Goodnight Irene—that was the last of our money, and we're close to running out of gas.*

goody-goody 1. noun Someone who exclusively follows the rules and caters to authority figures; a teacher's pet. *Jill's classmates called her a goody-goody after she volunteered to supervise the class while the teacher was away.* 2. adjective Self-righteous or sanctimonious. *Forget your goody-goody rules and go out on a school night for once!*

goody two-shoes 1. adjective (used as a modifier before a noun) Of or having prudish, self-righteous and/or rigidly moral standards. *Many have been critical of the agency as being nothing but a goody two-shoes organization more concerned with telling people how to behave than serving their best interests.* 2. An exceedingly and/or haughtily prudish, self-righteous, or rigidly moral person; someone who conforms inflexibly to the rules or the law. *Mary is such a goody-two shoes, always squealing to the teacher when one of us does something against the rules. Our gang would have control of half the city if that goody two-shoes hadn't somehow gotten himself elected governor.*

goon squad A group of people hired or acting for the purposes of enforcement, protection, intimidation, and/or harassment on behalf of someone else. Primarily heard in US. *After Mr. Smith refused to pay the*

mafia protection money, they sent a goon squad around to rough him up.

Gordian knot A complicated problem that can only be solved with creative or unorthodox thinking. In Greek and Roman mythology, King Gordian tied such a complex knot that only Alexander the Great was able to loosen it by cutting it with his sword. *Trying to remove the gum from my daughter's hair turned into quite the Gordian knot. Ultimately, it was just easier to cut the tangled mess out of her hair. The coding problem looked like a Gordian knot until we realized we could bypass it altogether with a different approach.*

the gorge rises at it One is disgusted or sickened by something. (The "gorge" is the stomach.) The phrase appears in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. *I could never be a doctor. Blood, vomit, open wounds—the gorge rises at it.*

gosh See [\(oh\) \(my\) gosh!](#).

gosh almighty See [God almighty!](#).

gosh almighty! An exclamation of surprise, shock, frustration, anger, or annoyance. A euphemistic variant of "God almighty." *Gosh almighty! If we'd stopped the car one second later that train would have hit us! I know you've had a long day at work, but gosh almighty, is it too much to ask for you to take out the trash? Gosh almighty, it's hot as the dickens out here!*

grab (a)hold of (someone) **1.** Literally, to grab and hold onto someone with one's hands. *The police officer grabbed hold of the suspect before he could run away. My sister grabbed ahold of me at our mother's funeral to keep herself from breaking down in tears.* **2.** To gain total control, influence, or power over someone. *Once major corporations grab hold of a politician, it's easy to predict where his political interests will lie. Addiction seems to have completely grabbed ahold of John.* **3.** To capture someone's attention, interest, or imagination. *Her latest novel grabbed hold of me and didn't let go until I'd read it cover to cover.*

grab and go (used before a noun; sometimes hyphenated) Characterized by being very quick and easy to obtain, access, and use. *Increasingly busy lifestyles have led to an explosion in the popularity of grab and go meals and snacks. The purpose of our app is to provide a new grab-and-go resource for students and educators alike.*

grab bag **1.** A container or bag filled with various things, usually free gifts

or promotional items. Primarily heard in US, Australia. *For their grand opening event, the new cosmetics store gave customers a grab bag filled with coupons and free samples of their products.* **2.** By extension, anything that represents a variety of differing or unrelated items. *My resume has a real grab bag of experience on it. I hope they can see how it applies to the position I applied for.*

grab some rays To spend some time in the sun (often with goal of tanning). *We're supposed to have nice weather this afternoon, so why don't we go to the beach and grab some rays? I'm really glad I grabbed some rays on vacation—I was so pale before!*

grab the bull by its horns To approach, confront, or deal with a problem or difficult situation directly and with clear, confident action. *I grabbed the bull by its horns and confronted my manager about the blatant sexism in the office. I've been complaining about being out of work for too long—it's time to grab the bull by its horns and go find a job!*

grab the bull by the horns To approach, confront, or deal with a problem or difficult situation directly and with clear, confident action. *I grabbed the bull by the horns and confronted my manager about the blatant sexism in the office. I've been complaining about being out of work for too long—it's time to grab the bull by the horns and go find a job!*

grace period **1.** A period of time after a debt has become due for payment during which no new fees, penalties, or interest are accrued. *Our new student credit plan offers an additional 30-day grace period on all credit card purchases.* **2.** A period of time after an insurance premium has become due for payment during which the terms of the policy remain active and in effect. *Luckily, I was still within the grace period for my home insurance policy when the basement got flooded, or else I don't know how I would have afforded the repairs!* **3.** By extension, any period of time following a deadline during which no penalty is issued. *Due to his mother's sudden death, James was given a grace period of three weeks to submit his dissertation.*

grain of truth A little bit of truth. Often used to refer to a small amount of insight or truth in something otherwise false or nonsensical. *The only reason why Dave's joke about my love life bothered me so much is because there was a grain of truth to it.*

grammar Nazi Someone who insists on correcting or criticizing others

for errors in spelling, grammar, and syntax, especially to a pedantic or self-righteous degree. Potentially offensive due to its reference to the fascist National Socialist German Workers' Party, which was brought to power in 1933 under Adolf Hitler. *It irritates me to no end when people use "good" as an adverb, but I try not to be a grammar Nazi about it.*

grand poobah The most important or powerful person in a group, organization, business, or movement (e.g., the boss, leader, etc.). *I think it sounds like a great idea, but you'll have to ask the grand poobah first.*

grand scheme The long term; the complete picture of something. Typically used in the phrase "in the grand scheme of things." *I know you're worried about getting a bad grade on this test, but you're such a great student that I doubt it will matter in the grand scheme of things.*

grand slam **1.** In the card game bridge, the winning of all thirteen tricks on one deal of the game. *I've been playing bridge for years, but I've still never been able to make a grand slam.* **2.** In baseball, a homerun that is achieved when all three bases have runners on them. *It looked like the home team was in for a sure loss, but a grand slam at the last minute edged them ahead of their opponents.* **3.** (sometimes capitalized) In sports, the winning of all major championships or tournaments in a single year, especially in tennis or golf. *The young player shocked the tennis world by winning a Grand Slam in her first year at the professional level.* **4.** By extension, any total, sweeping victory or success. *With the Ohio votes in her favor, it looks like the new president has managed a grand slam.*

grand total The final amount after adding several different numbers or sums. *After everything was accounted for, the cost of remodeling the kitchen came to a grand total of \$4,500.*

grand tour **1.** An extended tour or sightseeing trip in, through, or across any country or region. Originally used in specific reference to the major cities of Europe, the trip was considered a necessary part of well-bred gentlemen's upbringing. It was later extended to travel in general. *I've been saving up all year long for my grand tour through France.* **2.** By extension, a comprehensive, guided tour, inspection, or survey. *This is your first time seeing our new house, right? Let me give you the grand tour! The general insisted on a grand tour of all the sites that are still operational.*

the granddaddy of them all The biggest, oldest, most impressive,

or most respected person or thing of his, her, or its kind. *I own a lot of vintage cars, but my 1926 Bentley is the granddaddy of them all.*

grandstand play **1.** In sports, any excessively showy action or maneuver during play done primarily to impress or entertain the spectators. Originally specific to baseball, it has since been extended to any sport. *Rather than shoot the ball and secure an easy two points for the team, she instead attempted to slam dunk the ball as a grandstand play for the crowd.* **2.** By extension, any excessively dramatic, showy, or ostentatious action, behavior, or maneuver. *Our manager is more concerned with making a grandstand play for the CEO than effectively running the office. The dictator's constant threats of war are more of a grandstand play than a legitimate concern to the rest of the world.*

granny bashing The physical, psychological, or verbal abuse or assault of an elderly person or persons. *While the abuse of children garners a huge amount of attention from the public, granny bashing seems to go largely unnoticed in comparison.*

granny dumping The abandonment of an elderly relative in a public place or facility, especially a hospital or care center, so as to relieve oneself of the duty of caring or looking after him or her. *While I know how stressful caring for your elderly parents can be, I'll never understand how anyone could consider granny dumping an acceptable option.*

grant (someone) no quarter To offer (someone) no mercy, concession, indulgence, or leeway. *This match determines if we're heading to the finals of the tournament, so go out there and grant them no quarter! Our boss grants no quarter when it comes to the standards of our projects.*

granted no quarter To be offered no mercy, concession, or indulgence. *We are at war with barbarians, soldier. You will be granted no quarter if you are taken captive; likewise, you shall grant them no quarter should you take them alive. This match determines if we're heading to the finals of the tournament, so make sure they are granted no quarter!*

grasp at a straw To make a desperate attempt to salvage a bad situation. A: *"But what about all those times I took the trash out when you hadn't even asked me to?"* B: *"That has nothing to do with why you're in trouble now, so stop grasping at a straw."*

grasp in the dark To seek out a solution, meaning, or sense of purpose

in a blind, aimless, or uncertain manner. Often used in the progressive tense. *We've been grasping in the dark for a way to pay our mortgage, but I just don't see how we'll be able to afford it anymore. My recent breakup with Janice has left me grasping in the dark.*

grass widow **1.** A woman who lives apart from her husband due to a job location or other circumstances. *The politician's wife has become a grass widow ever since he started campaigning for office.* **2.** A woman who is divorced or separated from her spouse. *If you never get married, you'll never have to worry about becoming a grass widow.* **3.** A mistress who is no longer wanted. *The town referred to Judy as a grass widow after the man she was seeing decided to return to his wife.* **4.** The mother of an illegitimate child. *When they discovered that Maria had had her son out of wedlock, they cruelly called her a grass widow.*

grass widower **1.** A man who is divorced, separated, estranged from, or abandoned by his wife. *John became a grass widower after his wife left him for a younger man.* **2.** A man whose wife is away from home frequently or at great length, though not permanently. *Janet has had to travel a lot since she got her promotion at work. I'm happy for her, but I've been feeling like a grass widower lately.*

grasstops The leaders of a group or community (in contrast to the "grassroots"—the common people). A: *"If we really want to enact change in our neighborhood, we need to get the support of the grasstops."* B: *"Well then, let's go present our proposal at tonight's town meeting."* *The grasstops have totally ignored our petition—now what should we do?*

grateful for small blessings See [be grateful for small blessings](#).

gravitationally challenged **1.** Fat, bulky, or very heavy. A euphemistic and ironically politically correct term, usually said of a person. *I don't think Mike is obese—he's just a bit gravitationally challenged.* **2.** Prone to or characterized by clumsiness or a lack of balance. *I've been bumping into people at work all day long—I must be a bit gravitationally challenged today or something.*

gray amber See [grey amber](#).

a gray area See [grey area](#).

the gray dollar The economic purchasing power of elderly people as a

group. Primarily heard in US. As the baby-boom generation enters old age, many different markets are trying to capitalize on the burgeoning influence of the gray dollar.

gray pound See [the grey pound](#).

gray power See [grey power](#).

grease monkey A mechanic, especially one who works on aircraft or automobiles. *My parents were of course concerned when I decided to drop out of high school and become a grease monkey, but I love my job!*

grease (one's) hand To bribe someone discreetly by slipping money into their hand. A: "How are we going to get a table without a reservation?" B: "Don't worry, I greased the hostess' hand, and she promised us a table in no time." *I greased my brother's hand to stop him from telling mom that I had a party while she was away.*

grease payment A sum of money, typically a bribe, paid to a government official or business person so as to facilitate or expedite some decision or transaction. *Just offer the governor's aide a grease payment to move our building application to the forefront of the governor's agenda.*

grease the wheels To facilitate, expedite, ease, or aid something or some process; to make or help things run more smoothly or more easily. *Hopefully, this shift in public opinion will help grease the wheels of immigration reform. The clients have been reluctant to sign on for another year, so the boss is offering a cash incentive to help grease the wheels.*

greasy spoon A small restaurant or diner, especially one that serves fried foods. *Every time I go on a road trip, I make it a point to stop at a greasy spoon for at least one of my meals.*

great cry and little wool A great deal of fuss, noise, fanfare, or protestation over something of little or no substance, importance, or relevance. *My opponent has been making outlandish claims about my track record so as to foment distrust in the public, but I assure you, he is offering great cry and little wool.*

great deal A large amount or degree. *It would help me a great deal if you could drive me to work tomorrow.*

a great many A very large number of (people, things, etc.). *A great many people have joined the protest to voice their concerns over increased*

taxes.

great minds run in the same channel See [\(all\) great minds run in the same channel](#).

great oaks from little acorns grow Large and powerful things once were very small and insignificant. *It's hard to believe that her successful clothing line was once a small business run from her tiny studio apartment. Great oaks from little acorns grow.*

great pith and moment High importance. A: "Making a speech at your college graduation is an occasion of great pith and moment." B: "I know, and I'm so honored that the committee chose me." Getting engaged is a decision of great pith and moment—do not take it lightly.

the great unwashed The general public, especially those of the lower and lower-middle classes. *The film didn't cause too great a stir with the great unwashed, but it has been considered a milestone in cinematic achievement among film critics and scholars. The world of the super rich is one that we among the great unwashed can't even begin to understand.*

great white hope Someone or something expected to succeed or on whom/which certain hopes are based. *Many have come to regard the presidential candidate as a great white hope for a new era of social reform and economic prosperity. The new video game console is widely seen as the foundering company's last great white hope.*

great with child Very visibly pregnant. ("With child" is a euphemism for "pregnant.") *I'm only a few months pregnant, and I'm already great with child! I guess it's time to invest in some maternity clothes.*

greater than the sum of its parts See [more/bigger/greater than the sum of its parts](#).

the Greek calends A time that is expected to never arrive or occur. (Used after a preposition, especially "at," "on," or "till.") A reference to the day of the new moon and the first day of the month in the ancient Roman calendar, which the Greeks did not observe. *You lent that leech John more money? It'll be at the Greek calends when he pays you back.*

green about the gills Nauseated. *After all that drinking last night, I sure am green about the gills today. The steady rocking of the boat caused Colleen to be green about the gills.*

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green as a gooseberry Very young, immature, and/or inexperienced. *Are you sure he's fit to run your campaign? He's just out of college and still as green as a gooseberry!*

green as a gooseberry See [be \(as\) green as a gooseberry](#).

green fingers A figurative trait attributed to someone who is a skilled gardener. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *My mom can keep any plant alive, even ones that I've nearly killed—she seriously has green fingers.*

green folding stuff/money Paper money, especially in large amounts. Primarily heard in US. *Boy, I bet you had to lay down some serious green folding for that new sports car, huh? How much green folding stuff is this repair job gonna cost me? Now, don't go shelling out all your green folding money at once just because you've gotten your first paycheck.*

green indigo A nickname for lokao, a green vegetable dye that originated in China. *We're dyeing some cloth with green indigo today.*

green state **1.** An American state where the Green Party of the US is favored or carries influence. Primarily heard in US. *In this green state, Democrats and Republicans have to battle more fiercely than ever for a majority of votes.* **2.** A state that is or is perceived to be environmentally friendly. Primarily heard in US. *While campaigning in the green states, the presidential hopeful highlighted his plans for a decreased dependence on oil and coal.* **3.** A country or sovereign state in which environmental concerns dictate policy or are of the utmost importance. *Environmentalists are hopeful that that the country might emerge as a green state and lead the rest of the world in environmental agendas.*

green thumb A proclivity for successfully growing plant life. (Often used with "have.") *I've never had a green thumb—everything I try to grow dies! With John's amazing green thumb, our garden always looks amazing!*

greenhorn **1.** A very young, naïve, immature, or inexperienced person, especially one who is extremely gullible or easily deceived. Primarily heard in US. *We all convinced that greenhorn in work that the boss loves to have "Happy Birthday" sung to him in Spanish!* **2.** A newcomer or newly arrived

immigrant, especially one who is unfamiliar with the customs or ways of a place or group. Primarily heard in US. *Alright, Steve, show the greenhorn around the ranch so she'll be ready for work tomorrow. It was tough when I moved to Iceland. I was such a greenhorn that I didn't even know the polite way to order coffee!*

greige A neutral color that looks like a mix of gray and beige. A: "Greige is so boring. Can't we use a bolder color?" B: "No, prospective buyers like neutral colors."

grey amber Another term for ambergris, a waxy substance excreted by sperm whales and used as a fixative, especially in the preparation of perfumes. *The large chunk of grey amber that washed ashore is worth more than gold!*

grey area A concept or topic that is not clearly defined or that exists somewhere between two extreme positions. Primarily heard in Australia. *There's a large grey area regarding whether the use of the new surveillance technology is lawful.*

grey dollar See [the gray dollar](#).

the grey pound The economic purchasing power of elderly people as a group. Primarily heard in UK. *As the baby-boom generation enters old age, many different markets are trying to capitalize on the burgeoning influence of the grey pound.*

grey power The influence exerted by the elderly people in an organization, community, etc. *When I decided to run for office, I knew that grey power would be an important factor in the election and that I needed to rally support from the elderly.*

grill (someone) (about something) To question or interrogate someone intensely and relentlessly (about something). *I wish my parents would stop grilling me about where I go with my friends at night! You're going to have to grill Janet if you want any answers about her spending habits.*

grin like a Cheshire cat To smile smugly or mischievously. The term was popularized by the character in Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. *I knew he had a prank planned for April Fools' Day when he arrived at work grinning like a Cheshire cat.*

grind (someone's) gears To greatly or specifically irritate or annoy someone. *It really grinds my gears when cyclists go zipping through red lights! John's not a bad guy, but he has a habit of grinding people's gears with his political rants.*

grinder A sandwich served on a long roll of bread, typically six inches to several feet in length, filled with a variety of ingredients including meat, cheese, and vegetables. Primarily heard in US. *This restaurant across the road from our office makes the best grinder in the city. I've gotten to where I go there two or three times a week for lunch. I'm ordering a few four-foot grinders for the party this weekend, so if you have any food allergies, let me know before tomorrow.*

grip on (oneself) Control of one's reactions or emotions. *After losing her job, Sarah needed to calm down and get a grip on herself in order to drive home safely. You're not going to be able to think clearly until you get a grip on yourself.*

grip on (something) 1. A good physical hold on something. *In order to remove the bolt, I needed to get a grip on the wrench.* 2. A newfound understanding of a topic or concept. *The teacher spent extra time going over the material in class because she wanted her students to have a good grip on the subject matter before they took the exam.*

grist for (one's) mill Something that initially seems bad or negative but is ultimately used in a positive way by someone. A: *"The tabloids found out that you've been in rehab. How do you plan on handling it?"* B: *"It's just grist for my mill—I'm a changed man now, and that's what I'll tell the media. At least they're writing about me again!"*

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grope in the dark 1. Literally, to feel about without the use of one's eyes, as due to blindness or an absence of light. *I was groping in the dark down in this basement for ten minutes before I could find a light switch.* 2. To seek (something) in a blind, aimless, or uncertain manner, especially to find a solution, meaning, or sense of purpose. *We've been groping in the dark for a*

way to pay our mortgage, but I just don't see how we'll be able to afford it. Pretty much everyone gropes in the dark at some point or another, trying to figure out the meaning of life.

gross-out 1. modifier Eliciting a strong feeling of disgust or revulsion, usually intentionally. *With its paper-thin plot and gross-out humor, this movie will only appeal to the most juvenile of audiences.* **2.** noun Some thing, event, or situation that elicits a strong feeling of disgust or revulsion, whether intentionally or not. *That new horror movie isn't even scary, it's just trying to be a big gross-out. There's a piece of meat in the fridge that's completely rotten. What a gross-out!*

a ground ball with eyes In baseball, a ball that is hit onto the ground and narrowly eludes two or more infielders, allowing the batter to take a base. It is said to have "eyes" because it seems to "see" its way between the two defensive players. *The home team finally secured a run after their star batter hit a ground ball with eyes right between the other team's first and second basemen.*

ground bass A musical phrase played on the bass that repeats consistently throughout a piece of music (unlike the varied phrases that are played by the other instruments in the composition). *While you play the ground bass, the piano will play the melody, and then the choir will come in.*

ground beetle Any of several families of beetles that are primarily found on or near the ground. *Milly screamed and ran across the backyard after she overturned a stone and disrupted a group of ground beetles.*

ground-breaking Innovative and unprecedented. *The narration in this novel is truly ground-breaking—I've never read anything like it! We've had some really ground-breaking legislation this year that will influence the laws in this nation for decades to come.*

ground laurel A creeping wildflower with pink and white flowers and evergreen leaves. The plant is also known as the "Mayflower" and the "trailing arbutus," and it is found throughout eastern North America. *It just doesn't feel like spring until I see the ground laurel start to bloom in our backyard.*

ground rule A basic guideline or governing principle of procedural conduct in a given situation or endeavor. Often used in the plural ("ground rules"). The phrase is a reference to baseball, in which different ballparks

have specific ground rules that govern play for that particular field. *Before we begin the debate, let's establish some ground rules about what may and may not be discussed OK, class, here are the ground rules: no talking during class and no cell phones. Follow those and you'll stay on my good side.*

ground rules Basic guidelines or governing principles of procedural conduct in a given situation or endeavor. A reference to baseball, where the ground rules govern the rule of play specific to different ballparks. *Before we begin the debate, let's establish some ground rules about what may and may not be discussed.*

ground sloth A now-extinct very large mammal that once inhabited North and South America. *I wish I could go back in time to when ground sloths roamed the Earth—how cool would that be?*

ground squirrel A burrowing rodent of the squirrel family more commonly known as a gopher. *You can really tell that spring is here when the ground squirrels start coming out again.*

grow a pair vulgar slang To start acting in a strong, confident, and/or courageous manner, especially after having previously failed to do so. Though short for "grow a pair of testicles/balls" (discretion should be used because of this), the phrase can be said by or of either a male or female. Often used as an imperative. *You need to grow a pair and ask your boss for a raise already! Janet, I know you're nervous about asking Tom out on a date, but just grow a pair and give it a shot!*

grow cold 1. Literally, to gradually lose heat; to become cold. *Tommy, come down to dinner—your food is growing cold! Her feet grew cold from standing out in the snow in high heels.* 2. To wane or diminish; to lessen in strength over time, especially a feeling, sentiment, or interest. *We had an intense relationship initially, but lately it seems like his affection has grown cold.*

growing youth has a wolf in his belly Young people who are growing seem to be hungry all the time. *My teenage son has eaten every last bit of food in the house. I guess it's true that a growing youth has a wolf in his belly.*

Grub Street 1. Literally, the street in London that was home to impoverished writers with little talent in the 17th century. *Although this course will certainly focus on the classics, we will also read several works*

from the authors of *Grub Street*, to get a better sense of the time period as a whole. **2.** A derisive term used to describe impoverished writers with little talent. *Don't read trash written by Grub Street hacks—enrich your mind with the classics instead!*

grumble in the gizzard To be annoyed or unhappy. Primarily heard in US. *The outcome of that race left me grumbling in the gizzard—I thought for sure I had bet on the right horse!*

guardhouse lawyer One who acts knowledgeable about something one actually knows little about. *Stop being a guardhouse lawyer and giving me advice on how to get a job when you've been unemployed for months too!*

guardian angel **1.** An angel or other supernatural being who is appointed to protect, guide, or otherwise watch over a particular individual. *You're lucky to be alive after that accident! You must have a guardian angel!* **2.** A person who protects, guides, or otherwise looks after the welfare of someone. *Uncle John became my guardian angel after my parents died, always making sure I had everything I needed.*

guess again A rhetorical imperative indicating that the person being spoken to is mistaken about, and thus should reconsider, something. *You'd better guess again if you think I'm going to lend you any more money.*

guiding light Someone who is influential or an inspiration to others. *Mother Teresa was certainly a guiding light to many who shared her faith.*

guiding spirit Someone who is influential or an inspiration to others. *Amy's mother was always her guiding spirit during difficult decisions.*

guilt complex A very strong and persistent feeling of guilt regarding something or some event. *John developed a guilt complex after forcing his brother to move out.*

guilt trip **1.** noun A deep feeling of guilt or remorse. *I'm having a guilt trip for not being able to attend my sister's wedding.* **2.** verb To make others feel guilty, especially in an attempt to manipulate them. *Kelly's parents were always trying to guilt trip her for not giving them grandchildren. You can't guilt trip me into donating money, I give enough to charity already.*

a guilty conscience needs no accuser A feeling of guilt and remorse can be so strong that it will prompt an offender to confess, even if no one is requiring him or her to do so. *Gary felt so guilty after taking the money*

out of Bill's wallet that he confessed and returned it a day later. A guilty conscience needs no accuser.

guilty pleasure Something that one enjoys or finds pleasurable but knows or feels to be bad, inferior, aberrant, or lowbrow, especially as might be perceived or judged by other people. *I know these gossip magazines are trashy, but reading them on my commute home is my guilty pleasure!*

guinea pig Someone or something used as the subject of an experiment. *Jane used her husband as a guinea pig to try her new baked chicken recipe. Craig earned a little extra money by signing up to be a guinea pig in some local clinical studies.*

gully washer An extremely heavy rainstorm that usually lasts a short amount of time. *That gully washer at 3 AM woke me up because the pouring rain was so loud on the roof!*

gun it To accelerate or increase speed suddenly or rapidly; to travel or move very quickly. Usually said while traveling in an automobile. *We'll have to gun it if we want to make it to the movie on time! Okay, I've got the cash. Now gun it and get us out of here!*

gun-shy 1. Frightened of using a gun or by the sound of one firing. *My other three sons all really love to hunt, but Tommy's a little bit gun-shy.* 2. Hesitant or wary of something or some action, especially after having previously suffered a negative experience of such. *I've been rather gun-shy about driving ever since I got into that car accident last year.*

gunner's daughter obsolete A cannon or other such armament used on a naval vessel, to which seamen were bound so as to receive lashings during corporal punishment. (Usually used with the verbs *marry*, *kiss*, or *hug + the*.) *I was forced to marry the gunner's daughter for attempting to bring about a mutiny on the ship.*

gussied up Dressed or decorated fancifully or attractively, especially in a showy, garish, or tawdry manner. *You sure got gussied up for the occasion! A tuxedo and everything! Samantha's always going around town all gussied up in those tacky dresses and cheap makeup.*

gut-bucket 1. A derogatory term for a very obese person. *We left the bar when we realized it was seedy and filled with nothing but old gut-buckets looking for easy women.* 2. A free-spirited style of jazz or blues music. *The*

band surprised the audience by playing a few of their songs in a gut-bucket style. **3.** A stringed instrument used in folk music that is made from a metal washtub. *Grandpop brought out his old gut-bucket and started playing folk songs beside the fire.*

gut check A moment in which one stops to seriously evaluate something or one's current state. *I think we need to step back and have a gut check about our plan because I don't think it's going to work out the way we envisioned. It's gut check time for the defending champions, who find themselves down 10 points with just two minutes left in the game.*

gut factor The subjective, emotional element or dimension that influences a decision. *All three candidates appear ideal for the position, so we'll have to rely on the gut factor when we make our choice.*

gut feeling An intuition or instinct, as opposed to an opinion based on a logical analysis. *Jennifer's mother had a gut feeling that something was wrong when her daughter wasn't home by 10 o'clock.*

gut instinct An intuition or feeling, as opposed to an opinion based on a logical analysis. *My gut instinct about Kara's new boyfriend proved correct when we discovered he had a pretty extensive criminal history.*

gut reaction A reaction to a situation based on a person's instinct and feelings, rather than on a logical analysis. *My initial gut reaction was that the merger would result in a drop in stock prices, but the opposite turned out to be true.*

gut-wrenching Agonizing; extremely distressing, unpleasant, or emotionally disturbing; having a severe effect on one's feelings. *What a gut-wrenching loss for the young athlete, who poured her heart and soul into this match. Kids today are so desensitized that images of violence their grandparents would have found gut-wrenching now barely even register a response.*

gutless wonder A timorous, insipid, or apprehensive person; someone without conviction, confidence, or courage. *All those gutless wonders in Congress never get anything done unless the big corporations tell them it's OK.*

gym bunny Someone who is obsessively preoccupied with maintaining or improving their physique and thus spends a large amount of time at the

gym to do so. After recovering from his surgery, John spent a lot of time at the gym getting his body back into shape. Now he's turned into a total gym bunny.

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H

H-E-double-hockey-sticks A euphemistic spelling of "hell," referring to each L resembling a hockey stick in shape. *"Oh yeah?" said Tommy to the schoolyard bully. "Well, you can go to H-E-double-hockey-sticks!"*

H-E-double-L A euphemistic spelling of "hell." *"Oh yeah?" said Tommy to the schoolyard bully. "Well, you can go to H-E-double-L!"*

H-E-double-toothpicks A euphemistic spelling of "hell." *"Oh yeah?" said Tommy to the schoolyard bully. "Well, you can go to H-E-double-toothpicks!"*

a ha moment See [aha moment](#).

hail down To fall, or to be thrown or ejected, usually in a violent manner. *I'd stay away from the corner house right now—that couple's in some sort of fight, and possessions are hailing down from the second floor.*

a hair in the butter A problem or challenging situation (likened to trying to pick a single hair out of a slippery substance like butter). *Things were going smoothly enough on our road trip until we found out that every hotel in town was booked for the night. Talk about a hair in the butter! Forgetting my textbook at school has proved to be a real hair in the butter for my study plans.*

hair out of place Any cosmetic blemish or flaw. Often used in the negative to describe a very neat and organized appearance or demeanor. *Gina always prided herself on her appearance and was never seen with a hair out of place.*

hair shirt **1.** An uncomfortable garment made of coarse hair or other material worn against the skin. Used in some religious rituals as punishment or penance. *In ancient times, men would wear a hair shirt as a sign of repentance to their deity for wrongs they had done.* **2.** By extension, something a person does to intentionally make an aspect of their life uncomfortable or unpleasant, often as a form of penance. *I understand that you are sorry for your actions, but there is no need to wear a hair shirt*

because of it. All is forgiven. A: "Why aren't you eating dessert?" B: "Oh, it's my punishment—my hair shirt, if you will—for blowing off my schoolwork this week."

hair-splitting **1.** modifier Of or characterized by minute and irrelevant differences or details in an argument. *There have been some hair-splitting changes to the script, but other than that, it's the same as it ever was.* **2.** noun The act of scrutinizing minute, irrelevant, or imperceptible differences or details. *We would get a lot more done in these meetings if everyone did less hair-splitting.*

hair-splittingly With extremely minute, unimportant, or imperceptible differences or details. (Used before an adjective.) *I think it's clear to see that the defendant's work is only hair-splittingly distinct from that of my client.*

hair's breadth A very small amount or short length. *After wandering around the forest for an hour thinking we were lost, it turned out that we were only a hair's breadth away from our campsite. The seal is air-tight—there's not a hair's breadth between the door and the frame.*

half a heart See [with half a heart](#).

half a loaf is better than no bread Getting less than what one wants is better than getting nothing at all. *I know they're offering you less money than you'd hoped for, but at least it's a good job—half a loaf is better than no bread.*

half a loaf is better than no loaf Getting less than what one wants is better than getting nothing at all. *I know they're offering you less money than you'd hoped for, but at least it's a good job—half a loaf is better than no loaf.*

half a mind A moderate, irresolute, or indefinite inclination or intention. *My flight home was so terrible, I have half a mind to write a letter to the airline company and complain. We set out on the road with only half a mind as to where we would go!*

half again as many Fifty percent more than the starting amount. A: "Here you go, take my other half. Now you have one and a half donuts instead of just one!" B: "Half again as many, in fact! Thanks, Sandy!"

half again as much Fifty percent more than the starting amount. A: "Here you go, take my other half. Now you have one and a half donuts

instead of just one!" B: "Half again as much, in fact! Thanks, Sandy!"

the half is better than the whole A moderate approach often yields the best results. *I know you want to do a huge ad campaign, but we can't afford it, so I really think that the half is better than the whole here. We'll still advertise our new product, just in a way that makes more sense for our budget. Speak thoughtfully—the half is better than the whole at events like this.*

half-naked Partially undressed. The phrase is sometimes used hyperbolically by someone who considers another's attire not conservative enough. *Thinking only my mom was outside, I came out of the dressing room half-naked and, to my horror, saw some older girls from school. You can't wear shorts like that to church, you look half-naked! Go change right now!*

the half of it A portion of something, typically implied to be the most important or significant part. (Often used in the negative.) *Yes, the company is losing money, but that's only the half of it: if we don't show some improved sales soon, the bank will cut our credit line, too!* A: "I heard the meeting went pretty poorly." B: "That isn't the half of it. Now the boss wants to do a full review of my employment, so I might even lose my job!"

half-pint Any small, weak, and/or insignificant person. Alludes to a pint, a unit of liquid measurement. *Don't go picking a fight with me, half-pint, or I'll knock you into next Tuesday! That new half-pint they hired as a CEO is totally incompetent.*

half seas over Drunk; intoxicated. The phrase likely alludes to the staggering gait of one who is drunk. Primarily heard in UK. *Boy, you were really half seas over last night—how hungover do you feel this morning?*

half term A brief holiday that takes places in the middle of an academic term. Primarily heard in UK. *I can't wait until half term—I need a break from school! Where are you traveling to during half term?*

half the man See [\(not\) half the person/man/woman \(one\) used to be](#).

half-wit An insulting term for person who is not very smart. *Some half-wit decided to leave sugar out on the counter, and now our kitchen is infested with ants.*

halfway decent Somewhat good, useful, or enjoyable, but not very; passable. *Anyone with a halfway decent phone can access the Internet these*

days! John: "So, what did you think of the film?" Bill: "Eh, it was halfway decent, I guess."

halfway house 1. A housing facility that provides treatment and rehabilitation services to people overcoming disabilities or addictions. *Once the halfway house helps Mark recover from his heroin addiction, he'll be able to return to his hometown and move forward with his life.* 2. A combination of two different things. *That restaurant is a halfway house between a burger joint and a sushi bar. Weird, right?* 3. The center point of a trip or journey. *To prevent us from becoming too tired on the long drive, we decided to stop at a halfway house to get some rest.*

Hallmark moment A particularly poignant, memorable, or emotionally touching moment or event, i.e., one that would be suitable as a greeting card. A reference to the Hallmark brand of greeting cards. Sometimes used ironically or satirically. *With so much of the extended family coming to visit, Grandpa's 80th birthday is turning into quite the Hallmark moment!*

HAM rude slang An abbreviation for "hard as a motherfucker." Usually used as an intensifier. *We lost because the other team went HAM from the opening face-off to the final buzzer—and we sure didn't.*

hammer and sickle An emblem of the Communist Party. The phrase is sometimes used as a shorthand way to refer to Communism. *You don't see flags with the hammer and sickle too often these days, do you? The Red Scare was rooted in fear of the hammer and sickle.*

hammer and tongs See [go at it hammer and tongs](#).

hammer-headed Stupid. *He's so hammer-headed he probably just walked by the entrance to the train station and didn't even see the huge sign out front.*

hammer (something) into (one's/someone's) head To commit some piece of information into one's or someone else's long-term memory, especially through intense repetition. *How many times do I have to hammer it into your head? Do not drive my car unless I give you permission first! I've just been trying to hammer these formulas into my head for the big test tomorrow!*

hammer (something) into (one's/someone's) thick skull

To commit some piece of information into one's or someone else's long-term memory, especially through intense repetition. *How many times do I have to hammer it into your thick skull? Do not drive my car unless I give you permission first! I've just been trying to hammer these formulas into my thick skull for the big test tomorrow!*

hand in (something) A contributory role in something. *It was pretty exciting to have a hand in launching the new business. We're going to find everyone who had a hand in this robbery and arrest them.*

hand-me-down A second-hand (not new) item, usually a piece of clothing, that is passed down for continued use, often from an older sibling to a younger one. *Maria was tired of getting her older sister's hand-me-downs and looked forward to being able to buy her own clothes.*

hand on the torch To give something to someone else, often one's position and/or responsibilities. *Because Gina is retiring, she is handing on the torch to me, and I'll take over her job as supervisor. My grandmother is unable to stand long enough to cook such a large meal, so we're making Thanksgiving dinner this year—she has handed on the torch to us.*

hand (one) (one's) head To completely destroy or devastate someone—as emphasized by the phrase's image of decapitation. *I thought I was doing well in my new role, but man, did my boss hand me my head in my performance review!*

hand (something) to (someone) on a plate To give or relinquish something to someone very easily, without him or her having to work very hard to get or achieve it. *The team's defense has been atrocious today, handing a victory to their opponents on a plate. If we can get the government to subsidize our project, we'll have our yearly earnings handed to us on a plate.*

hand to hand Involving or characterized by people in close proximity to one another. (Hyphenated if used as a modifier.) *The journalist moved hand to hand among the crowd of protesters to get a better sense of their varied concerns. The Internet has transformed bullying from a hand-to-hand act to one done from a distance.*

hand to mouth See [\(from\) hand to mouth](#).

hand-to-mouth Having, providing, or characterized by the bare

minimum of money, food, or resources to survive, with little or nothing else to spare. *I enjoy being a college student, but I'm so sick of this hand-to-mouth lifestyle.*

hand with (something) Help with a task or chore. *Could you please give me a hand with carrying the laundry up the stairs?*

handbags at dawn A confrontation or disagreement that is highly aggressive, emotionally expressive, and/or highly dramatic, but which does not end or result in violence. Used originally and primarily in reference to football (soccer) players, who would be sent off if they engaged in violent actions, the phrase is a play on the clichéd "pistols at dawn," indicating a forthcoming pistol duel. Primarily heard in UK. *It was handbags at dawn between the two players, who had been verbally taunting one another throughout the match.*

handbags at ten paces A confrontation or disagreement that is highly aggressive, emotionally expressive, and/or highly dramatic, but which does not end or result in violence. Used originally and primarily in reference to football (soccer) players, who would be sent off if they engaged in violent actions, the phrase is a play on the clichéd "pistols at ten paces," indicating a forthcoming pistol duel. Primarily heard in UK. *It was handbags at ten paces between the two players, who had been verbally taunting one another throughout the match.*

handful Something or someone that is difficult to manage. *Joan's daughter is very polite and well-behaved, but her son is a real handful, always getting into trouble. This project seemed easy at first but it has become a real handful, and I'm not sure I'm going to finish by the deadline.*

handle on **1.** A good physical hold on something. *Make sure you've got a handle on your end of the couch before we try to lift it.* **2.** A newfound understanding of a topic or concept. *Once I got a handle on how to operate the new system, I found that it made my job much easier.*

handle to (one's) name **1.** A title added before one's name, as may indicate one's position, profession, or rank. *The disgraced doctor was stripped of his medical license and the handle to his name. After marrying the duke, it took some time to get used to having a handle to my name.* **2.** A nickname or sobriquet. *Because of my need for glasses, I had a handle to my name all throughout elementary school: Four Eyes. The Big Apple been the*

handle to New York City's name since the 1920s.

(someone's) hands are full Someone is too busy or has too much going on to be able to do or become involved with anything else. *I really wish that I could babysit for you tonight, but I'm afraid my hands are full at the moment. Normally I'd pass a project like this on to Dave, but his hands are quite full this month.*

handsome is that handsome does One's character is more important than one's physical attractiveness. *Would you go out with my friend Doug? I know you don't think he's very good-looking, but he's just the nicest guy, and handsome is that handsome does.*

handwaving Actions, words, or ideas that are meant to impress or appear convincing but which are in reality insubstantial or inconsequential. *The governor has been doing a lot of political handwaving over the issue of immigration lately, but few suspect that anything will actually be accomplished in the coming year.*

(one's) (hand)writing is like chicken scratch One's handwriting is very poor, messy, and/or illegible, likened to the marks made in the dirt by a chicken. *I can't understand these notes at all, your handwriting is like chicken scratch!*

hang a U-ie To make a U-turn. Primarily heard in US, Australia. *Dang it, I forgot my keys! Hang a U-ie up ahead so I can go back and get them.*

hang about 1. To loiter (somewhere); to idly waste time (somewhere). *Would you two quit hanging about and help me clean up this mess already? I wish you wouldn't hang about the house like this. Why don't you go outside for a while?* **2.** To frequent the company (of someone); to spend a lot of time (with someone). *Why are you always hanging about with that jerk? All he ever does is insult us! I wish your little brother would quit hanging about. Doesn't he have his own friends to spend time with?*

hang an arse obsolete To loiter; to lag or remain behind; to be reluctant or sluggish in moving forward, especially out of cowardice. *My good sir, why do you hang an arse? Art thou afeared of the perils ahead?*

hang by the eyelids To have a loose grip on something. Can be used either literally or figuratively. *For the tug-of-war, don't just hang by the eyelids, gentlemen! Really get a secure grip on the rope and keep a strong*

stance! I currently have a D in this class, but I'm just hanging by the eyelids —I really need to get a tutor.

hang on (one's) sleeve To be totally reliant on someone else. *You're 30 years old, so stop hanging on your mother's sleeve and get a job already! I know my kids are too young to be self-sufficient, but sometimes I just need a night without anyone hanging on my sleeve.*

hang on (someone's) every word To listen very closely, intently, or with obsequious attention to what someone is saying. *The politician was so charismatic that he had even his detractors hanging on his every word.*

hang on (someone's) words To listen very closely, intently, or with obsequious attention to what someone is saying. *The politician was so charismatic that even his detractors were hanging on his words.*

hang one on To drink alcohol, especially to the point of drunkenness. *After graduation, our gang of friends all went out to hang one on.*

hang paper To write a dishonored or bad check. *My ex-husband has been attempting to hang paper all over the state.*

hang the moon See [think \(one\) hung the moon](#).

hang the moon and the stars See [think \(someone\) hung the moon and the stars](#).

hang up **1.** verb To disconnect a phone call. The term is often used to mean to end the call in the middle of the conversation, but it can also mean to disconnect the call when it is finished. *Don't you dare hang up on me, I'm not done issuing my complaint! I can't hear you anymore, it must be a bad signal. I'm going to hang up now, so call me back if you can hear this.* **2.** noun (usually hyphenated) A disconnected phone call. *The phone's been ringing all day, but it's just been a bunch of hang-ups. I think someone's pranking us.* **3.** noun (usually hyphenated) An impediment of some kind, usually an emotional or psychological insecurity, that prevents a person from making progress in a situation. *Jeff's personal hang-up is that he always felt like his parents supported his brother more than they supported him.*

hang up (one's) boots To retire from playing a sport. *After suffering so many injuries on the field, I think it's time for him to hang up his boots.*

hang up (one's) fiddle To retire from something. *I've been at the company for 30 years, so it's time for me to hang up my fiddle.*

hang (up) (one's) hat To live somewhere; to take up residence. *I'm originally from the East Coast, but I hang my hat in San Francisco these days. I've been traveling around the world for so long that it feels strange to finally have a place to hang up my hat.*

hang up (one's) hatchet 1. To make peace with someone. It is most likely an earlier version of the phrase "bury the hatchet." *Can you please hang up your hatchet and make up with your sister already? I can't take the constant fighting.* **2.** To take a break from work; to stop working. *Hang up your hatchet, buddy, it's lunchtime! It's really time for me to hang up my hatchet and find a new job somewhere else.*

hang up (one's) spurs To stop doing something; to retire from something. *I've been at the company for 30 years, so it's time for me to hang up my spurs. You're an adult now, and you can't stay out all weekend—it's time to hang up your spurs and ditch the party scene.*

hangar queen 1. An aircraft that spends more time being serviced or requiring maintenance than it does flying. *The new stealth jet was a promising addition to the Air Force's fleet, but due to its frequent breakdowns, it has proved to be more of a hangar queen than a useful plane.* **2.** An airplane that is permanently grounded so that its parts may be used to repair other aircraft. *I loved my first plane, but as I began buying more, it became a mere hangar queen to replace the parts of the newer ones.*

hangdog expression A self-pitying expression of abjection, defeat, shame, or guilt. *Don't just stare at me with that hangdog expression. You've already made a mess of things, so now you have to deal with it! The losing team walked away from the pitch with hangdog expressions after their execrable defeat at the hands of their rivals.*

hangdog look A self-pitying expression of abjection, defeat, shame, or guilt. *Don't just stare at me with that hangdog look. You've already made a mess of things, so now you have to deal with it! The losing team walked away from the pitch with hangdog looks after their execrable defeat at the hands of their rivals.*

hanged if I know See [\(I'll be\) hanged if I know!](#)

hanger-on Someone who spends time with a person or a group of people hoping to benefit in some way from the association. The term implies that

such a person is sycophantic and/or unwanted. *Ever since Jennifer became a famous actress, she's surrounded by hangers-on trying to use her to further their own careers.*

hanging offense A crime, misdeed, or impropriety that is (hyperbolically) perceived to warrant death by hanging. Primarily heard in US. *Political correctness has become so authoritarian these days that saying anything with even the slightest derogatory implication is seen as a hanging offense!*

hangry slang Cranky due to hunger. A portmanteau of "hungry" and "angry." *I know I was supposed to leave for the airport earlier, but I had to eat something first. Being hangry in the security line is a situation I'd like to avoid!*

happen along To appear, arrive, pass, or come upon casually or by chance. *I happened along a quaint new craft store the other day. I happened along your brother yesterday in the grocery store. If another tornado like that happens along any time soon, this town is done for!*

happen by To appear, arrive, pass, or come upon casually or by chance. *I happened by a quaint new craft store the other day. I happened by your brother yesterday in the grocery store. If another tornado like that happens by any time soon, this town is done for!*

happily ever after This phrase borrowed from fairy tale endings is used to suggest that everything will work out perfectly in the future. It is often used after a couple has gotten married. *It was such a beautiful wedding, and I just know that Allie and Michael will live happily ever after. It's not like real people just magically live happily ever after—it takes a lot of hard work!*

happy accident A mistake or unplanned event that results in a beneficial outcome or pleasant surprise. *The creation of penicillin was a happy accident that resulted from Alexander Fleming's discovery of mold growing in his agar plates.*

happy as a clam at high tide Very joyful and content. Clams are dug at low tide, so a clam at high tide would be able to remain uncaught. *Look at your sister out there! She's happy as a clam at high tide now that she's back in the starting lineup again. I know I'll be happy as a clam at high tide once I get this stupid cast off my leg.*

happy as a lark Very happy; contented. *I've been happy as a lark ever since we moved to the countryside. Johnny's in a bit of a bad mood, but just give him a new toy to play with and he'll be happy as a lark.*

happy as a pig in shit rude slang Very happy and content in one's situation. *Johnny loves politics, so he's happy as a pig in shit at this convention.*

the happy day A wedding, or marriage in general. *So now that all your siblings are married, when will the happy day be for you?*

happy days **1.** Literally, a period of time that is pleasant, prosperous, or happy. *With the economy recovering, it looks like the happy days might finally be coming back. It is not uncommon to long for the happy days of one's youth.* **2.** An expression of congratulation or happiness regarding positive news or information. Primarily heard in UK, Ireland. *We're all going to get a bonus at the end of the month? Happy days! John: "My work visa was finally approved yesterday." Janet: "Ah, happy days! That must be a weight off your shoulders!"* **3.** An informal phrase of farewell. *I'll see you tomorrow, class. Happy days!*

happy hunting ground A utopia. Used by Native Americans to describe the afterlife. *The annual car swap meet is a happy hunting ground for automotive enthusiasts.*

happy medium A healthy balance between two extremes. *It can be difficult for working mothers to find a happy medium between maintaining their careers and caring for their families.*

happy warrior One who remains stalwart and undiscouraged in the face of adversity. The phrase is often applied to politicians who are nominated for higher offices but ultimately are not elected. *The other party's candidate is so strong that we need to nominate a happy warrior who can gracefully shoulder the disappointments we may face.*

hard and fast Strictly or rigidly adhered to; strong, binding, and clearly defined. Used especially to describe rules. *I have some hard and fast rules in my company; break them, and you're out of here. The duties you're responsible for are hard and fast, so don't become lax in your role.*

hard as a motherfucker rude slang A phrase that usually follows a verb as an intensifier. Often abbreviated as "HAM." *We lost because the*

other team went hard as a motherfucker from the opening face-off to the final buzzer—and we sure didn't.

hard by Nearby; in close proximity to. A less popular variant of "hard on." *If you want to follow me to the restaurant, stay hard by my car so that I don't lose you.*

hard cases make bad laws Laws based on unique and unusual situations are ineffective or difficult to enforce. A: *"Just because one idiot threw a cupcake in the cafeteria, we're banned from having food anywhere on campus."* B: *"I don't know how they're going to enforce that—hard cases make bad laws."*

hard done-by Mistreated or abused; cheated; dejected. Often preceded by "feel." *The company paid Steve a generous severance package after firing him, but he still claims he was hard done-by. I don't think you have a right to feel hard done-by since you received the same level of assessment as everyone else!*

a hard egg to crack A person, thing, situation, or problem that is particularly difficult to understand, solve, or deal with. *I've been dating Jenny for over a year, and I still think she's a hard egg to crack! Figuring out the best way to modernize our product without alienating existing customers is definitely a hard egg to crack. The spy we captured is a hard egg to crack—he hasn't said a thing since we began the interrogation.*

hard hat **1.** modifier Requiring the use of rigid protective headgear, usually a location or area. *This is a hard-hat zone, so you won't be let in unless you're wearing the appropriate protective clothes.* **2.** modifier Of or characterized by extremely conservative views, beliefs, or opinions. *This area of the country has some pretty entrenched hard-hat politics.* **3.** noun A construction worker, in reference to the protective headpiece made from rigid metal or plastic that is often worn in construction work. *Though the work was tough, I loved working as a hard hat when I was younger.* **4.** noun Any working-class individual with extremely conservative views or beliefs. *Though opinion polls show the governor's approval ratings slipping in the rest of the state, she still enjoys considerable support from hard hats in more rural areas.*

hard knocks The real and practical experiences of life, especially those involving hardship or adversity. *The problem with you is that you've been*



spoiled your whole life. You haven't had any hard knocks to teach you what the world is really like!

hard liquor Any distilled alcoholic beverage, such as whiskey, vodka, gin, etc. "Hard" here is a reference to the higher percentage of alcohol in comparison to wine or beer. Primarily heard in US, Canada. *I've learned to steer clear of hard liquor if I want to avoid a hangover the next day!*

hard luck **1.** modifier Of or characterized by misfortune, hardship, adversity, etc. *I can understand John's tendency to drink, as he's led quite a hard-luck life. Here he goes again with some hard-luck story to get us to pay for his drinks.* **2.** noun Misfortune, hardship, adversity, etc. *I've been having a lot of hard luck lately. It just seems like nothing is going right for me!* **3.** An expression of sympathy or condolences for someone who has experienced some slight or mild misfortune or hardship. *I just heard that Janet broke up with you. That's hard luck, buddy.*

hard-luck story A typically self-pitying tale of misfortune, hardship, adversity, etc., told especially to gain sympathy or charity from others. *Here he goes again with some hard-luck story to get us to pay for his drinks.*

a hard nut (to crack) A person, thing, situation, or problem that is particularly difficult to understand, solve, or deal with. *I've been dating Jenny for over a year, and I still think she's a hard nut to crack! Figuring out the best way to modernize our product without alienating existing customers is definitely a hard nut to crack. The spy we captured is a hard nut; he hasn't said a thing since we began the interrogation.*

hard-on **1.** slang An erection. **2.** rude slang A strong desire or affinity for something. *Chrissy had a real hard-on for that band, but now she thinks they're sell-outs.*

hard on the eyes Unattractive; ugly. *Personally, I think Tom's new boyfriend is a little hard on the eyes, but Tom seems to love him, so that's all that matters. This house seems a bit hard on the eyes after the luxurious apartment we used to live in.*

hard pass slang No; not interested; absolutely not. *If my ex is going to be at this party, hard pass. Have fun without me.*

a hard pill to swallow Something, especially a fact or piece of news, that is unpleasant or difficult but which is unavoidable or must be accepted. *It*

was a hard pill to swallow learning that my father's fortune had been squandered. Her recent breakup with Janet was a hard pill to swallow.

hard power The ability of a nation or other political entity to reach a desired outcome through force or the threat of force (i.e. military action). (The opposite of soft power.) *Many of the top military brass have stated their belief that the nation's interests are best served through maintaining traditional hard power in combination with so-called soft power methods, such as diplomacy.*

a hard row to hoe A particularly difficult or problematic task, situation, or set of circumstances to contend with or confront. *Tax reform was one of the new president's primary campaign promises, but it will likely prove a hard row to hoe, given the deep divisions in congress. I know finishing this thesis will be a hard row to hoe, but I'm actually looking forward to the challenge.*

hard time Time spent in a prison, often implied to be as unpleasant as possible. *When we catch these criminals, they're going to be doing at least 20 years of hard time. Solitary confinement is the hardest time you can do.*

a hard time 1. Grief or frustration intentionally inflicted on one by another, in the form of teasing, bullying, or other ill treatment. *The school bully started giving the new kid a hard time until the teacher sent him to the principal's office.* 2. Difficulty or a source of struggle. Often used in the phrase "have a hard time." *I'm really having a hard time in math this semester—I need to get a tutor.*

hard yards Particularly hard work or a large amount of effort (toward some task), especially in sports. Often used with the verbs "do," "make," or "put in." *You're never going to have a successful business if you aren't willing to put in the hard yards yourself. Our team did the hard yards all game long, and we managed to pull out a victory in the end because of it.*

the harder they fall See [the bigger they are, the harder they fall](#).

hardheaded 1. Inflexible; stubborn; overly willful or obstinate. Also written as "hard-headed." *Our son is so hardheaded. Once he's made up his mind about something, there's no way anyone can change it! We've got a hard-headed new boss in the office who thinks her way of doing things is the only correct one.* 2. Very practical and shrewd; not concerned with or influenced by emotions. Also written as "hard-headed." *We've hired a*

consultant to give us a hardheaded analysis of the company's future.

hardly dry behind the ears Not yet fully mature; not well experienced in some situation or for some role. *You boys can't enlist for the army, you're hardly dry behind the ears!*

hardly ever Nearly never; very infrequently; only on a few or rare occasions. *We used to go visit Grandma and Grandpa every year when I was a kid, but nowadays I hardly ever see them. I hardly ever get the chance to go out to the movies alone since having kids.*

harp away at (someone or something) To complain about or dwell upon someone or something repeatedly and to the point of tediousness. *Mark is always harping away at how little money he makes. I wish he would come up with something new to talk about! You need to stop harping away at your boss and just quit already!*

harp on one string To dwell tediously and repeatedly upon a single subject or topic, especially in complaint. Likened to playing the same note over and over again on a harp. *Mark is always harping on one string about how little money he makes. I wish he would come up with something new to talk about! I get it, you don't like your job. Quit harping on one string!*

harp on the same string To dwell tediously and repeatedly upon a single subject or topic, especially in complaint. Likened to playing the same note over and over again on a harp. *Mark is always harping on the same string about how little money he makes. I wish he would come up with something new to talk about! I get it, you don't like your job. Quit harping on the same string!*

harrowing experience An experience that is frightening, chilling, or disturbing, either due to an implied or actual element of danger, or from being physically or emotionally unpleasant. *With so much traffic, cycling in this city can be a harrowing experience. Walking through that graveyard last night was quite the harrowing experience. The film is very good, but it's a bit of a harrowing experience; it doesn't shy away from intense subject matter.*

has-been A person who is no longer admired, famous, or popular. *The young actor constantly sought media attention because he feared becoming a has-been too early in his career. You're not even a has-been, you're a never-was!*

hash slinger A cook or a waitress, especially at a diner or cheap restaurant. ("Hash," in this sense, refers to a dish or stew of chopped meat and vegetables, not hashish.) Primarily heard in US. *I worked as a hash slinger for several years to pay my way through college.*

hashtag 1. noun A word or phrase (written without spaces) preceded by the pound sign or hash mark (#) in a post on social media, meant as a way to add additional information, humor, or a searchable tag to the post. "Hashtag" is sometimes said humorously in conversation as well. *She used the "unedited" hashtag, but that picture looks too good to not have a filter. A: "What a great day we've had!" B: "I know! Hashtag blessed."* **2.** verb To mark a post with such a hashtag. *She hashtagged that picture "unedited," but it looks way too good to not have a filter.*

hasn't slept a wink See [not sleep a wink](#).

hat trick 1. In cricket, three wickets knocked off by a bowler in three consecutive deliveries. First used to describe H.H. Stephenson's accomplishment of such in 1858, and so named because he was allegedly awarded a new hat afterward. *He came amazingly close to securing a hat trick, but the third batter managed to dash his hopes by scoring a run.* **2.** In sports, especially hockey or football (soccer), three goals or points scored by a single player in one game or match. *Fans' hats littered the ice to celebrate the player's hat trick, his fourth so far this season.* **3.** Three consecutive wins or achievements by a single athlete, such as winning three consecutive major tournaments in tennis or golf. *Matthews has been playing the best golf of her life this year, and she is poised to secure a hat trick if she wins the Ladies European Tour next month.* **4.** In baseball, to hit three home runs or be struck out three times in a single game. *With such a ghastly performance so far, the team's star player has been relegated to the dugout after getting a hat trick. Fans were on their feet for her hat trick as her third home run sailed into the bleachers.*

hatchet job A very critical attack on someone or something, especially through media outlets. *The movie critic did a real hatchet job on the new film in last week's paper.*

hatchet man A person hired by a company to make sweeping changes to save money, usually by reducing staff. *We knew our days were numbered when our company brought in a hatchet man to make cuts to the staff.*

haters gonna hate slang There will always be those who criticize anything and everything. The phrase is often used to dismiss such critics while acknowledging that it is no use trying to stop them. *I don't enjoy when opposing teams' fans boo me, but, hey, haters gonna hate.*

haul (one's) ashes **1.** To leave or depart, especially with great haste. *I'm going to break your nose if you don't haul your ashes out of here!* **2.** slang To engage in sexual activity, especially intercourse; to achieve sexual release or gratification. Also phrased as "get one's ashes hauled." *After six months at sea, I was quite anxious to haul my ashes!*

haul (someone) over the coals To scold, reprimand, or reprove someone severely for an error or mistake. *I was hauled over the coals by my boss last week for messing up the accounting software. I know Mary messed up, but don't haul her over the coals too hard for it.*

haunted house **1.** A house that is said to be visited by and/or home to ghosts or spirits. *We're going to have a séance at the haunted house down the street, to see if we can talk to the spirits.* **2.** A house decorated to be spooky that serves as an attraction, usually around Halloween. *I think the kids are too young to go to a haunted house, honey—I don't want them to have nightmares. Every year at Halloween, my family turns the garage into a haunted house by playing spooky music and hanging cobwebs everywhere.*

have a bad time To have an unpleasant experience of something (usually used in the past tense). *I had a really bad time last night. My date showed up an hour late and then was so disinterested that she left half an hour later! The lecture was incredibly boring, but I tried to hide the fact that I was having a bad time.*

have a bellyful (of something) **1.** To have as much (food) as one wants or is able to eat. A: "Would you like seconds?" B: "No, thank you, I've had a bellyful." **2.** To have more (of something) than one can or is willing to tolerate or endure. *You're looking for trouble, huh? Well mister, you're about to have a bellyful! I've had a bellyful of my parents' criticism over my college applications.*

have a big head To be conceited, arrogant, or self-aggrandizing. *Cheryl has such a big head on her, all she ever talks about is herself. Janice has had a bit of a big head ever since she got that promotion.*

have a big mouth To have a tendency or habit of speaking incessantly, indiscreetly, and/or in a noisy, boorish manner. *I can't stand Terry's new husband, he has such a big mouth! It's like no one else gets a chance to speak when he's here. If I'd known you had such a big mouth, I'd have never shared my secret with you!*

have a big pair See [have a pair](#).

have a bite To eat, often a snack or a small meal that can be consumed quickly. *Let's have a bite before we get on the road. I just stopped to get a bite, but I'll be home soon, I promise.*

have a brick in (one's) hat To be drunk. A: "Don't mind him, he just has a brick in his hat." B: "Seriously? How is he drunk already?"

have a charmed existence To lead a life characterized or seemingly protected by marked good fortune or luck, without (or rarely) encountering trouble, danger, or misfortune. *Celebrities seem to have a rather charmed existence, with everything handed to them on a silver platter. Other than minor colds, I've never been ill in my life. I guess I've just had a charmed existence.*

have a charmed life To lead a life characterized or seemingly protected by exceptionally good fortune or luck, without (or rarely) encountering trouble, danger, or misfortune. *Great family, great job, nice house. That guy really has a charmed life. You've had a charmed life if you've never been in any kind of trouble before now.*

have a Chinaman at (one's) neck To suffer from an addiction to narcotics or the withdrawal symptoms caused by it. A derogatory phrase, it likely refers to opium's classical association with Southeast Asia. *Having that Chinaman at her neck has kept Janet out of work for years. I want to get clean and turn my life around, but having this Chinaman at my neck is absolute torture.*

have a Chinaman on (one's) back To suffer from an addiction to narcotics or the withdrawal symptoms caused by it. A derogatory phrase, it likely refers to opium's classical association with Southeast Asia. *Having that Chinaman on her back has kept Janet out of work for years. I want to get clean and turn my life around, but having this Chinaman on my back is absolute torture.*

have a clean conscience To be guiltless or have no feelings of guilt or remorse over something. *Don't you dare accuse me of causing this, I have a clean conscience! Some people think I should have treated him better, but I have a clean conscience in this whole affair.*

have a corner on the market To exclusively control the supply or sale of a particular product or service, or to do so much more successfully than anyone else. *Through clever and aggressive marketing, they were able to have a corner on the market in coffee shops across the Pacific Northwest.*

have a couple To have multiple alcoholic drinks (not necessarily just two), especially to the point of becoming mildly intoxicated. *John's usually quite reticent around other people, but he becomes the life of the party after he's had a couple. Nothing helps me unwind after a long week of working like having a couple with some good friends.*

have a crush on (someone) To have a romantic infatuation with someone, especially unbeknownst to that person. *I've had a crush on Tommy for years.*

have a dog in the hunt To have some vested interest in or something to gain by a given situation. *Some people can watch a football game no matter who is playing, but I'm only interested if I've got a dog in the hunt. Many small business owners—whether they know it or not—have a dog in the hunt with this proposed tax bill.*

have a fable for (something) To have a strong or particular preference, affinity, or weakness for something. *I always had a fable for animals growing up, so I knew that I wanted to be a veterinarian someday.*

have a falling out See [a falling out](#).

have a few To have multiple alcoholic drinks, especially to the point of becoming mildly intoxicated. *John's usually quite reticent around other people, but he becomes the life of the party after he's had a few. Nothing helps me unwind after a long week of working like having a few with some good friends.*

have a few kangaroos loose in the top paddock To be crazy; to act, think, or behave in an eccentric, foolish, or nonsensical manner. Primarily heard in Australia. *Tommy must have a few kangaroos loose in the top paddock if he thinks he can convince our mother to let him get a tattoo*

for his birthday. There's an old lady who stands on the corner yelling at strangers all day. I think she might have a few kangaroos loose in the top paddock.

have a few screws loose See [have a screw loose](#).

have a fix on (something) To have a firm, clear understanding or determination of something. *I hope everyone has a fix on the material, as you'll be tested on it next week. I thought I had a pretty good fix on English idioms, but I don't understand this one at all!*

have a fling (with someone) To have a brief, noncommittal sexual relationship (with someone). *I had a few flings in college, but it was only after I graduated that I started having any serious relationships. The professor lost her job for having a fling with one of her students.*

have a forked tongue To make empty or false promises; to speak duplicitously or beguilingly. Likened to having the tongue of a serpent, a traditional symbol of deceit and dishonesty. *That's the last time I lend Brian any money, that guy has a forked tongue! He learned quickly that having a forked tongue was an effective way of getting ahead in business.*

have a gas To have a thoroughly entertaining, enjoyable, and/or amusing time. *I went out last night with all my old high school buddies for a night on the town. We had a gas! We were all having a gas at the party when the police showed up to tell us we were being too loud.*

have a go (at someone) 1. To physically attack someone. Primarily heard in UK. *Watch out for that bull in the back field—he'll have a go at you if you get too close. There were couple of drunkards having a go outside local pub last night.* 2. To criticize, berate, or verbally harass someone at length and/or with great intensity. Primarily heard in UK. *My wife had a go at me last night for coming home drunk again. My parents were always having a go when I was a kid—it's no wonder they got divorced.*

have a go (at something) To attempt to do or undertake something, especially that which is unfamiliar or new. Primarily heard in UK. *I know a lot of this work is new to you, but just have a go and let me know if you have any questions. I'm having a go at doing my own taxes this year to save on the cost of hiring an accountant.*

have a golden touch See [have \(the\) golden touch](#).



have a good day cliché An expression of farewell. *Sounds great, Bob. I'll talk to you tomorrow. Have a good day!*

have a good name (somewhere or in something) To have a respected reputation (in something or some place). *Our family has always had a good name in this town due to the philanthropy of my great-great-grandfather. She has a very good name in politics.*

have a good one cliché An expression of farewell. *Sounds great, Bob. I'll talk to you tomorrow. Have a good one!*

have a (good/solid/sound/etc.) grasp of/on (something) To have a firm, clear understanding or determination of something. *I hope everyone has a solid grasp of the material, as you'll be tested on it next week. I thought I had a pretty good grasp on English idioms, but I don't understand this one at all!*

have a handle on (something) To have a firm, clear understanding or determination of something. *I hope everyone has a handle on the material, as you'll be tested on it next week. I thought I had a pretty good handle on English idioms, but I don't understand this one at all!*

have a handle on (something) To understand (something). *Now that I have a handle on the situation, I've come up with a solution. I think I have a handle on this calculus chapter, if you need some help with it.*

have a hankering for (something) To have a very strong, persistent desire or craving for something. *I've been having a hankering for sushi ever since I came back from Tokyo last month. The former heavyweight champion has had a hankering for a chance to reclaim her title.*

have a hard head **1.** To be inflexible or stubborn; to be overly willful or obstinate. *Our son has such a hard head. Once he's made up his mind about something, there's no way anyone can change it!* **2.** To be very practical and shrewd; to not be persuaded or influenced by emotions. *You have to have a hard head to work in this job—you can't let people's emotional appeals influence your decisions.* **3.** To be dim-witted, stupid, or an especially slow learner. *I've always had a hard head when it comes to math.* **4.** Literally, to have an especially hard skull, often said humorously after receiving a mild blow to the head. *A: "Oops! Sorry, I didn't mean to hit you!" B: "It's OK, I have a hard head!"*

have a heart of glass To have or be in a state of extreme emotional fragility or susceptibility, one that is easily influenced or affected by others. *Poor Mary has a heart of glass; I don't know how she'll recover from Tom's refusal to go to the prom with her.*

have a heavy heart To have a dejected or miserable attitude or disposition; to be in a depressed or grievous state. *I've had a terribly heavy heart since my dog passed away. I have a heavy heart leaving home, but hopefully, this move is for the best.*

have a hope in hell See [not have a hope in hell \(of doing something\)](#).

have a hope in hell See [not have a hope in hell](#).

have a jag on To be drunk. A: "Don't mind him, he just has a jag on." B: "Seriously? How is he drunk already?"

have a knack See [have \(got\) a knack for \(something\)](#).

have a laugh 1. To joke or kid around; to act or behave in a lighthearted, foolish manner. Primarily heard in UK. *Ah, don't be upset, we were only having a laugh!* 2. To have a fun or enjoyable time or experience. Primarily heard in UK. *I love hanging out with my old schooltime friends—we always have a laugh when we get together.*

have a lean patch To experience or be in the midst of a period of failure, decline, or poor performance or results. *Her business has had a bit of a lean patch lately. If things don't pick up soon, she might have to close shop. Though the team has been having a lean patch in recent years, they still have a very devoted fanbase.*

have a lick of the tar brush dated ethnic slur To be of mixed race, such that one's skin is darker than that of a person with only white ancestry. *My racist aunt refuses to vote for someone who has a lick of the tar brush.*

have a light heart To have a carefree, uplifted attitude; to be in a happy or gladdened state or condition. *Though it is, of course, bittersweet to leave my friends and family behind, I have a light heart because of the amazing opportunities that await me in Europe.*

have a long memory To have a clear memory of events that happened long ago. *My grandma has a long memory of her childhood in Russia. It's astonishing hearing how things were when she was young! I always have a*

long memory for people who disrespect me. Once you're in my bad books, you're there forever!

have a look-see To have a very quick look or brief examination. A: "Is there any more of that cake left in the fridge?" B: "I'll go have a look-see!"

have a loose screw To be or seem particularly silly, eccentric, crazy, or mentally unstable. (Also written as "have a screw loose.") *That guy on the corner must have a loose screw or something because he's been standing out there yelling obscenities at passersby all morning. My old Uncle Pete has a few loose screws, but he's a really nice guy. What the hell's the matter with you? Do you have a screw loose, or what?*

have a loud mouth To have a tendency or habit of speaking incessantly, indiscreetly, and/or in a noisy, boastful manner. *I can't stand Terry's new husband—he has such a loud mouth when he drinks! If I'd known you had such a loud mouth, I'd have never shared my secret with you!*

have a lump in (one's) throat To have difficulty speaking as a result of feeling that one is about to cry due to an intense emotional response to something. *Though I was excited for my daughter to start her college experience, I still had a lump in my throat saying goodbye to her at the airport.*

have (a) method in (one's) madness To have a specific, rational purpose in what one is doing or planning, even though it may seem crazy or absurd to another person. *I know you don't understand my motivation for this decision, but after the dust settles, you'll see that I have a method in my madness. You may have method in your madness, but these radical changes to the business could still prove catastrophic.*

have (a) method to (one's) madness To have a specific, rational purpose in what one is doing or planning, even though it may seem crazy or absurd to another person. *I know you don't understand my motivation for this decision, but after the dust settles, you'll see that I have a method to my madness. You may have method to your madness, but these radical changes to the business could still prove catastrophic.*

have a mind like a sieve To be exceptionally forgetful or absentminded. *I need to start getting more sleep at night, because lately I've had a mind like a sieve. John has a mind like a sieve—I had to leave him three separate reminders about the play tomorrow night!*

have a moonflaw in the brain To act very strangely. A "moonflaw" is an obsolete term to describe an odd trait or behavior seemingly influenced by the moon. *The way she runs about in a frenzy when the sun goes down makes me wonder if she has a moonflaw in the brain.*

have a mountain to climb To have an extremely difficult, seemingly impossible task at hand. *After losing Ohio to his opponent, the president now has a mountain to climb if he wants to hold on to his job.*

have a mouth of a sailor See [have the mouth of a sailor](#).

have a nodding acquaintance (with someone or something) To have a slight or precursory knowledge of someone or something. *Jim asked me to help fix his computer for him, but I'm afraid I only have a nodding acquaintance with how his machine works. Ruth and I had only a nodding acquaintance before going to the party, but once we got talking, it was like we'd been friends our whole lives.*

have a package on To be drunk. Possibly a variation of the phrase "tie a bag on." Primarily heard in UK. A: *"Don't mind him, he just has a package on."* B: *"Seriously? How is he drunk already?"*

have a pair vulgar slang To act or behave in a strong, confident, and/or courageous manner. Though short for "have a pair of testicles/balls" (discretion should be used because of this), the phrase can be said by or of either a male or female. Often used with an intensifier, such as "quite a pair" or "a big pair." Primarily heard in US. *Crime is really bad in this town, so you've got to have a big pair to be a police officer around here. Wow, your sister must have quite a pair to stand up to her boss like that!*

have a part in (something) To be involved in some capacity with establishing, maintaining, or running something. *Look, we all have a part in making sure this campaign is successful, so we each have to do our best.*

have a part in (something) 1. To have a specific involvement or participation in something. *There's no use lying to the committee, Mr. Marshall, as we know for a fact that you had a part in hiding your company's losses from its investors.* 2. Literally, to have a job portraying a certain character in a performance. *I hear that Samantha has a part in some new film. She's really making her way into the big leagues!*

have a penny to her name See [not have a penny to \(one's\) name](#).

have a price on (one's) head To have an amount of money being offered as a reward for one's capture. *I'm sorry, but we can't travel with your brother any longer. He has a price on his head, and it's too dangerous for the rest of us! I'll never be able to live peacefully in this town as long as I have a price on my head.*

have a right to See [have a/the right to \(something\)](#).

have a right to do See [have a/the right to \(do something\)](#).

have a role in (something) 1. To have a specific involvement or participation in something. *There's no use lying to the committee, Mr. Marshall, as we know for a fact that you had a role in hiding your company's losses from its investors.* 2. Literally, to have a job portraying a certain character in a performance. *I hear that Samantha has a role in some new film. She's really making her way into the big leagues!*

have a rough patch To experience or be in the midst of a period of trouble, difficulty, or hardship. *Her business has had a bit of a rough patch lately. If things don't pick up soon, she might have to close shop. We had a rough patch in our marriage after Frank lost his job, but now, we love each other more than ever.*

have a rough trot To experience an especially difficult or turbulent period or series of misfortune(s) or hardship(s). Primarily heard in Australia, New Zealand. *The beleaguered celebrity family has been having a rough trot in recent months, as news of yet another scandal started hitting the media outlets this afternoon. I can't believe Jake's wife was diagnosed with cancer. They've really had a rough trot lately, haven't they?*

have a say (in something) To have an active and participatory role in making or influencing a decision about something. *The best thing about working for a smaller company is that it finally feels like everyone has a say in how it should operate. You've decided to move the family to Alaska for a new job? Don't I have a say in the matter? We're all equals here, so everyone should have a say.*

have a score to settle To have an old problem, grudge, or grievance (with or against someone or something) that one wishes or intends to redress or rectify. *I have a score to settle with that no-good swindler who cheated me out of my inheritance. The former champion entered the competition having a*

score to settle, after being knocked out of the tournament last year by a newcomer.

have a screw loose To be or seem particularly silly, eccentric, crazy, or mentally unstable. (Also worded as "have a loose screw.") *That guy on the corner must have a screw loose or something, because he's been standing out there yelling obscenities at passersby all morning. My old uncle Pete has a few screws loose, but he's a really nice guy. What's the matter with you? Do you have a loose screw, or what?*

have a short temper See [short temper](#).

have a silver tongue To be particularly eloquently and/or artfully persuasive in speech. *He might not have much experience in politics, but he's got a silver tongue and is bound to win over a great deal of voters on his charismatic speeches alone.*

have (a) skeleton(s) in (one's)/the closet To have (an) embarrassing, unpleasant, damaging, or incriminating secret(s) from one's past. Primarily heard in US. *Even the most seemingly perfect people have some pretty shocking skeletons in their closets. She has a skeleton in her closet that could ruin her chance at the presidency if the press were to find out about it. My agoraphobia has always been something of a skeleton in the closet for me.*

have (a) skeleton(s) in (one's)/the cupboard To have (an) embarrassing, unpleasant, damaging, or incriminating secret(s) from one's past. Primarily heard in UK. *Even the most seemingly perfect people have some pretty shocking skeletons in their cupboards. She has a skeleton in her cupboard that could ruin her chance at being elected if the press were to find out about it. My agoraphobia has always been something of a skeleton in the cupboard for me.*

have a sneaking suspicion To have a slight but persistent premonition or intuition (about something). *Jimmy said he'd never be back, but I have a sneaking suspicion we'll see him again sooner or later.*

have a snoot full 1. To have enough alcoholic beverages as to be intoxicated; to be drunk. Also written as "have a snootful." Primarily heard in US. *The wine was free and the waiter kept filling my glass, so by the end of the evening, I'd had a snoot full! We all had a snoot full at the reception after the ceremony.* 2. To have more than enough of something; to be fed up with

something. Primarily heard in US. *To be honest, I've had a snoot full of everyone telling me how to live my life.*

have a solid grasp of See [have a \(good/solid/sound/etc.\) grasp of/on \(something\)](#).

have a spot of bother To have a small amount of trouble, difficulty, or unpleasantness with some task, thing, or person. *You might have a spot of bother finding a job after college, but you should never give up! Joe had a spot of bother accepting Mary's newfound success.*

have a spring in (one's) step To have a happy, energetic, and excited mood or manner, as indicated by the carefree way one walks. *Joe's had a spring in his step ever since he found out he was getting a promotion. I bet you'll have a spring in your step after I tell you this bit of good news!*

have a thick head **1.** To be dim-witted, stupid, or an especially slow learner. *I've always had a thick head when it comes to math.* **2.** To be inflexible or stubborn; to be overly willful or obstinate. *Our son has such a thick head. Once he's made up his mind about something, there's no way anyone can change it!* **3.** Literally, to have an especially dense skull, often said humorously after receiving a mild blow to the head. *A: "Oops! Sorry, I didn't mean to hit you!" B: "It's OK, I have a thick head!"* **4.** To have a painful feeling in one's head or have difficulty thinking clearly, especially as the result of a hangover or illness. Primarily heard in UK. *That party was a lot of fun, but I drank a bit too much and had quite a thick head the next morning!*

have a thick skull **1.** To be dim-witted, stupid, or an especially slow learner. *I've always had a thick skull when it comes to math.* **2.** To be inflexible or stubborn; to be overly willful or obstinate. *Our son has such a thick skull. Once he's made up his mind about something, there's no way anyone can change it!* **3.** Literally, to have an especially dense skull, often said humorously after receiving a mild blow to the skull. *A: "Oops! Sorry, I didn't mean to hit you!" B: "It's OK, I have a thick skull!"*

have a thin skin To be easily offended or upset by something that is said. *Watch what you say around Uncle Ed—he has such a thin skin and gets angry at the slightest provocation. You can't have a thin skin if you want to be an actress—harsh reviews are all too common.*

have a thing To have some sort of engagement (that the speaker is not

offering any details about). *Stan has to leave soon, he said he has a thing at 8 o'clock. I have a thing after work, but I shouldn't be home too late.*

have a thing for (someone) To have a romantic infatuation with someone, especially unbeknownst to that person. *I had a thing for one of my colleagues for a while, but I decided not to pursue it for the sake of our work. I hear that Samantha has a thing for John.*

have a thing for (something) To have a very keen or particular interest in something; to really like or enjoy something. *John has a thing for antique books. He's always on the lookout for new ones to add to his collection. I know they're stupid, but I've always had a thing for cheesy horror movies.*

have a time of it To experience particular trouble or difficulty. *We all had a time of it after our father died. Mary's having a time of it in her new math class.*

have a touch of the tar brush dated ethnic slur To be of mixed race, such that one's skin is darker than that of a person with only white ancestry. *My racist aunt refuses to vote for someone who has a touch of the tar brush.*

have a trick up (one's) sleeve To have a secret plan, idea, or advantage that can be utilized if and when it is required. A reference to cheating at a card game by hiding a favorable card up one's sleeve. *I've got a few tricks up my sleeve if he decides to pursue legal action against me.*

have a voice (in something) To have an active and participatory role in making or influencing a decision about something. *The best thing about working for a smaller company is that it finally feels like everyone has a voice in how it should operate. You've decided to move the family to Alaska for a new job? Don't I have a voice in the matter? We're all equals here, so everyone should have a voice.*

have a whack (at something) To have a chance to try (doing something); to attempt to do or undertake (something). *I can't get the lid off this jar for the life of me. Do you want to have a whack? I'm going to have a whack at doing my own taxes this year, to save on the cost of hiring an accountant. Let me have a whack at getting the car started.*

have a whale of a (good) time To have an exceptionally fun,



exciting, or amusing experience. *Gee, Samantha, I sure had a whale of a time at the dance with you last night. We should go out again sometime! Come out to our party this weekend, you're sure to have a whale of a good time!*

have a worm in (one's) tongue To be ornery, irritable, and prone to lashing out. *Ever since my boyfriend lost his job, he's had a worm in his tongue and is not very pleasant to be around. Watch what you say around Uncle Ed—he has a worm in his tongue and gets angry at the slightest provocation.*

have a yen for (something) To have a very strong and persistent desire or craving for something. *I've had a yen for sushi ever since I came back from Tokyo last month.*

have a/the right to (do something) To have the freedom or the just or legal permission, privilege, or authority to do something. *I think we sometimes take it for granted that we have the right to say whatever we want without fear of reprisal by the government. As her father, I have a right to spend time with my daughter!*

have a/the right to (something) To have the just or legal permission, privilege, or authority to have or own something. *Everyone has a right to food, shelter, and water, but unfortunately, not everyone in this country gets them. I have the right to my own opinions, so don't try to tell me how to think!*

have a/the wolf by the ear(s) To be in a difficult situation from which it is as dangerous to extricate oneself as it is to remain in it. *I'm afraid we have a wolf by the ears regarding our current healthcare system. It would be unthinkable to completely overhaul it, but it is dangerously untenable in its current condition. The authoritarian regime has the wolf by the ear with the way it treats the population.*

have act together See [have \(one's\) act together](#).

have all day See [not have all day](#).

have an eye on See [have \(got\) an/\(one's\) eye on \(something\)](#).

have an out To have an excuse or a means of escaping (from something). *I'm dreading going to my high school reunion. I hope I have an out by the time it rolls around! They left a clause in the contract so they had an out in case the deal went sour.*

have an ox on the tongue To be unable to talk, often because one has been bribed into silence. *Don't worry about Joey, he won't say a peep—I slipped him a little money to assure that he has an ox on the tongue in this meeting.*

have any joy To have some amount of luck or success in some task. *Have you had any joy getting the washing machine working? I've been looking all over town for a book I need for class next week, but I haven't had any joy so far.*

have any qualms See [have \(some/any\) qualms about \(something or someone\)](#).

have at heart See [have \(something\) at heart](#).

have back See [have \(got\) \(someone's\) back](#).

have bats in the belfry To be crazy; to act, think, or behave in a foolish or nonsensical manner. *Tommy must have bats in the belfry if he thinks he can convince our mother to let him get a tattoo for his birthday. There's an old lady who stands on the corner yelling at strangers all day. I think she might have bats in the belfry.*

have better things to do See [better things to do](#).

have blood on head See [have \(someone's\) blood on \(one's\) head](#).

have butterfingers To be clumsy, usually momentarily, by dropping or failing to catch something. *I dropped another plate! I guess I just have butterfingers today. Coach, don't put Jimmy in the outfield—he has butterfingers!*

have by the short hairs See [have \(someone\) by the short hairs](#).

have by the tail See [have \(someone or something\) by the tail](#).

have coming and going See [have \(someone\) coming and going](#).

have contact with (one) To communicate with one. *Has anyone had contact with grandma since the storm hit?*

have done with (someone or something) To be finished with someone or something; to cease being involved with someone or something. *I've been working on this essay for hours now, so I'm just going to write the conclusion and have done with it. That group has been a really negative*

influence in my life, so I've decided to have done with them altogether.

have down cold See [have \(something\) down cold](#).

have down pat See [have/get \(something\) down pat](#).

have drop on See [have the drop on \(someone or something\)](#).

have druthers See [have \(one's\) druthers](#).

have ears lowered See [have \(one's\) ears lowered](#).

have enough on (one's) plate To be sufficiently busy or preoccupied with work, problems, or difficulties as to be unable or unwilling to cope with anything more. *I really wish I could help you move this weekend, but I have enough on my plate as it is!*

have enough sense to pound salt To have a basic level of competence, intelligence, or common sense. Used most often in the negative to imply that someone lacks even that. A variant of the more common expression "have enough sense to pound sand." *I lost my faith in the political process when I realized that the people getting voted into Washington don't have enough sense to pound salt. That boy doesn't have sense enough to pound salt. What makes you think he'll be able to fix your computer?*

have enough sense to pound sand To have a basic level of competence, intelligence, or common sense. Used most often in the negative to imply that someone lacks even that. *I lost my faith in the political process when I realized that the people getting voted into Washington don't have enough sense to pound sand. That boy doesn't have sense enough to pound sand. What makes you think he'll be able to fix your computer?*

have eyes bigger than (one's) belly To take more food than one is actually capable of eating. *I always have eyes bigger than my belly when I go to all-you-can-eat buffets! Can't finish your meal, huh? I guess you had eyes bigger than your belly!*

have eyes bigger than (one's) stomach To take more food than one is actually capable of eating. *I always have eyes bigger than my stomach when I go to all-you-can-eat buffets! Can't finish your meal, huh? I guess you had eyes bigger than your stomach!*

have feet on the ground See [have \(one's\) feet on the ground](#).

have fill See [have \(one's\) fill \(of something\)](#).



have foot on neck See [have \(one's\) foot on \(someone's\) neck](#).

have forked tongue See [have a forked tongue](#).

have going See [have \(someone\) going](#).

have going for See [have \(something\) going for \(one\)](#).

have golden touch See [have \(the\) golden touch](#).

have good antennae To be very sensitive (to something); to have a keen sense of detection or perception. Likened to the antennae of (e.g.) an insect, which are extremely sensitive to environmental stimuli. *The best teacher must have good antennae for any emotional difficulties their students may be going through.*

have got a big mouth See [have a big mouth](#).

have (got) a knack for (something) To be exceptionally proficient at (doing) something. *I don't know what it is, but David just has a knack for getting under my skin. Jenny's got a real knack for the piano.*

have got a loud mouth See [have a loud mouth](#).

(have) got a thing going (with someone) To have or be in the midst of a romantic or sexual affair with someone. A colloquial variant of "have a thing going (with someone)." *I hear you've got a thing going with Jeff from accounting, is that true? I got a thing going with a lady across town, but it's nothing too serious.*

have (got) an/(one's) eye on (something) **1.** To watch or look at something closely; to monitor something continuously. *I always have my eye on the clock at the end of the day, counting down the minutes until I can go home. Make sure you've got an eye on that pot or it might boil over on you! Don't worry, I've got my eye on the kids.* **2.** To be keenly interested in something, especially as an objective or as something to be bought or acquired. *After a successful career as a state governor, Ms. Jones now has an eye on the presidency. Now that my bonus came in, I've got my eye on the newest model of Corvette.*

(have) got it going on **1.** To be particularly attractive, especially romantically or sexually. *I've gotta say, Keith's new girlfriend has definitely got it going on. You're looking good today—you got it going on!* **2.** To be very successful, impressive, or exceptional. *With a top job at the bank, an*

amazing wife, and a vacation home in the south of France, Jennifer's got it going on these days.

have got nothing to do See [have nothing to do](#).

have (got) (someone) pegged as (something) To distinctly regard someone as being a certain type of person. *I had you pegged as a coward, but I'm impressed with how you stood up to that criminal. Everyone's got me pegged as a loser, but I'll show them!*

have (got) (someone's) back To be willing and prepared to help or defend someone; to look out for someone in case they need assistance. *Don't worry about those thugs, buddy. I've got your back if they ever come bother you again. You can always rely on your parents to have your back.*

(have) got something going (with someone) To have or be in the midst of a romantic or sexual affair with someone. A colloquial variant of "have something going (with someone)." *I hear you've got something going with Jeff from accounting, is that true? I got something going with a lady across town, but it's nothing too serious.*

have got something to do See [have \(something\) to do](#).

have got to (do something) To be obligated, obliged, or required to (do something). *I don't want to go to the family reunion, but I'm afraid I've got to. I have got to get this essay finished before Monday!*

have gotten lost in translation See [get lost in translation](#).

have had its/(one's) day To be past the highest point of success or potential in life. *My father has had his day. Now, it's time he let his children take over the family business. It often seems that letter writing has had its day.*

have had (one's) chips To be defeated; to fail completely; to die or be killed. A reference to chips (small plastic disks) used to make wagers when gambling. *We tried to keep our business open through this recession, but we've had our chips at this point. My poor Uncle Rick fought long and hard against cancer, but he has had his chips in the end.*

have had (one's) chips To have failed to capitalize on what seems like all of one's chances at success; to be defeated. A phrase taken from gambling, in which "chips" represent one's money. *How can you squander so many good opportunities? I hope you like unemployment, because you've had*

your chips now. I tried my hardest to win the race, but it seems that I have had my chips—I simply can't regain my earlier form.

have had the biscuit To be no longer functional or useful; to be dead or about to perish. Primarily heard in Canada. *This old truck has served me well, but after lasting 20 years, it's finally had the biscuit. Despite the doctor's best efforts, it looked as though I'd had the biscuit.*

have had the radish To be no longer functional or useful; to be dead or about to perish. A colloquialism local to the state of Vermont. Primarily heard in US. *This old truck has served me well, but after lasting 20 years, it's finally had the radish. Despite the doctor's best efforts, it looked as though I'd had the radish.*

have hand out See [have \(one's\) hand out](#).

have handle on See [have a handle on \(something\)](#).

have hands on See [have \(one's\) hands on \(something\)](#).

have (hand)writing like chicken scratch To have very poor, messy, and/or illegible handwriting, likened to the marks made in the dirt by a chicken. *I can't understand these notes at all, you have handwriting like chicken scratch!*

have head in the sand See [have \(one's\) head in the sand](#).

have head read See [have \(one's\) head read](#).

have heart in See [have \(one's\) heart in \(something\)](#).

have heart on sleeve See [have \(one's\) heart on \(one's\) sleeve](#).

have in hands See [have \(something\) in \(one's\) hands](#).

have it down cold See [have \(something\) down cold](#).

have it down pat See [have/get \(something\) down pat](#).

have it easy To have or be in a particularly comfortable or relaxed position, such that makes for an easier life. *I get over a month of paid time off each year, so I feel like I have it pretty easy compared to other people I know. With all the information available on the Internet, kids these days have it easy when it comes to writing research essays.*

have it going on 1. To be particularly attractive, especially romantically or sexually. *Samantha really has it going on these days—she looks fantastic!*

The guys in this town all seem to have it going on! **2.** To be very successful, impressive, or exceptional. *With a top job at the bank, an amazing wife, and a vacation home in the south of France, Jennifer seems to have it going on.*

have it in for (someone) To persistently try or desire to criticize, cause harm to, or harass someone, especially due to a grudge. *This is the third time in a row my professor has given me an F on my paper. I think he has it in for me or something! John's had it in for her ever since she forced him to sell his shares in the business.*

have it large To engage in or seek out pleasurable, hedonistic activities with great enthusiasm or intensity, especially dancing and drinking alcohol. Primarily heard in UK. *After the stress of exams, we were all eager to go out and have it large on Friday night.*

have it off pat See [have \(something\) off pat](#).

have it off (with someone) To engage in sexual intercourse (with someone). *I wouldn't have it off with someone you work with—it will only make things really complicated at the office. I can hear my neighbors having it off at night—it's really embarrassing!*

have it out for (someone) To persistently try or desire to criticize, cause harm to, or harass someone, especially due to a grudge. *This is the third time in a row my professor has given me an F on my paper. I think he has it out for me or something! John's had it out for her ever since she forced him to sell his shares in the business.*

have it out (with someone) To have an argument, verbal fight, or frank discussion (with someone), especially to settle something that has caused anger, frustration, or annoyance. *I had to have it out with my roommate because he never does his share of cleaning in the house. Tom and his boyfriend are always having it out.*

have its/(one's) day To be at the height of or experience success or prosperity. *Any of you who is determined and willing to put in hard work will have her day eventually. The smartphone is really having its day it seems.*

have joy See [have any joy](#).

have jump on See [have the jump on](#).

have laughing in the aisles See [have \(someone\) laughing in the aisles](#).

have lead in (one's) pants To move slowly or lazily. *Do you guys have lead in your pants today? Pick up the pace! If I want something done quickly, I never give it to Stu—that guy has lead in his pants!*

have letters after (one's) name To have a series of abbreviations listed after one's name indicating one's levels of higher education or military honors, thereby denoting a presumed level of intelligence, wisdom, or respectability. *I hate hanging out with your PhD colleagues—it seems like they'll only take you seriously if you have letters after your name.*

have lumps in our throats See [have a lump in \(one's\) throat](#).

have many strings to (one's) bow To have many reliable opportunities, skills, or resources at one's disposal. *With more than two decades of decorated service in the military, Colonel Hicks has many strings to his bow as he enters civilian life. My mother trained in various fields all over the world, so she has very many strings to her bow.*

have method in her madness See [have \(a\) method in \(one's\) madness](#).

have method to her madness See [have \(a\) method to \(one's\) madness](#).

have more chins than a Chinese phone book To be exceptionally or exceedingly fat, i.e., having multiple rolls of fat (chins) on one's neck. Used as a humorous insult, the phrase is a (somewhat derogatory) pun on the word chin and the supposed commonness of "Chin" as a Chinese surname. *Your mama is so fat, she has more chins than a Chinese phone book!*

have more than one string to (one's) bow To have multiple viable options or alternatives available in the event that the current course of action, circumstance, opportunity, etc., does not work out. *With all this varied job experience under my belt, I have more than one string to my bow if this particular career path isn't to my liking. I've got a job interview next week, but I'm still handing out my résumé so that I'll have more than one string to my bow.*

have nine lives To endure, continue, or survive despite a near encounter with death or disaster. From the common myth that cats have nine lives. *I can't believe he survived after his bungee cord snapped! He must have nine*

lives or something. It seems as though the CEO has nine lives, as her company has faced near ruin several times but has managed to remain standing after all these years.

have no joy See [no joy](#).

have no qualms See [have \(some/any\) qualms about \(something or someone\)](#).

have no stomach for (something) 1. To lack the courage, determination, or resolve to do, face, or experience something unpleasant. Can also be phrased as "not have the stomach for something." *The military always sounded interesting as a means of traveling the world, but I know I'd have no stomach for combat. I have no stomach for scary movies, but my girlfriend loves them.* 2. To be unable to tolerate certain food(s). *I love living in India, but having no stomach for spicy food makes every meal here rather difficult.*

have no strings attached To have no special conditions, restrictions, obligations, or arrangements that must be met. *The bill has no strings attached, so it should easily pass the Senate. This sounds like a superb deal—I just hope it doesn't have any strings attached.*

have no time for (someone or something) To have no respect for, interest in, or approval of someone or something and thus have no desire to be involved with him, her, or it. *I have no time for people who belittle or harass others for their own enjoyment. Some may think I'm old-fashioned, but I have no time for these flashy new smartphones.*

have nothing on her See [not have anything on \(someone or something\)](#).

have nothing to do To have no tasks or actions that one must complete or undertake; to have nothing with which to occupy one's time. A: "Do you want to come to a party at our house this Saturday?" B: "Sure, I have nothing else to do!" *Mom, we're always so bored at grandma's house. We have nothing to do there!*

have number on it See [have \(someone's\) number on it](#).

have on See [have \(something\) on \(someone\)](#).

have on See [have \(something\) on](#).

have on a tight leash See [have \(someone\) on a tight leash](#).

have on conscience See [have \(something\) on \(one's\) conscience](#).

have one for the worms To have an alcoholic drink. The phrase refers to the belief that alcohol kills worms in the stomach. *Let's all have one for the worms—I'm buying!*

have one over (the) eight To have enough alcoholic drinks to be thoroughly inebriated. Primarily heard in UK. *I was composed and in control of myself for most of the evening, but somewhere around midnight, I had one over the eight and started making a show of myself. It seems like Jenny makes a point of having one over eight every time she goes out on the weekend.*

have (one's) act together 1. To be well-organized and prepared. *You all need to have your act together tomorrow morning so that we can leave for the airport on time.* 2. To be stable and successful in life, especially after past indiscretions or missteps. *Boy, Ted really has his act together these days—it's hard to believe that he's the same guy who was constantly getting into trouble as a teen. If you don't have your act together by the time you're 40, I'm not sure it's ever going to happen.*

have (one's) druthers To have one's choice or preference; to have things the way one would like them to be; to have one's way. Usually formulated as "if I had my druthers...." Primarily heard in US. *I tell you, if I had my druthers, I'd spend the rest of my life living in Paris. If the president had his druthers, we'd be paying taxes for the privilege of breathing!*

have (one's) ears lowered To have one's hair cut, especially to a length that reveals one's ears. *Ah, I see you had your ears lowered. It looks good! I'm thinking of having my ears lowered—my hair's just too long in this hot weather.*

have one's eye on See [have \(got\) an/\(one's\) eye on \(something\)](#).

have (one's) feet on the ground To be and remain in a calm, stable, sensible, and pragmatic state or condition; to not be subject to extreme emotional reactions or affected by exceptional changes in one's situation. *My father has always been a rock of level-headed judgment and advice. Even during our family's lowest points, he's always had his feet on the ground.*

have (one's) fill (of something) To have, consume, or experience as much (of something) as one desires or is able to. Often used in the present

perfect tense ("have had one's fill"). *Make sure you have your fill of cake—we made plenty for everyone! I've had my fill of people giving me advice about my love life. Janet: "Would you like any more of this curry?" Mark: "No, thank you, I've had my fill."*

have (one's) foot on (someone's) neck To be in a position of control or power over someone else; to have another person in a vulnerable position. *It looks like you have your foot on his neck in this negotiation, so I'm confident that you'll get the outcome you want.*

have (one's) hand out To be in request, demand, or expectation of benefits, such as welfare, especially when undeserved or unneeded. *You have to get a job and contribute to society. You can't just have your hand out and expect the government to provide for you all the time!*

have (one's) hands on (something) **1.** Literally, to be touching or grasping something with one's hands. *Make sure you have your hands on the wheel or you might lose control of your car!* **2.** To have something in one's possession. *I hear Johnny has his hands on a bunch of new comic books—let's go check 'em out! We nearly had our hands on the championship, but the referee disallowed our last goal.*

have (one's) head in the sand To refuse to acknowledge or deal with problems, danger, or difficulty, especially in the hopes that they will resolve themselves. The phrase is a reference to ostriches, which were believed (incorrectly) to hide their heads in the ground at the sight of approaching danger. *Your department clearly has its head in the sand regarding this security breach! You can't just always have your head in the sand whenever you're confronted with a problem in your relationship.*

have (one's) head read To have one's logic or sanity examined or reevaluated, usually regarding some ridiculous decision, plan, or idea. A reference to a psychiatric evaluation, the phrase is usually used prescriptively. *I'm telling you, you need to have your head read if you think the bank will approve you for another loan. With all the harebrained ideas she's been having lately, I think she ought to have her head read.*

have (one's) heart in (something) To be emotionally and enthusiastically involved in something; to do or undertake something with passion and zeal. *My mom really has her heart in her new business. By all rights, our team should have won the game, but I guess they just didn't have*

their hearts in it.

have (one's) heart on (one's) sleeve To openly display or make known one's emotions or sentiments. *My father was always very closed off regarding his feelings, so when I had kids, I made a point of having my heart on my sleeve with them.*

have (one's) name taken In football (soccer), to receive a yellow card (and thus have one's name recorded in the referee's booklet). *It's questionable whether that slide tackle really warranted the penalty, but she's had her name taken regardless.*

have (one's) (own) way To get or have what one wants; to have things done according to one's personal preference or decision. *If Tommy doesn't have his way, he'll start throwing a tantrum that could last all night. Samantha always has to have her own way when it comes to dividing responsibilities for group assignments.*

have (one's) say To express or make known one's views, opinions, or ideas. *We aren't going to make a decision until everyone here has had their say.*

have (one's) thinking cap on To be using, or be ready to use, the utmost of one's intellectual abilities; to be able or ready to think very carefully and seriously (about something), often to solve a problem. *I'm really excited for the pub quiz tonight! Does everyone have their thinking caps on? OK fellas, if we all have our thinking caps on, I'm sure we can come up with a way to earn enough money to go to the baseball game this weekend.*

have other fish to fry To have more important or more interesting things to do or attend to. *I hope the boss keeps this meeting short—we all have other fish to fry.*

have our backs See [have \(got\) \(someone's\) back](#).

have our blood on her head See [have \(someone's\) blood on \(one's\) head](#).

have our day See [have its/\(one's\) day](#).

have our names taken See [have \(one's\) name taken](#).

have pegged as See [have \(got\) \(someone\) pegged as \(something\)](#).

have quite a pair See [have a pair](#).

have rocks in (one's) head To be thoroughly stupid, crazy, absurd, incorrect, etc. *You must have rocks in your head if you think the bank will approve you for another loan.*

have sat tall in her saddle See [sit tall in the/\(one's\) saddle](#).

have scales fall from (one's) eyes To suddenly be able to see a situation clearly and accurately. *I used to be so in love with Andrew, but now that we've broken up, I've had scales fall from my eyes, and I can see how oafish he truly is! Once you start working somewhere new, it doesn't take long until you have the scales fall from your eyes, and you can see all of the problems of your "perfect" new job.*

have scores to settle See [have a score to settle](#).

have seen (one's) day To be beyond one's prime; to be no longer useful, effective, or functional. *The one-time champion seems to have seen his day, having been knocked out of the qualifying round for the fifth year in a row. The VHS, the once-dominant form of home movie entertainment, has by now truly seen its day.*

have sex To have sexual intercourse with someone. A: "Did you have sex last night?" B: "Well that's a personal question!"

have (sexual) relations (with someone) To engage in sexual intercourse or activity (with someone); to have or be in a sexual relationship (with someone). *As there was no hard evidence that Mr. Smith's ex-wife had sexual relations outside of marriage, the judge was obliged to uphold the prenuptial agreement during the divorce proceedings. I hear Jim got fired for having relations with his secretary.*

have skeleton in /the closet See [have \(a\) skeleton\(s\) in \(one's\)/the closet](#).

have skeleton in /the cupboard See [have \(a\) skeleton\(s\) in \(one's\)/the cupboard](#).

have skin in the game To have a personal investment, usually monetary, in the pursuit of some goal or achievement, especially in business and finance. *If you want to find a company that is truly motivated to succeed, find one where all the executives have skin in the game.*

have snow on the mountain To have silver, grey, or white hair on one's head, as due to aging. *Sure, I may have a bit of snow on the mountain, but I still lead as adventurous a life as I ever have!*

have snow on the roof To have silver, grey, or white hair on one's head, as due to aging. *Sure, I may have a bit of snow on the roof, but my life is as adventurous as ever!*

have some loose screws See [have a loose screw](#).

have some screws loose See [have a screw loose](#).

have (some/any) qualms about (something or someone) To have some or certain hesitations, apprehensions, uneasiness, or pangs of conscience (about something or someone). (Also often used in the negative to mean the opposite.) *I know it's wrong to feel this way, but I don't have any qualms about telling my boss I'm sick if it means I can have a long weekend. I thought his promotion was a done deal, but it turns out the board of directors has some qualms about Jonathan. Before we start, do you have any qualms about the plan we discussed?*

have (someone) by the short hairs To completely control, dominate, or hold power over someone, especially in a difficult or awkward situation. A reference to the hairs on the back of one's neck, though it is often (and incorrectly) assumed that the phrase refers to pubic hairs. Can also be used with the verbs "got" or "catch." *After scoring a third goal in the last quarter, the home team really had their opponents by the short hairs. He found out about my painkiller addiction and is using it to blackmail me—he's got me by the short hairs now.*

have (someone) coming and going To put someone in an inescapable position or situation; to leave someone with no viable options or solutions. *If I want to stay in the country, I need a job, but if I want a job, I need to be living here—these immigration issues have me coming and going!*

have (someone) going **1.** To convince or persuade someone into temporarily believing an untruth; to fool someone, especially briefly. *Man, you really had me going there with that fake winning lottery ticket!* **2.** To arouse, excite, or upset someone, usually for a brief period of time. *Seeing that model in his underwear really had me going! That rumor that the company was dissolving had me going for a while, but it looks like our jobs*

are safe for the moment.

have (someone) laughing in the aisles To cause someone to laugh uproariously or hysterically. *Your jokes are perfect for your speech tonight. You'll have them laughing in the aisles! I'm telling you, Mark's boyfriend is hilarious! He had me laughing in the aisles when I met him.*

have (someone) on a tight leash To maintain strict or tight control over someone; to not allow someone very much independence or autonomy. *Poor George seems like he doesn't get out too much these days. I think his husband has him on a tight leash. The boss has had her assistant on a tight leash ever since she hired her.*

have (someone or something) by the tail To be in complete control of someone or something; to be in a situation in which one's success is likely. Primarily heard in US. *Any time my little brother wants to tattle on me, I just threaten to tell mom about the vase he broke—I've sure got him by the tail now! I can't wait to get my grades back—I studied so hard that I had my exams by the tail!*

have (someone) turned around (one's) (little) finger To have complete control, dominance, or mastery over somebody; to be able to make someone do whatever one wishes. *The spoiled little brat has his parents completely turned around his little finger. Everyone accused her of getting the promotion by having the boss turned around her finger.*

have (someone) turned round (one's) (little) finger To have complete control, dominance, or mastery over somebody; to be able to make someone do whatever one wishes. *The spoiled little brat has his parents completely turned round his little finger. Everyone accused her of getting the promotion by having the boss turned round her finger.*

have (someone) twisted around (one's) (little) finger To have complete control, dominance, or mastery over somebody; to be able to make someone do whatever one wishes. *The spoiled little brat has his parents completely twisted around his little finger. Everyone accused her of getting the promotion by having the boss twisted around her finger.*

have (someone) twisted round (one's) (little) finger To have complete control, dominance, or mastery over somebody; to be able to make someone do whatever one wishes. *The spoiled little brat has his parents completely twisted round his little finger. Everyone accused her of*

getting the promotion by having the boss twisted round her finger.

have (someone) under (one's) spell To be extremely fascinating, enchanting, or seductive to someone and have him or her under one's control or influence as a result. *Our son has never acted out like this before. I think that new friend of his must have him under his spell. I would normally never rush into a relationship this quickly, but Susan has me completely under her spell. Such was the magnitude of the duchess's beauty that she has had countless men under her spell.*

have (someone) under (one's) thumb To maintain authoritarian control over someone; to continually force someone to submit to one's will. *They seem happy when they're out and about, but I hear that Johnny has his husband completely under his thumb when they're at home. Although the job was well paying, I couldn't stand the way the boss had me under his thumb.*

have (someone) under (one's) wing To be someone's benefactor, tutor, protector, caretaker, or nurturer. *It has somehow become part of my job that, after every graduation cycle from the local university, I have three or four new interns under my wing. Our parents died when we were quite young, so my grandmother had me and my sister under her wing for most of our lives.*

have (someone) wound around (one's) (little) finger To have complete control, dominance, or mastery over somebody; to be able to make someone do whatever one wishes. *The spoiled little brat has his parents completely wound around his little finger. Everyone accused her of getting the promotion by having the boss wound around her finger.*

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have (someone's) blood on (one's) head To be the cause of (someone's) death; to bear the guilt or responsibility of (someone's) death or injury. *You may have walked away from your drunk driving accident unscathed, but you have that poor boy's blood on your head. The police now have blood on their heads since their crackdown on protesters turned violent.*

have (someone's) number on it To be considered the agent or instrument of one's fate, especially leading to death. *Those poor souls should have been safe in that trench, but it looks like that artillery shell had their number on it.*

have (something) at heart To place a lot of value or importance on something; to have or act with something at the forefront of one's mind. *I know you don't agree with some of the decisions I've made, but you have to trust that, as your mother, I have your best interests at heart.*

have (something) down cold To learn, master, or understand something perfectly, to the point of requiring little or no focus to do, recall, or accomplish it. *Make sure you practice these equations until you have them down cold. I always get my routine down cold so there won't be any room for error during the performance.*

have something down pat See [have/get \(something\) down pat](#).

have (something) going for (one) To have something that is favorable, beneficial, or advantageous to one. *Well, I gained a lot of experience in IT from my last job, so at least I have that going for me. I know the job market is pretty treacherous at the moment, but I have a few things going for me that should help me find the right career.*

have (something) in (one's) hands To have under one's control, charge, or care; to have responsibility for something. *With his father gone, Mike has the company's future in his hands.*

have (something) off pat To learn, master, or understand something perfectly, to the point of requiring little or no focus to do, recall, or accomplish it. *I know it's a little tricky getting the hang of the machine, but*

keep at it, and you'll have it off pat in no time. My sister is such a musical prodigy that she can have a song off pat after listening to it only once or twice.

have (something) on To be busy or engaged with something; to have plans to do something at a particular point in time. *Bob: "Do you want to come around on Sunday to watch the big game?" Janet: "Sorry, Bob, I've got something on that evening." I've got a few things on at the moment, but business has been pretty slow overall.*

have (something) on (one's) conscience To have persistent feelings of guilt about something, such as an act of wrongdoing. *It's because of your cruelty that your brother died. I hope you have it on your conscience for the rest of your days!*

have (something) on (someone) 1. To have incriminating or unfavorable proof against someone, as for some crime, wrongdoing, or misbehavior. *Go to the police, for all I care! You don't have anything on me! If we want to nail him for fraud, we'll need to have more on him than a few questionable phone calls.* 2. To have a particular advantage over someone. *You may think you can beat me, but I've got 10 years' experience on you.*

have (something) to do To have some task or action that one must complete or undertake. *I've got a few things to do before I head over to the party, so I might be a little late. I have so much to do this weekend that I don't know how I'll have time for a date.*

have something to eat A set phrase meaning "to eat." *Yeah, we had something to eat, and then we came home. Sit down and have something to eat—I made plenty!*

have (something) under (one's) belt 1. To have eaten or drunk something. *Once I have some proper food under my belt, I'll be ready to tackle any work you can throw at me! My father could become quite nasty when he had a bit of booze under his belt. That's why he gave up drinking.* 2. To have some achievement, accomplishment, or record attributed to one's career or reputation. *The legendary batter had more than 2000 runs under his belt by the time he retired. As a pilot in training, it's always a relief to have your first real landing under your belt.* 3. To have something learned or mastered. *Once he had the proper technique under his belt, Jacques had no problem finishing the project on his own.*

have (something) up the wazoo To have a great or excessive abundance of something. *The company's had financial difficulties up the wazoo lately, but the CEO is adamant that it will start making a profit again soon. Sorry, I can't come out tonight, I've got homework up the wazoo.*

have (something) up the yin-yang To have a great or excessive abundance of something. *The company's had financial difficulties up the yin-yang lately, but the CEO is adamant that it will start making a profit again soon. Sorry, I can't come out tonight, I've got homework up the yin-yang.*

have sporting blood **1.** To have a natural love of sports or athletics. *This town has sporting blood in its veins, and the people here will gather together with unmatched enthusiasm to support all of their local teams.* **2.** To have an adventurous, risk-taking, and/or thrill-seeking personality or disposition; to be highly competitive or ready to accept a challenge. *You have to have sporting blood to make it in this sort of cutthroat business, but the rewards are all the higher for it. I'm not one to rise up to the challenges of bullies, but my brother Seamus has sporting blood and backs down from no one.*

have strings attached To have one or more special conditions, restrictions, obligations, or arrangements that must be met. *The Republicans in the Senate are willing to allow the bill to pass, but you can be sure that the final draft will have several strings attached. This sounds like a superb deal—I just hope it doesn't have any strings attached.*

have the ball at (one's) feet To be in the best position to do something; to be in control. *With your grades and extracurriculars, you'll have the ball at your feet in your college search. I want to have the ball at my feet at the most crucial moment in a game—I want to be the hero.*

have the better of (someone or something) To have or gain superiority, mastery, or an advantage over someone or something; to have control over someone or something. *I knew I shouldn't be meddling in other people's business, but my curiosity had the better of me. I know we could have beaten them in last week's game, but they just had the better of us from the get-go.*

have the biscuit See [have had the biscuit](#).

have the blues To be or feel generally sad or melancholy. *I don't know*

what it is, but I find I always have the blues on Sundays.

have the constitution of an ox To possess an unusually robust amount of strength, determination, and stamina, so as to be able to work extremely hard and/or overcome hardships or limiting factors (e.g., sickness, fatigue, alcohol, drugs, etc.). *John works his farm single-handedly every day, from sunup to sundown; he must have the constitution of an ox! Mary has the constitution of an ox—she's had more drinks than any of us, and she still seems completely sober. Janice was bedridden with the flu over the weekend, but she must have the constitution of an ox because she was right back in the office first thing Monday morning.*

have the courage of (one's) convictions To have the confidence to act or behave in accordance with one's beliefs or ideologies, especially in the face of resistance, criticism, or persecution. *The governor was presented with a bribe to help the corporation avoid regulation, but she had the courage of her conviction to refuse such an offer.*

have the drop on (someone or something) To have an advantage over another person; to catch someone else in a vulnerable position or situation. *I think we'll have the drop on the defense if we run this play next. The police received an anonymous tip and had the drop on the would-be robbers when they entered the bank.*

have the feel of (something) To have a general sense of how to do or use something or how something operates; to be familiar with something. *Though it's radically advanced from my last computer, I'm starting to have the feel of this newer model. I had the feel of the office after a couple of days shadowing my boss.*

have the floor To have the right or opportunity to speak in a group, especially at a formal event or gathering. *Please, Dr. Dunstaple, your colleague has the floor. You'll have the opportunity to reply when he has finished speaking.*

have (the) golden touch To have the ability to earn a large amount of money or be very successful in any endeavor. From the Greek myth of King Midas, who was granted the ability to turn anything he touched into solid gold. *The manager is considered to have the golden touch of turning anyone she works with into a huge star. John has started three separate companies that have all earned him millions—he must have a golden touch!*

have the goods on (someone) To have incriminating evidence or proof against someone. *We know he's guilty, but we can't arrest him until we have the goods on him.*

have the guts (to do something) To have enough courage, conviction, or resolve (to do something). *You're always talking about quitting your job, but I don't think you have the guts. I know it can be difficult, but you've got to have the guts to stand up for your beliefs!*

have the heart (to do something) To be hard hearted, callous, or unsympathetic (enough to do something); to have the emotional resolve (to do something). Usually used in the negative. *How could you have the heart to fire Joanna the day after her father died? I didn't have the heart to tell her that I didn't love her anymore.*

have the horn dated To be or become lustful or sexually excited, especially of a man; to have an erection. *Sarah became quite embarrassed when she noticed that her date had the horn in the middle of the movie.*

have the jump on To have an advantage over another person; to catch someone else in a vulnerable position or situation. *I think we'll have the jump on the defense if we run this play next. The police received an anonymous tip and had the jump on the would-be robbers when they entered the bank.*

have the mouth of a sailor To have a tendency or proclivity to use coarse, rude, or vulgar language. *I don't know what you're letting your son watch on television, but, for a fifth grader, he sure has the mouth of a sailor! My grandmother is the sweetest old lady you'll ever know, but, my lord, does she have the mouth of a sailor!*

have the patience of Job To have an immense and unyielding degree of patience and conviction, especially in the face of problems or difficulty. A reference to the biblical figure Job, whose absolute faith in God remained unshaken despite the numerous afflictions set upon himself, his family, and his estate by Satan. *This field of work demands that you have the patience of Job. If you're looking for immediate results, you're in the wrong profession. My sister is amazing. She has five unruly children, but she has the patience of Job with every single one of them.*

have the radish See [have had the radish](#).

have the right to See [have a/the right to \(something\)](#).

have the right to do See [have a/the right to \(do something\)](#).

have the say To have the ultimate authority to command, control, or make a decision. *Your report looks good enough to me, but it's the manager who has the say on whether it's finished or not.*

have the shakes To tremble or shake involuntarily, as due to fear, unease, anxiety, or a reaction to (or withdrawal from) a substance, such as caffeine, drugs, or alcohol. *I've been doing public speaking for 10 years, but I still had the shakes when I gave my speech to the packed auditorium. I'm trying to get sober and haven't had a drink in four days, but I've been having the shakes something fierce.*

have the sun in (one's) eyes 1. To be unable to see because the sun is shining directly into one's eyes. *I have the sun in my eyes—can you read that sign? My mom hates having the sun in her eyes, so she keeps her sunglasses with her at all times.* 2. To be drunk. The phrase might refer to the unsteady gait of one who is drunk (likened to one who is blinded by the sun). *A: "Don't mind him, he just has the sun in his eyes." B: "Seriously? How is he drunk already?"*

have the wind up To be very anxious, upset, or frightened. *They had the wind up after we threatened them with legal action.*

have the wolf by its ear See [have a/the wolf by the ear\(s\)](#).

have the world by the tail To be very successful, contented, and happy in life. *Samantha landed her dream job after finishing at the top of her class in college. She has the world by the tail!*

have the world on a string To feel happy and confident that everything will work out in one's favor and/or that one is in complete control. *I got a great report card and then found out I got into my first choice school—I feel like I have the world on a string!*

have thinking cap on See [have \(one's\) thinking cap on](#).

have to do See [have \(something\) to do](#).

have to do with the price of cheese See [What's that got to do with the price of cheese?](#)

have to do with the price of eggs See [What's that got to do with the price of eggs?](#)

have to do with the price of fish See [What's that got to do with the price of fish?](#)

have to do with the price of meat See [What's that got to do with the price of meat?](#)

have to do with the price of tea in China See [What's that got to do with the price of tea in China?](#)

have toys in the attic To be crazy; to act, think, or behave in an eccentric, foolish, or nonsensical manner. *Tommy must have toys in the attic if he thinks he can convince our mother to let him get a tattoo for his birthday. There's an old lady who stands on the corner yelling at strangers all day. I think she might have toys in the attic.*

have truck with To work well with or associate with someone. The phrase is most commonly used in the negative ("have no truck with") to describe someone or something that will not work together. *Let me call that office—I used to work there, so I have truck with them. That lowlife has no truck with us, so tell him not to come around here anymore.*

have turned around finger See [have \(someone\) turned around \(one's\) \(little\) finger](#).

have turned round finger See [have \(someone\) turned round \(one's\) \(little\) finger](#).

have twisted around finger See [have \(someone\) twisted around \(one's\) \(little\) finger](#).

have twisted round finger See [have \(someone\) twisted round \(one's\) \(little\) finger](#).

have two strikes against (one) To be at a deficit or disadvantage, nearing failure. The phrase comes from baseball, in which a batter is called "out" after three strikes. *Man, I already have two strikes against me in that class, I can't turn in my project late too! You have two strikes against you from putting a dent in my car and getting a speeding ticket—if anything happens this week, your driving privileges will be taken away.*

have two strings to (one's) bow To have multiple ways to accomplish something. *At least you have two strings to your bow, since you can always contact your aunt if the recruiter from HR doesn't call you back.*



have under belt See [have \(something\) under \(one's\) belt](#).

have under her spell See [have \(someone\) under \(one's\) spell](#).

have under her thumb See [have \(someone\) under \(one's\) thumb](#).

have under her wing See [have \(someone\) under \(one's\) wing](#).

have up See [be had up \(for something\)](#).

have up the wazoo See [have \(something\) up the wazoo](#).

have up the yin-yang See [have \(something\) up the yin-yang](#).

have us by the short hairs See [have \(someone\) by the short hairs](#).

have us coming and going See [have \(someone\) coming and going](#).

have us going See [have \(someone\) going](#).

have us laughing in the aisles See [have \(someone\) laughing in the aisles](#).

have us on a tight leash See [have \(someone\) on a tight leash](#).

have us pegged as See [have \(got\) \(someone\) pegged as \(something\)](#).

have way See [have \(one's\) \(own\) way](#).

have windmills in (one's) head To be lost in dreams and illusions, rather than rooted in reality. *I appreciate Sal's ability to see beyond what is happening right now, but some of the wild ideas he comes up with make me wonder if he has windmills in his head!*

have work done A euphemism for having cosmetic surgery. *You look fantastic—did you have work done? You know she had work done, right? Just a brow lift, but still—what a difference!*

have wound around finger See [have \(someone\) wound around \(one's\) \(little\) finger](#).

have wound round finger See [have \(someone\) wound round \(one's\) \(little\) finger](#).

have wrapped around finger See [have \(someone\) wrapped around \(one's\) \(little\) finger](#).

have wrapped round finger See [have \(someone\) wrapped round \(one's\) \(little\) finger](#).

have writing like chicken scratch See [have \(hand\)writing like chicken scratch](#).

have/get (something) down pat To learn, master, or understand something perfectly, to the point of requiring little or no focus to do, recall, or accomplish it. *Make sure you practice these equations until you have them down pat. I got my routine down pat so there wouldn't be any room for error during the performance.*

haven't been getting a wink of sleep See [not get a wink of sleep](#).

haven't been sleeping a wink See [not sleep a wink](#).

hawks and doves Respectively, those who favor or support aggressive military action, especially regarding foreign policy, versus those who are inclined to more peaceful, diplomatic solutions. *After the terrorist attacks, the hawks in Congress demanded a unilateral attack on the foreign nation, while the doves among them maintained that diplomatic sanctions would be effective for the time being.*

he ain't particular See [\(one\) ain't particular](#).

he can barely hear himself think See [can barely hear \(oneself\) think](#).

he can dispense with (something) See [you can dispense with \(something\)](#).

he can hardly believe his eyes See [\(one\) can hardly believe \(one's\) eyes](#).

he can hardly hear himself think See [can hardly hear \(oneself\) think](#).

he can scarcely believe his eyes See [\(one\) can scarcely believe \(one's\) eyes](#).

he can sell sawdust to a lumber mill See [\(someone\) could sell sawdust to a lumber mill](#).

he could sell an icebox to an Eskimo See [\(someone\) could sell an icebox to an Eskimo](#).

he could sell ice to Eskimos See [\(someone\) could sell ice to Eskimos](#).



he couldn't win for losing See [\(one\) can't win for losing](#).

he does not wash his dirty linen in public See [\(one\) does not wash \(one's\) dirty linen in public](#).

he doesn't know when to quit See [\(someone\) \(just\) doesn't know when to quit](#).

he-double hockey stick See [H-E-double-hockey-sticks](#).

he-double L See [H-E-double-L](#).

h.e. double toothpicks See [H-E-double-toothpicks](#).

he figures See [\(one\) figures \(that\)](#).

he had better be going See [\(one had\) better be going](#).

he had better get moving See [\(one had\) better get moving](#).

he had better get on his horse See [\(one had\) better get on \(one's\) horse](#).

he had better keep quiet about it See [\(someone had\) better keep quiet about it](#).

he had better keep still about it See [\(someone had\) better keep still about it](#).

he looks a little peaked See [you look a little peaked](#).

he looks like a million See [you look like a million](#).

he-man A particularly strong, tough, and/or virile male, especially one who likes to flaunt his strength. *Janet's always dated these bulked up he-men, so there's no way she'd be interested in a scrawny guy like me.*

he puts his pants on one leg at a time See [\(one\) puts \(one's\) pants on one leg at a time](#).

he puts his trousers on one leg at a time See [puts \(one's\) trousers on one leg at a time \(just like everybody else\)](#).

he saved the day See [you saved the day](#).

he stoops to conquer See [stoop to conquer](#).

he takes it See [I take it](#).

he that lieth with dogs riseth with fleas If one spends time with

bad people, one will suffer in some way (often by becoming like said associates). *I worry about my brother hanging out with all those troublemakers—he that lieth with dogs riseth with fleas.*

he that would eat the fruit must climb the tree One must work for what one wants. *You can't rely on sheer intelligence in order to get good grades—he that would eat the fruit must climb the tree.*

he who smelt it dealt it A retort made when someone has passed gas that places the blame on the first person to acknowledge the smell. A: "What's that awful smell?" B: "Hey, he who smelt it dealt it!"

he will rue the day See [rue the day \(that something happened\)](#).

he would do well to See [\(one\) would do well to \(do something\)](#).

head for a fall To take actions that will likely result in a problem or conflict, typically due to one's past behavior. *With the way he keeps skipping school, he is definitely headed for a fall. Oh, Jennifer is heading for a fall—you can't start rumors about half the school without repercussions.*

head for the hills **1.** To move to higher ground, as in preparation for or response to a natural disaster. *There are bound to be tsunamis after an earthquake like that. We'd better head for the hills!* **2.** To flee hastily; to clear out or depart quickly. *You better head for the hills before mom comes home and sees what you did to her car. The bandits all headed for the hills when they heard the marshall was riding into town.*

head hunter **1.** Someone who recruits employees for a business or corporation. *I'm not actively looking for a new job, but this head hunter for a big firm keeps calling me, so I might as well hear her pitch.* **2.** A member of a tribe who decapitates other people and preserves their heads as souvenirs. *Be careful exploring that part of the rainforest—it's home to a tribe of head hunters!*

head in the clouds adjective Impractical, aloof, or fanciful to the point of being very unhelpful or counterproductive. *That sort of head in the clouds thinking is not getting us any closer to a workable solution.*

a head of steam Momentum; the energy needed to move forward. *The protests against the corrupt organization picked up a head of steam when the national media started covering the story.*

a head-scratcher A thoroughly complex or difficult mystery, problem,

puzzle, or riddle. *I'm not sure how we'll be able to reach an agreement with the labor unions on this issue. It's a head-scratcher, to be sure. A: "What is weightless but can be seen, and if you put it in a bucket, it will make the bucket lighter?" B: "Hmm, I don't know. That's a real head-scratcher!"*

head south **1.** To escape; to vanish or disappear. (Not necessarily in a southerly direction.) *Everyone in the gang headed south when they learned that the police had discovered their hideout.* **2.** To fall or drop; to depreciate; to lose quality or value. (Especially related to finances or stock exchanges.) *The company's stock profile continued heading south for the third day in a row today. I used to be a big player in the stock market, but all my investments have headed south lately.* **3.** To cease working or functioning; to quit, fail, or fall apart. *Talks between the labor union and the construction firm headed south yesterday, so it looks like workers will be on strike again soon. My computer is only a month old, and it's already heading south.*

head-spinningly Unbelievably; incredibly. *Did you watch that head-spinningly spectacular play? I could hardly believe what I was seeing!*

head start An early start before the official or typical time to start something. *Billy liked to get a head start on his homework before leaving school so he had more time to play with his friends when he got home. If I don't get a head start on the project, I'm going to miss the deadline.*

head the ball A stupid, foolish, or idiotic person; someone who is crazy or mentally unstable. Primarily heard in Ireland. *I can't believe that head the ball is going to be the new Taoiseach.*

head to head Describing a one-on-one matchup or comparison. *When looked at head to head, these two players really bring similar defensive abilities to our team. I'm going head to head against last year's spelling bee champion, of course I'm nervous! I'm looking at the two job offers head to head, and I still can't make a decision!*

headbutter One who strikes other people with one's head. *You are becoming known as a headbutter, so unless you want the league to suspend you, I suggest that you stop playing dirty!*

headcase An insane person; someone who is mentally unstable or unbalanced. *I've felt like a total headcase ever since my father died. Mary's new boyfriend seemed nice at first, but the more I get to know him, the more I think he's a complete headcase!*

the headlines The titles of the news articles in a particular issue of a newspaper or in many periodicals on one day or over a period of time. The term is usually used to represent the main themes of the news being covered. *Let's read the headlines and see what's new in the world today. Once the press gets wind of this scandal, it will be in the headlines for weeks.*

heads up **1.** An interjection used as a warning for any imminent danger. *"Heads up!" he shouted as the brick fell off the edge of the building. Heads up, the boss is looking for you and she looks angry!* **2.** noun A preliminary notice, especially of future difficulty, trouble, or danger; a warning. Often hyphenated. *Make sure everyone gets the heads-up about the inspection tomorrow morning. We don't want anyone coming in unprepared. Hey, just a heads-up—the boss is in a foul mood, so don't do anything to attract attention to yourself! Just give me a heads-up if you need a ride.*

headstrong **1.** Obstinate willful; inflexibly determined to get one's way. *I was always so headstrong as a kid. Sometimes I'd try to hold my breath until I passed out if my parents didn't give me what I wanted!* **2.** Of or resulting from rash obstinacy or recklessness. *All it took was a few headstrong decisions by this administration to bring our entire economy to the brink of ruin.*

heap coals of fire on (one's) head To make a special effort to induce feelings of guilt or remorse in another person. *Why are you citing all these examples of times I wronged you? Why are you heaping coals of fire on my head?*

hear (something) on the jungle telegraph To hear or learn a something through an informal means of communication, especially gossip. Primarily heard in UK. *I heard on the jungle telegraph that Stacy and Mark are getting a divorce! A: "How do you know the company is going bust?" B: "I heard it on the jungle telegraph."*

hear the grass grow See [you could hear the grass grow\(ing\)](#).

hearing things Having auditory hallucinations. *Bob: "Listen, I'm sure that someone is right behind us!" Jack: "Bob, you're hearing things. There's nothing out here but us and the wind."*

heart of glass A state of extreme emotional fragility or susceptibility, one that is easily influenced or affected by others. *Poor Mary has a heart of*

glass—I don't know how she'll recover from Tom's refusal to go to the prom with her.

heart of glass See [have a heart of glass](#).

heart of gold A sincere, generous, and kind nature. *Sarah always goes out of her way to help everyone she can—she really has a heart of gold.*

(one's) heart of hearts The deepest, most intimate part of oneself. *In my heart of hearts, I knew that I didn't really love Bill—and yet, I married him anyway. A: "I'm so sorry that your daughter's modeling job didn't work out." B: "Oh, that's OK. In her heart of hearts, she knew it was a long shot."*

heart of oak A trait said to belong to a very emotionally and/or mentally strong person. *I don't know how a soldier does it—they must have a heart of oak. My brother has a heart of oak and has remained totally calm while coping with his wife's sudden illness.*

heart of stone A cold, mean nature. *The politician remained indifferent to the city's poverty crisis, causing many of his detractors to accuse him of having a heart of stone.*

the heart of the matter The focal, central, or most important element of a topic, problem, or issue. *Over the course of this trial, the prosecution intends to get to the heart of the matter regarding this company's shady financial dealings.*

heart-to-heart **1.** adjective Honest and open, without any attempt to hide emotions. Often used in the phrases "heart-to-heart conversation" and "heart-to-heart talk." *I know you two don't see eye-to-eye, but if you really sat down and had a heart-to-heart talk, I think you'd realize you are both working toward the same goal.* **2.** noun An honest and open conversation, usually about a serious topic. *Jim sat down with his son and had a heart-to-heart about the dangers of peer pressure and drug use.*

the heart wants what it wants A phrase typically used to explain or justify one's behavior, especially if it is confusing or disturbing to others. *A: "I can't believe he cheated on his wife with his co-worker." B: "Well, the heart wants what it wants." I know my parents don't like that I dropped out of school to pursue modeling in New York City, but the heart wants what it wants.*

heartbeat away from being (something) In a position to move

into a position immediately upon the absence of one's superior or predecessor (often assumed to mean from death). *The position of vice president may not seem important, but whoever it is will be a heartbeat away from being president, so we should take that into account when voting.*

heartbreaking Deeply upsetting or causing great sadness. *Watching my grandmother endure this horrible illness has been just heartbreaking. Have you seen that new movie? It's so heartbreaking, I cried the whole time!*

(one's) heart's desire Something one very much wants or needs. *After my six-month tour in Iraq, my heart's desire is just to see my husband again.*

heat wave A period of time in which the weather is unusually and persistently hot. *Our summers are usually very mild here, but we've been in the midst of a heat wave recently that's made it feel like the tropics!*

heave a sigh of relief To experience an intense feeling of happiness or relief because something particularly stressful, unpleasant, or undesirable has been avoided or completed. *Everyone in class heaved a sigh of relief after that horrible midterm exam was over. Investors in Europe are heaving a big sigh of relief now that a Greek exit from the Euro has been avoided.*

heave ho **1.** A sailor's cry to pull hard on a rope. *We need to raise anchor, heave ho!* **2.** An abrupt dismissal or termination, often used in the phrase, "give (one) the (old) heave ho." *I can't believe the boss gave me the old heave ho after five years on the job!* A: "Did you hear that Liz broke up with Dan?" B: "Wow, I never expected her to give him the heave ho." **3.** The disposal of something unimportant or unwanted. *Give that printer the old heave ho, it doesn't work anymore. Ugh, this cereal is stale now—I'm giving it the heave ho!*

heave into sight To move or rise into view, especially from a distance. *We'd been walking for hours in the barren desert when finally a small town heaved into sight.*

heave into view To move or rise into sight, especially from a distance. *We'd been walking for hours in the barren desert when a small town finally heaved into view.*

heaven helps those who help themselves God will assist people who are already putting forth effort toward something without relying solely on divine intervention. A less common variant of the phrase "God helps those

who help themselves." A: "I'm really praying hard for an A on my exam." B: "You better start studying. Heaven helps those who help themselves."

heaven knows **1.** No one knows (except for God or the heavens). Often emphasized as "heaven only knows." *Heaven only knows how long it will take for my application to be processed.* A: "How do you think you did on your exam?" B: "Heaven knows!" **2.** It is absolutely true, certain, or definite that; it is obvious or clear that. *Heaven knows I need to do well on this test or I can kiss my scholarship goodbye!*

heavy date A serious romantic date. Primarily heard in US, Australia. *Jackie has a heavy date tonight and is hoping to take her relationship to the next level.*

heavy-footed Clumsy, ponderous, or lumbering in gait or tread. *The team's star striker deftly navigated the ball past the heavy-footed defenseman.*

heavy-hearted Sorrowful; melancholy; depressed. *Johnny's been rather heavy-hearted ever since Samantha left him. The singer-songwriter's best works are her heavy-hearted songs about the lost ideals of youth.*

heavy hitter **1.** An extremely successful, important, or influential person. *John is a real heavy hitter in the world of finance. Many people have tried to copy his success.* **2.** A high-scoring athlete, especially a baseball player. *The team would be foolish to trade their heavy hitter. He's the reason the team did well this season.*

heavy lifting Any serious, difficult, or arduous work or activities. *I'm only the assistant manager, but I'm the one who does all the heavy lifting in the company. Trailing in the polls, the candidate is going to have to do some very heavy lifting if she is to have a hope of winning the election.*

a heavy purse makes a light heart If you are financially secure, you will not worry. *Money doesn't buy happiness, but it sure helps to solve a lot of life's little problems. A heavy purse makes a light heart.*

heavy with child Very visibly pregnant, often because the baby's due date is near. ("With child" is a euphemism for "pregnant.") *I am heavy with child right now, but at least the baby is due next week.*

heck of a **1.** Quite good or impressive. *That was one heck of a party you threw for Kelly. Everyone said they had such a great time. He's a heck of a ballplayer. I wouldn't be surprised if he made it to the pros someday.* **2.** Very

difficult. *I had a heck of a time trying to change the flat tire. The lug nuts didn't want to budge.*

heck of a lot of Quite a large amount of. *My car has been costing me a heck of a lot of money in repairs lately. It might be time to get a new one.*

he'd better be going See [\(one had\) better be going](#).

he'd better get moving See [\(one had\) better get moving](#).

he'd better get on his horse See [\(one had\) better get on \(one's\) horse](#).

he'd better keep quiet about it See [\(someone had\) better keep quiet about it](#).

he'd better keep still about it See [\(someone had\) better keep still about it](#).

a hedge between keeps friendship green Friendships are more likely to be successful when there is a level of space and privacy between the friends. *The reason their friendship has lasted as long as it has is because they respect each other's privacy. A hedge between keeps friendship green.*

the heebie-jeebies An extreme or acute sensation of fear, apprehension, worry, or anxiety. Often used with "get" or "give." *I always get the heebie-jeebies when I walk through a graveyard. All these ghost stories are giving me the heebie-jeebies.*

helicopter parent A parent who is overly attentive and doting toward their child or children. The term comes from the notion that they are "hovering" around their children at all times. *Don't be a helicopter parent. Your daughter is 18 and fully capable of picking her own classes.*

Hell and half of Georgia A great distance or area; a huge amount of space. Primarily heard in US. *I've been looking across Hell and half of Georgia trying to find you! Janet: "You guys are two hours late! Where were you?" George: "Lenny here thought he'd take a shortcut, and we ended up driving through Hell and half of Georgia!"*

Hell hath no fury like a (certain type of person) scorned No one will have a greater wrath or vengeance than (this type of person) when they have been wronged. A hyperbolic and often humorous play on the phrase "Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned," in which any person,



demographic, or profession may be substituted for "woman." *The university might think nothing of hiking up the cost of tuition, but we'll show them that Hell hath no fury like a broke college student scorned! The governor, after veering away from his party's core ideologies, is now discovering that Hell hath no fury like politicians scorned.*

hell in a handcart See [go to hell in a handcart](#).

hell mend (one) An exclamation showing one's anger or irritation with someone else. *I can't believe he stole my idea—hell mend him!*

hell of a 1. Quite good or impressive. *That was one hell of a party you threw for Kelly. Everyone said they had such a great time. He's a hell of a ballplayer. I wouldn't be surprised if he made it to the pros someday.* **2.** Very difficult. *I had a hell of a time trying to change the flat tire. The lug nuts didn't want to budge.*

hell of a lot of Quite a large amount of. *My car has been costing me a hell of a lot of money in repairs lately. It might be time to get a new one.*

hell of a mess A really bad situation. *Michael's lying got him into one hell of a mess at work. He'll probably get fired.*

hell of a time 1. Describing something (often a task or chore) that is, was, or will be very difficult or unpleasant. *I always have a hell of a time trying to get my kids ready for school in the morning. They are just too rambunctious for me at that hour.* **2.** Describing something that is, was, or will be very fun or exciting. *We had one hell of a time at that party last night. It was so much fun.*

hell or high water See [by hell or high water](#).

the hell out of slang To a huge or great degree; very much. *I swear, if that punk looks over at us like that again, I'm going to go over there and beat the hell out of him! Don't sneak up on me like that, you scared the hell out of me!*

he'll rue the day See [rue the day \(that something happened\)](#).

hell week A week in which new recruits or pledges of an organization, especially a college fraternity or sorority, are subjected to a series of hazing rituals prior to initiation. *Why anyone would want to endure something as mean-spirited and juvenile as "hell week" just to join a frat is beyond me. I'm really eager to join Delta Gamma, but I'm really nervous about hell week!*

the hell with (someone or something) I'm disgusted, fed up with, or want nothing to do with someone or something; I don't care about someone or something at all. *An F? The hell with this class, I don't even like calculus! Well the hell with him then! He can go date as many other guys as he wants, for all I care.*

hell's half acre See [all over hell's half acre](#).

Hell's Kitchen An area of midtown Manhattan that was once characterized by crime, slums, and general seediness. *Unless you're looking to get mugged, I'd stay out of Hell's Kitchen if I were you.*

help (oneself) (to something) To serve oneself (something); to take, consume, or indulge in (something) freely or without permission or restraint. *There's plenty of food in the kitchen, so please, help yourselves to more. The vagrant they had given shelter to for the night helped himself to the family's prized set of silverware. The maps at the information kiosk are free, so tourists are welcome to help themselves.*

help (someone) out of a fix To help someone avoid or escape from some troublesome, difficult, or dangerous position or situation. *My father's always having to go down to the courthouse to help my knuckle-headed brother out of some fix or another. Thanks so much for staying late with me to finish that report the other day—you really helped me out of a fix!*

helping hand Assistance with a task, or a person who provides such assistance. *I could really use a helping hand carrying all of these boxes downstairs. You've been such a helping hand with this dinner, I couldn't have done it without you!*

helpmate **1.** A companion who provides assistance or support, especially a wife or husband. *It's only by the support of my lifelong helpmate that I was able to get through the hardship of my father's death.* **2.** Anything or anyone that aids, assists, or is helpful, especially regularly or constantly. *We've entered an age where phones are no longer merely tools for communication—they've become helpmates in nearly every facet of life.*

heman See [he-man](#).

hen night A social gathering for women, especially a bachelorette party. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *The girls at work planned a hen night for Sarah since she is due to get married soon.*

hen party A social gathering for women, especially a bachelorette party. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *The girls at work planned a hen party for Sarah since she is due to get married soon.*

henpeck (someone) Of a woman, to thoroughly and continually dominate, intimidate, bully, or browbeat (a man), especially her boyfriend, partner, or husband. *Janet is usually so nice, but when she's around her husband, she just henpecks him relentlessly.*

henpecked Of a man, thoroughly and continually dominated, intimidated, bullied, or browbeaten by a woman, especially his wife or girlfriend. *John used to be the most adventurous, spontaneous guy I knew, but since he got married, he's become totally henpecked. I hope I never become some henpecked husband like my father was.*

hens' teeth Something very scarce (because hens have no teeth). Typically used in phrases like "rarer than hens' teeth." *I can hardly believe your brother got an A on his final exam—grades like that are rarer than hens' teeth for him!*

hen's tooth Something very scarce (because hens have no teeth). Typically used in phrases like "as scarce as a hen's tooth." *I can hardly believe your brother got an A on his final exam—grades like that are as scarce as a hen's tooth for him!*

herd cats To attempt to coordinate or control subjects that are uncooperative. Often used as a point of comparison in the phrase "like herding cats." *Trying to get my two toddlers out the door these days is like herding cats!*

herd cats See [be like herding cats](#).

here to stay See [be here to stay](#).

here we go **1.** An expression used when something is about to begin or arrive. *Here we go, another one of Grandpa's boring stories!* A: "When are the fireworks going to start? We've been waiting here for over an hour!" B: "Here we go, the first one just went off." **2.** Said when something or someone has been found or identified. *Let me just see if I can find that in the library database... here we go, the complete works of William Shakespeare.* **3.** A chant used by fans in a football (soccer) audience to show support for their team, especially after a successful play. Primarily heard in UK. *The*

tremendous roar of "Here we go, here we go, here we go" had become completely deafening after the goal.

here you are Here is what you needed or asked for; I present this to you. *Here you are, the complete works of William Shakespeare.*

here's how A phrase used at the end of a toast, similar to "cheers." *Speaker: "So congratulations again to my little brother and his new bride. May you have a lifetime of happiness. Here's how!" Audience: "Here's how!"*

hero (sandwich) A sandwich served on a long roll of bread, typically six inches to several feet in length, filled with a variety of ingredients including meat, cheese, and vegetables. Primarily heard in US. *This restaurant across the road from our office makes the best hero sandwich in the city. I've gotten to where I go there two or three times a week for lunch. I'm ordering a few four-foot heroes for the party this weekend, so if you have any food allergies, let me know before tomorrow.*

he's all in See [be all in](#).

he's on See [you're on!](#).

hic jacet A Latin phrase meaning "here lies" that is often inscribed on gravestones. *This headstone is a mystery—it says "Hic jacet" with no name underneath!*

hic Rhodus, hic salta A Latin phrase taken from one of Aesop's fables, in which an athlete is urged to repeat the impressive jump that he claims to have made on the island of Rhodes. The Latin phrase translates to "here is Rhodes, jump here." *A: "I'm friends with everyone in the school!" B: "Oh yeah? Hic Rhodus, hic salta—go to talk to that big group of people, I bet you don't know any of them!" A: "All right, star athlete, hic Rhodus, hic salta—do your slam dunk here." B: "I told you, I can't, I need my other shoes."*

hidden agenda A secret goal or an ulterior motive. *I didn't trust Julie when she started being really nice to me out of the blue. It felt like she had a hidden agenda. I'm starting to wonder if the boss has a hidden agenda because he promised me the job but now he won't return my calls.*

hide and seek A situation in which one party is constantly evading or avoiding another. (A reference to the children's game "hide and go seek.") Often used with the verb "play." *The police have been playing hide and seek with the suspect all night long. It's been a game of hide and seek trying to get*

definitive answers out of the governor.

hide (n)or hair No sign or sight of something or someone. *I haven't seen hide nor hair of our neighbor in weeks—I hope he's OK! Can you go check outside for the cat? I haven't seen hide or hair of her in hours.*

hide (one's) head To lower one's head or cover one's face, typically due to embarrassment or shame. *Michael showed me exactly who had broken my vase when he hid his head in response to my question. I totally forgot to do my homework, so all I could do was hide my head as my teacher collected it from everyone else.*

hide or hair No trace or evidence of someone or something. *I haven't seen hide or hair of Mary since this morning.*

hide the sausage rude slang To have sexual intercourse. A: *"Did you two hide the sausage last night?"* B: *"Well that's a personal question!"*

hiding to nothing A difficult situation that is unlikely to result in success. Primarily heard in UK. *I'm on a hiding to nothing right now trying to persuade my teacher to give me an extra credit assignment.*

high cotton A state of success (likened to the image of a field of well-growing cotton plants). Typically used in the phrase "in high cotton." *I can't believe I got such good grades this semester—I'm really in high cotton now!*

high flier A person who has the potential for or who has achieved great success. *Tim was such a high-flier in college that it's no surprise he's achieved such great success in his career.*

high-handed Haughtily presumptuous; arrogantly or inconsiderately overbearing. *The new boss is unbearably high-handed in dealing with employees. We've had just about enough of these high-handed displays of police brutality.*

high horse An attitude of moral superiority. Typically used in the phrases "get off (one's) high horse" and "on (one's) high horse." *My sister needs to get off her high horse and stop lecturing me because I know she was a troublemaker as a teenager! The radio host is known for always being on his high horse, despite the fact that everyone knows he's a creep.*

high muckamuck slang An especially important, influential, and authoritative person, especially someone who is overbearingly or arrogantly so. (Sometimes shortened to simply "muckamuck.") *All hail the high*

muckamuck," Jerry muttered under his breath as the dictator's motorcade rolled by. We're just waiting for the muckamuck to give us the green light before we get the project started.

high muckety-muck slang An especially important, influential, and authoritative person, especially someone who is overbearingly or arrogantly so. *We're just waiting for the muckety-muck to give us the green light before we get the project started. "All hail the high muckety-muck," Jerry muttered under his breath as the dictator's motorcade rolled by.*

high noon **1.** Literally, at or very near midday (noon). *It's only 9 AM and the heat out here is sweltering; by high noon, that sun will be deadly.* **2.** The peak or most advanced stage of a given period. *At the high noon of the economic boom, people spent money on the most ridiculous things. The actor had been a household name at the high noon of his career, but nowadays, there are few who even remember him.* **3.** The critical or appointed time of a decisive confrontation, crisis, or contest. *It's high noon for these two teams, as the result of this game will determine who makes it to the finals.*

high note The most successful, impressive, or climactic point (of something). *She's been in many films throughout the years, but this performance is without a doubt the high note of her career.*

high profile A presence or stance that is deliberately conspicuous and prominent socially. *People only become true celebrities when they maintain a high profile both in their professional and private lives.*

the high road **1.** The easiest or surest path, course, or method. *I'm hopeful that this master's degree will put me on the high road to success!* **2.** The most noble, ethical, or diplomatic course or method. *Strive to always choose the high road when dealing with others, even if they've treated you unfairly in the past. Life has a habit of rewarding those who learn to turn the other cheek.*

high roller Someone known for spending or gambling large amounts of money. *The back room at the casino was reserved exclusively for high rollers willing to play for big stakes. Jack was known as a real high roller, impressing everyone with his expensive cars, flashy jewelry, and nice clothes.*

high seas The open waters of an ocean or sea that are outside the jurisdiction of any nation. *After our navigation system failed, we found ourselves stranded out on the high seas.*

high-water mark **1.** Literally, the highest level a body of water has reached, or the mark designating such a point. *Due to climate change, the high-water mark on this beach has been getting higher every year.* **2.** The apex, peak, or highest point of something. *The high-water mark of the country's economic boom was in 2007.*

high-wire act An especially risky or treacherous job, plan, action, or operation. Alludes to an aerialist performance on a tightrope. *Because of the nation's deeply divided political beliefs, creating a tax reform deal that everyone is happy with has been a high-wire act for the president.*

highbrow **1.** adjective Of or pertaining to heightened intellectualism or superior learning or culture; especially erudite or sophisticated; appealing or suited to highbrows. *The film is by no means highbrow, but it has an intelligent enough story and some compelling characters. After two degrees in literature, Stanley insists on reading only highbrow books.* **2.** noun A person who has or affects heightened intellectualism or superior learning or culture, often in a pretentious or elitist manner. *Of course, a book like this won't be given the time of day by literary highbrows, but it nevertheless provides an engaging and—dare I say it—entertaining read.*

highbrowed Of or pertaining to heightened intellectualism or superior learning or culture; especially erudite or sophisticated; appealing or suited to highbrows. *The film is by no means highbrowed, but it has an intelligent enough story and some compelling characters. After two degrees in literature, Stanley insists on reading only highbrowed books.*

higher than a kite **1.** Very intoxicated by alcohol or (especially) drugs. *I tried tutoring him in math, but he was always higher than a kite when I came by.* **2.** Elated; euphorically happy. *I was higher than a kite when I found out I got into my first choice school.*

higher than a kite See [be higher than a kite](#).

higher than Gilderoy's kite Extremely high; so high that it can hardly be seen. "Gilderoy" was the nickname of notorious 17th-century highwayman Patrick MacGregor, who was hanged at a time when the height of the gallows corresponded to the severity of a criminal's misdeeds. Thus, MacGregor was hanged higher than his accomplices—like a kite in the sky. *Why did you put the dishes on a shelf higher than Gilderoy's kite? You know I can't reach anything up there! A: "Can you see the plane?" B: "It's higher*

than Gilderoy's kite! All I see is a tiny speck!"

a hill of beans Something of little or no importance, value, or worth. *For all the congressman's posturing about overhauling the tax system, his plan to do so is just a hill of beans.*

hill to die on Something so important that it must be dealt with, despite the difficulty and potential problems that could result. *In negotiations with your new company, your salary must be your hill to die on—accept nothing less than the amount you want!*

hind tit The worst, least valuable, or discarded part or portion of something; that which is unwanted and has been leftover. *The job market is so desperate these days that I've had to take any hind tit work I can find.*

hindsight is (always) 20/20 It is easier to clearly reevaluate past actions or decisions than when they are being made or done; things are clearer or more obvious when they are reflected upon. A reference to the visual acuity of normal eyesight (20/20 vision). *I can see now that having my brother as my legal counsel was unwise, but I guess hindsight is always 20/20. A: "I can't believe I was ever interested in such a self-absorbed jerk." B: "Don't blame yourself. Hindsight is 20/20, after all."*

hired gun 1. A person who is hired to kill someone. *Don't worry about that snitch. We've sent a couple of hired guns around to his house, so he won't be a problem for us much longer.* **2.** A person employed to provide armed protection for or fight on behalf of someone. *Things have become so violent in the town that even the mayor has taken on some hired guns to keep him safe. The rebels brought in a few hired guns to help bolster their meager attack.* **3.** A person who is especially skilled at attaining power for others, such as a lobbyist or politician. *The corporation has sent their best hired gun to convince the senator to vote against the environmental regulation bill.* **4.** A person hired to resolve difficult or complex problems or disputes, especially in business or law. *Because of the intricacy of the legislation, the company brought in a hired gun to ensure the merger deal didn't hit any legal snags.*

hired muscle One or more persons who have been paid to intimidate someone else (typically into doing something that will benefit the hired muscle's "boss"). *I can't believe Jimmy sent some hired muscle after me—I was always going to pay him back, sheesh! Their so-called hired muscle is just one guy, and I'm bigger than him.*

hit a brick wall To come up against an immovable or insurmountable difficulty or obstacle. *Our project was going well, but we hit a brick wall when our funding was suddenly cut.*

hit a sour note To indicate, introduce, or allude to something particularly unfortunate, unpleasant, or disagreeable. *News of my father's passing hit quite a sour note before my graduation ceremony. No one in the family brought attention to David's drinking problem until it started hitting a sour note at their holiday get-togethers.*

hit above (one's) weight **1.** To perform, achieve, or do something at a level that is considered beyond one's abilities, talents, or personal attributes. *The small-town mayor has been hitting above her weight recently, going head-to-head with federal lawmakers over the issue of immigration reform.* **2.** To be romantically or sexually involved with someone who is considered by others to be superior in physical appearance, intelligence, or success. *I think Janet's new boyfriend is a model or something. She's really hitting above her weight!*

hit-and-run **1.** adjective (used before the noun) Guilty of causing a motor-vehicle accident and fleeing the scene so as not to be identified and held responsible. *Police are appealing for witnesses to help identify the hit-and-run driver of this morning's fatal accident.* **2.** adjective (used before the noun) Of, involving, or resulting from a traffic accident in which the person responsible has fled the scene. *This one intersection has seen more hit-and-run fatalities than the rest of the state combined.* **3.** adjective (used before the noun) Involving or relying on swift, effective action followed by rapid departure. *There have been more hit-and-run attacks on military bases this month, as dissidents continue to intensify their guerrilla warfare tactics.* **4.** adjective (used before the noun) In baseball, of, involving, or denoting a play in which a base runner leaves for the next base as soon as the ball is pitched to the batter. *The runner managed to steal third base as the ball rocketed down midfield in a beautiful hit-and-run maneuver.* **5.** noun (not always hyphenated) The act of causing or contributing to a motor-vehicle accident on the road and fleeing the scene so as not to be identified and held responsible. *Luckily, a more concentrated police presence near busy intersections has cut down on the number of hit-and-runs over the past two years. No, officer, he left the scene—it was a hit and run!* **6.** verb (not always hyphenated) To cause or contribute to a hit-and-run. *Some jerk decided to hit-and-run our parked*

car. Our insurance will cover it, but our premium is sure to go up! Using security camera footage, police were able to identify the driver who hit and ran an elderly couple late last night. **7.** verb (not always hyphenated) In baseball, to attempt or execute a hit-and-run play. *The score was deadlocked the entire game, but when one player hit-and-ran in the last inning she was able to set up the winning run.*

hit below (one's) weight **1.** To perform, achieve, or do something at a level that is considered to be lower than one's abilities, talents, or personal attributes. *The Oscar-winning actor is truly hitting below his weight in this new film, with a performance that is dull at best and downright amateurish at worst.* **2.** To be romantically or sexually involved with someone who is considered by others to be inferior in physical appearance, intelligence, or success. *It's odd to me that someone so motivated by his career would hit below his weight with some gas station attendant like her.*

hit it big To find major or extraordinary success. *My uncle earned a respectable living in the '90s selling computers, but he really hit it big when he got into software development.*

hit it up (with someone) **1.** To develop or strike up a very good rapport (with someone), especially in a flirtatious or romantic manner. *After a few drinks, I felt much more confident hitting it up with Janet at the party.* **2.** To spend an enjoyable time (with someone); to hang out (with someone). *You all should come over and hit it up this weekend! I would love to hit it up with you later, but I've got a huge assignment due tomorrow.*

hit list **1.** A list of one's enemies who, as such, are subject to acts of violence or vengeance. *The politician was shocked to discover his name was on the criminal's hit list.* **2.** A list of people who are the subject of one's anger for a (real or perceived) wrongdoing. *Every employee in the accounting department was on the manager's hit list after he discovered they had been manipulating the books. I have no idea why I'm on Shelly's hit list all of a sudden—I haven't done anything wrong!*

hit man Someone who is hired to kill someone; a professional assassin. *The woman was arrested when the hit man she tried to hire turned out to be an undercover police officer.*

hit me (right) in the feels To induce an emotional reaction in someone. *Oh man, that video for the animal shelter hit me right in the feels. I*

want to adopt 10 puppies now!

hit me up slang Contact me. *I gave that cute boy my number and told him to hit me up sometime.*

hit on all cylinders To operate, perform, function, or proceed exceptionally well or at the greatest possible speed or efficiency. *We'll be hitting on all cylinders if we get Janet to join our team.*

hit on all six To work as efficiently and smoothly as possible. The phrase refers to the cylinders in the engine of a car. Primarily heard in US. *Now that we've divided up the responsibilities, we're really hitting on all six! We'll have this project done in no time!*

hit (one) when (one) is down To criticize, exploit, insult, or otherwise treat badly someone who has already suffered a setback or is in a vulnerable position. *Can Jeff's employee review wait until next week? His girlfriend just left him, and I don't want to hit him while he's down. Bob: "I'm sorry you got fired, but you shouldn't have been so sloppy with your work." Dave: "Wow, Bob. Way to hit me when I'm down."*

hit parade Any listing or inventory of the best or most popular persons or things in a given category. *Anthony's bookshelves are a veritable hit parade of classic literature.*

hit pay dirt To discover or come upon something very, particularly, or abundantly valuable or useful, especially after a long or arduous search. *I had been combing through books in the library for hours trying to find material for my thesis, when finally I hit pay dirt with an old collection of literary criticisms from the 1970s. One of my fondest memories was searching through my grandfather's attic when I was a kid, convinced that some day I would hit pay dirt.*

hit (someone) for six To upset or overwhelm someone, especially suddenly or unexpectedly. Primarily heard in UK. *News of my father's sudden death completely hit me for six.*

hit (something) out of the (ball)park To do or perform something extraordinarily well; to produce or earn an exceptional achievement. An allusion to hitting a home run in baseball that lands outside the stadium. *Great job on that report, Jacobs—you really hit it out of the park! I'm pretty sure I hit that test out of the ballpark.*

hit the big time To become very famous or successful. *Though she'd been acting for years, it was after her role in last summer's blockbuster that she finally hit the big time.*

hit the gas To move quickly; to accelerate or go faster. Used especially while riding in an automobile. *We'll need to hit the gas if we want to make it to the movie on time.*

hit the pavement 1. To walk outside, especially on the streets or sidewalk. *I need to get out, hit the pavement, and start looking for a job. 2.* To begin or take part in a strike. *The workers hit the pavement again after the company implemented a unilateral pay cut to all employees.*

hit the rock 1. To touch another person's fist with one's own in a display of celebration, solidarity, or friendship, or to solidify a deal or arrangement; to "fist-bump." Primarily heard in US. *Hey man, how you been? Come here and hit the rock! The two hit the rock and sealed the deal. 2.* To freebase crack cocaine. Primarily heard in US. *It was when I found myself hitting the rock for five or six days straight that I decided to get professional help.*

hit the rocks To encounter an especially difficult, troubled, or low point, as in a relationship or some pursuit. *We'd been great friends for nearly 10 years, but our friendship has hit the rocks lately.*

hit the sauce To drink alcohol, especially heavily and frequently. *You need to stop hitting the sauce and start taking care of your kids!*

hit the sawdust trail 1. dated To accept, practice, or convert to Christianity at an evangelist's revival meeting, so as to find redemption, rehabilitation, or spiritual salvation. Alludes to sawdust-covered aisles of the temporary church dwellings for revival meetings in the early 1900s. Primarily heard in US. *That travelling evangelist has been pleading for everyone in town to hit the sawdust trail, for he believes that the end is nigh. My friend, the only way you will find peace within yourself is by hitting the sawdust trail at our meeting place over yonder. 2.* dated Of an itinerant evangelist preacher, to begin travelling to the next location where one will preach. ("Sawdust trail" is sometimes capitalized in this usage.) Primarily heard in US. *Old Bill Baxton? Shoot, he's been hitting the Sawdust Trail for the better part of his life. He probably wouldn't be able to settle down in one place if he tried!*

hit the silk To jump out of an aircraft. The phrase refers to a skydiver's parachute. *A lot of people think skydiving is nerve-wracking, but when I hit the silk, I'm completely calm.*

hit the white To be correct; to be right on target. (The bull's-eye on a target was once white.) *You sure hit the white with that answer—it was exactly what the panel was looking for.*

hit two birds with one stone To complete, achieve, or take care of two tasks at the same time or with a singular series of actions; to solve two problems with one action or solution. (A variant of the more common "kill two birds with one stone.") *I might as well hit two birds with one stone and drop off my tax return while I'm at the mall for the computer part I need. Bike-to-work plans are a great way of hitting two birds with one stone: getting more exercise while cutting down on the cost of your daily commute.*

hmu slang An abbreviation for "hit me up," meaning "contact me." *If anyone's doing anything tonight, hmu.*

hoagie A sandwich served on a long roll of bread, typically six inches to several feet in length, filled with a variety of ingredients including meat, cheese, and vegetables. Primarily heard in US. *This restaurant across the road from our office makes the best hoagie in the city. I've gotten to where I go there two or three times a week for lunch. I'm ordering a few four-foot hoagies for the party this weekend, so if you have any food allergies, let me know before tomorrow.*

hobby-horse A subject, topic, or issue about which one frequently or incessantly talks, expounds, or complains. *Ah, here we go again. Once grandpa gets on his hobby-horse about the government, there's no stopping him!*

hog (something) To take or use something all for oneself; to not allow others to have or use something. *Hey buddy, quit hogging the road! My wife always hogs the covers at night.*

hoist (a/the) white flag To offer a sign of surrender or defeat; to yield or give in. *After the prosecutors brought forward their newest evidence, the defendant hoisted the white flag and agreed to the plea bargain. We've been in negotiations for weeks, but it looks like the other company might finally be ready to hoist a white flag.*

hoist by (one's) own petard To be injured, ruined, or defeated by one's own action, device, or plot that was intended to harm another; to have fallen victim to one's own trap or schemes. (Note: "hoist" in this instance is the simple past-tense of the archaic form of the verb, "hoise.") *I tried to get my boss fired by planting drugs on him, but I was hoist by my own petard when the police caught me with them beforehand.*

hoist the blue peter To leave or prepare to leave. This nautical term refers to the blue and white flag that sailors would hoist before departing from a location. *Hoist the blue peter, gentleman, so we can set sail!*

hold a candle See [doesn't hold a candle](#).

hold a grudge To harbor persistent and continual resentment or ill feelings toward someone, especially for some slight or wrongdoing they have committed in the past. *Johnny has been holding a grudge against me since we were 12 because I embarrassed him in front of a girl he liked. Samantha is just so forgiving—I don't think she's ever held a grudge in her life!*

hold a wolf by the ears To be in a difficult situation from which it is as dangerous to extricate oneself as it is to remain in it. *I'm afraid we're holding a wolf by the ears regarding our current healthcare system. It would be unthinkable to completely overhaul it, but it is dangerously untenable in its current condition. The authoritarian regime is holding the wolf by the ears with the way it treats the population.*

hold (all) the cards To be in a position of power or control over someone or something else. The phrase alludes to having the best cards in a card game (which would lead to victory). *Now that Charlotte knows about us, she holds all the cards—I imagine it won't be long until she tells my wife what she saw. I saw my brother break the vase, so I hold the cards right now and can get him to do anything I want.*

hold an eel by the tail To try to engage or somehow detain an elusive person or thing. *Trying to get in touch with my insurance company is like trying to holding an eel by the tail—I can never get through to a live person! Every time we try to pin charges on the mob boss, it's as hard as holding an eel by the tail because he somehow weasels his way out of them!*

hold fast 1. To remain securely adhered (to something). *I didn't think the makeshift weld would do the trick, but I'm happy to say that it's holding fast.*

2. To remain determined, stalwart, and unyielding, as in one's position or opinion. *Though it may be hard, we must hold fast in our pledge to environmental reform.*

hold firm 1. To remain securely adhered (to something). *I didn't think the makeshift weld would do the trick, but I'm happy to say that it's holding firm.*

2. To remain determined, stalwart, and unyielding, as in one's position or opinion. *Though it may be hard, we must hold firm in our pledge to environmental reform.*

hold on to your hat Get ready for what's coming or about to happen! *Hold on to your hats, everybody—we're about to see what these fireworks can do!*

hold (one's) nerve To remain calm, steady, and resolute, especially in the face of danger or adversity. *I know learning to drive can be daunting, but if you can hold your nerve out on the road, you'll do just fine.*

hold (one's) water To be calm or patient; to stop making pressing demands, requests, or solicitations. *Janet needs to hold her water and just let the committee do its job. You kids hold your water back there or I swear I'll turn this car right around!*

hold (someone) in good stead Especially of a talent, ability, or experience, to prove particularly useful or beneficial to someone in the future. *Janet is hoping her internship working in IT will hold her in good stead when she looks for a job after college.*

hold (someone) in high esteem To have a large amount of respect or admiration for someone. *I'll go see if I can persuade the committee—they hold me in high esteem. I've always held my father in high esteem for his hard work to provide for us.*

hold (someone) in high regard To have a large amount of respect or admiration for someone. *I'll go see if I can persuade the committee—they hold me in high regard. I've always held my father in high regard for his hard work to provide for us.*

hold still for (something) To accept, tolerate, endure, or put up with something. (Often used in the negative to indicate the opposite.) *Do you really think the boss will hold still for this outrageous plan of yours? The people of this country will no longer hold still for the persecution*

administered by the despots and corrupt politicians in government.

hold that thought An expression used to interrupt someone mid-speech and indicate that one's attention is being or about to be diverted. *Sorry, Janet, hold that thought—I'm getting a call on the other line.*

hold that thought imperative Do not forget what you were saying, because I need to change the subject. *Sorry, Mark, hold that thought for a minute. I need to take this phone call.*

hold the reins To have or be in control, especially of a group, project, or situation. *Though my grandfather was the breadwinner, it was my grandmother who truly held the reins in their house. The boss decided she'd hold the reins on this project after the assistant manager bungled the last one so badly.*

hold the ring To monitor or control a conflict or dispute, especially in a neutral or uninvolved manner. Primarily heard in UK. *Working in HR, my job is to hold the ring between employees who have a problem, rather than involve myself directly in it.*

hold (up) (one's) end of the bargain To do as was promised in an agreement or bargain; to carry through with what one agreed to do. Also worded as "hold (one's) end of the bargain up." *I've delivered the cash as you instructed. Now you have to hold up your end of the bargain! We've done the work on our end, I just hope their team holds their end of the bargain! My dad said he'd buy me a car if I got a 4.0 this semester, so I've got to ace this test if I want to hold my end of the bargain up.*

hold up (one's) end (of the bargain) To fulfill or attend to one's obligation(s) or promise(s) as agreed; to do one's agreed part in some arrangement. *I've paid my share setting up this business—now it's time for you to hold up your end. Jackie didn't hold up her end of the bargain, so we're excluding her from the deal.*

hold with the hare and run with the hounds 1. To support or attempt to placate both sides of a conflict or dispute. *Many have criticized the US government of holding with the hare and running with the hound regarding the territorial dispute between the two nations.* 2. To act duplicitously or hypocritically; to speak or act out against something while engaging or taking part in it. *How can you be taken seriously as an anti-drug reformer when extensive documents reveal that you are a frequent user of*

methamphetamine? You can't hold with the hare and run with the hound, Senator.

holding pattern See [in a holding pattern](#).

holding pattern 1. Literally, of an aircraft, a continuous, generally circular flight pattern over an airport, as while awaiting clearance to land. *Due to a security breach in the airport, our plane was kept in a holding pattern for nearly 45 minutes.* **2.** A state or condition of inactivity or stagnancy, leading to little or no change, advancement, or development. *Relying solely on derivative sequels, many feel that the video game company has been in a holding pattern in recent years*

hole card 1. In poker, a card dealt face down to a player. *It is common in stud poker for the player to receive a number of hole cards.* **2.** A secret advantage. *Just when everyone thought Randy was going to lose the competition, he used his hole card and pulled into first place.*

hole in the wall A small, inconspicuous place, often an establishment such a restaurant. The term sometimes but not always has a negative connotation implying a place that is perceived to be disreputable in some way. *I wasn't impressed when Gary suggested a hole in the wall for our first date, but we ended up having a good time.*

Hollywood moment 1. A highly dramatic act or moment, as might happen in a film. *I'll never forget that Hollywood moment with my first love, standing out in the rain, awaiting the train that would take her away from me forever.* **2.** A moment or period of time when one or one's actions are featured in a film. *The local sheriff had his Hollywood moment this afternoon as a film crew followed his day-to-day activities for an upcoming documentary.*

holy crap A mildly indecent exclamation of surprise, shock, or astonishment. *Holy crap, the bill for that dinner is nearly \$200! We won the lottery? Holy crap, that's amazing news!*

holy crap on a cracker A mildly indecent exclamation of surprise, shock, or astonishment. (An emphatic form of "holy crap.") *Holy crap on a cracker, the bill for that dinner is nearly \$200! We won the lottery? Holy crap on a cracker, that's amazing news!*

holy crickets An exclamation of surprise, shock, or astonishment. *Holy crickets, the bill for that dinner is nearly \$200! We won the lottery? Holy*

crickets, that's amazing news!

holy fuck rude slang An exclamation, typically of surprise, dismay, or anger. *Holy fuck, did someone hit my car? Look at the size of that bear! Holy fuck!*

(Holy) Mother of God An exclamation of alarm, amazement, or exasperation. (Could be considered blasphemous to some.) *Holy Mother of God, I thought that car was going to hit me! Oh, Mother of God, could you work any slower?*

holy shit rude slang An exclamation of surprise, shock, or astonishment. *Holy shit, the bill for the dinner is nearly \$200! We won the lottery? Holy shit, that's amazing news!*

a holy terror A very troublesome, aggressive, or aggravating person; a person who is exasperatingly difficult in manner or behavior. *I know that I was a holy terror when I was young, so I guess it's fitting that my own kids give me so much trouble.*

home and dry Assuredly successful. Primarily heard in UK. *I'm pretty sure I did well on that last exam, so it looks like I'm home and dry for the semester.*

home and dry See [be home and dry](#).

home and hosed Assuredly successful. Primarily heard in Australia. *I'm pretty sure I did well on that last exam, so it looks like I'm home and hosed for the semester.*

home and hosed See [be home and hosed](#).

home away from home A place in which one has spent a lot of time and often where one feels as comfortable and familiar as one's own home. *Growing up, I spent so much time at my best friend's house, it felt like my home away from home. Brett visits Paris so often, it has become his home away from home.*

home game A game that is played at a sports team's own playing field or court (as opposed to its opponent's). *Thank goodness we have a home game this weekend—I can finally spend some time with my kids after this long road trip!*

home is where you hang your hat Wherever one resides and

keeps one's belongings is home. The phrase separates the notion of "home" from its sentimental connotation. *My parents think that my apartment isn't truly a home, but hey, home is where you hang your hat!*

home of ill fame See [house of ill fame](#).

home poor See [house poor](#).

home sweet home An expression of pleasure or relief upon returning to one's home, especially after an extended period away from it. *Ah, home sweet home! After two months in India, it sure is great to be back.*

home team A sports team that is playing in its regular arena in its home city. *I always love to see the fans' enthusiasm and excitement when the home team wins.*

home truth An uncomfortable or unpleasant fact, especially one that is hard to hear or acknowledge. Often used in the plural. *After growing tired of Paul's constant complaining, Jana decided to tell him a few home truths about his bad attitude.*

home, James (, and don't spare the horses) A humorous directive for a driver to take one home directly and without delay. *Thank goodness you finally came to pick me up. Home, James, and don't spare the horses! You know, shouting "home, James" every time you get in the car is starting to get a little tiresome.*

homeless dumping The premature discharge of indigent patients onto the streets by hospital workers or care providers, due to the high cost of providing care or shelter for them. *A local hospital is being investigated for a continual practice of homeless dumping, with many who suffer from chronic addiction and health issues being thrust straight back onto Skid Row.*

homer 1. slang In baseball or softball, a home run (a hit that allows the batter to round all four bases and score a run, almost always because the ball was hit out of the ball park in fair territory). *If he hits a homer, we'll win the game.* 2. slang A sports fan who ardently (and often blindly or irrationally) supports the hometown team(s). *Oh, that guy's a real homer—he'll tell you all the reasons why his team is going to make the playoffs, even though they're currently last in the standings.*

Homer nods See [even Homer \(sometimes\) nods](#).

Homeric nod A continuity error in a work of fiction. An allusion to the

Greek poet Homer, whose epic poems contain several apparent errors in continuity. *Though the film is being heralded by many as the director's masterpiece, there is a Homeric nod towards the end that is undeniably jarring.*

an honest buck Honest, legal work or income. Often used in the phrase "make/earn an honest buck." Primarily heard in US. *After 10 years working for the mob, Jeremy was ready to finally start making an honest buck.*

honest injun An expression used to emphasize the veracity of one's statement. Based on an informal spelling of "Indian" (i.e., Native American), the phrase is somewhat dated and may be considered offensive. Primarily heard in US. *I swear it wasn't me who broke the lamp, honest injun!*

an honest mistake A mistake made unintentionally or unknowingly and without the intention of causing harm; a mistake that anyone might have made in similar circumstances. *It was an honest mistake! How was I to know that you wouldn't want me to send that letter with the rest of the mail?*

honest to Pete Honestly; truly; genuinely. An expression used to emphasize the veracity of one's statement, "Pete" here is a substitution of the word "God," so as to avoid potential blasphemy. *I swear it wasn't me who broke the lamp, honest to Pete! Honest to Pete, how are we supposed to finish this project on time with half of our staff laid off?*

the honest truth The sincere, unadulterated truth. *I swear it wasn't me who broke the lamp, that's the honest truth! The honest truth is that I don't really see this relationship working out in the long run.*

honey catches more flies than vinegar Being kind and gentle produces more positive results than being rude or unpleasant. *I don't understand why the boss is always yelling at us like that—doesn't he realize that honey catches more flies than vinegar?*

honey-do list A list or collection of tasks or jobs one has been requested to perform or undertake, especially household duties or jobs, given to a person by their spouse or romantic partner. It is a pun on "honeydew" (a fruit), with "honey" referring to a common term of endearment, and "do" referring to a "to-do list." *All I want to do on the weekends is relax, but my husband always has some honey-do list for me.*

honey-mouthed Smooth, soothing, and sweet in voice, especially in a

persuasive or seductive manner or intent. *The king has fallen victim to the honey-mouthed advice of his power-hungry chancellor. Handsome and honey-mouthed, the young man was able to pick up any woman he wanted.*

honey trap 1. An attraction, location, or sight designed to entice people to visit it, especially for monetary gain; a tourist trap. *Even though I've lived in New York City for 10 years, I've never visited the Statue of Liberty. It's just a big honey trap, in my opinion.* **2.** The use of an attractive person, especially a woman, to extract information from someone by means of seduction. *Though it feels a little demeaning, I know that being used as a honey trap against the mafia leader is for the greater good.*

honeymoon period The short amount of time at the beginning of a new relationship, activity, or pursuit when everything goes well and seems to be free of problems. *Donna was excited when she started her new job, but once the honeymoon period was over, she realized that she had more responsibilities than she could handle. Many couples find it difficult to maintain a relationship after the honeymoon period ends.*

honeymoon phase The short amount of time at the beginning of a new relationship, activity, or pursuit when everything goes well and seems to be free of problems. *Donna was excited when she started her new job, but once the honeymoon phase was over, she realized that she had more responsibilities than she could handle. Many couples find it difficult to maintain a relationship after the honeymoon phase ends.*

honeymoon stage The short amount of time at the beginning of a new relationship, activity, or pursuit when everything goes well and seems to be free of problems. *Donna was excited when she started her new job, but once the honeymoon stage was over, she realized that she had more responsibilities than she could handle. Many couples find it difficult to maintain a relationship after the honeymoon stage ends.*

honor bound See [be honor-bound to do \(something\)](#).

honorable mention A recognition or citation of merit given to a contestant, exhibition, entry, etc., in a competition despite that person or thing not being awarded a prize or top honor. Primarily heard in US. *My short story did not win a top place in the writing competition, but being given an honorable mention still gives me great pride.*

honours are even Both sides are equally matched; the contest is equal

or level; neither side has been victorious. Primarily heard in UK. *Honours are even going into the third round of this match. At the end of an amazing game, honours are even between these two teams.*

hooky See [play hooky](#).

hoover up something **1.** Literally, to use a vacuum cleaner on something; to suck up something using a vacuum cleaner. An allusion to the Hoover brand of vacuums, though used generically. Also phrased as "hoover something up." Primarily heard in UK. *We'd better hoover up the house before our guests arrive. I need to hoover this glass up or someone might get hurt!* **2.** To eat or drink something with great speed and voracity. Primarily heard in UK. *I'm so hungry, I'm going to hoover up everything I can lay my hands on at the restaurant! I've never seen anyone hoover vegetables up the way you do.* **3.** To absorb or consume something with great enthusiasm, intensity, or eagerness. Primarily heard in UK. *The teacher was brilliant at finding ways to encourage her students to hoover their studies up. My son hoovers any new technological gadget up.*

hop joint A location where opium is dealt and smoked; an opium den. *Though they've become pretty rare, you can still find a few hop joints downtown.*

hop, skip, and a jump A short distance away from a certain location. *My apartment's location is so convenient. It's just a hop, skip, and a jump away from the train station and the grocery store.*

hope chest **1.** A piece of furniture used to store household items such as clothing and linens. *The antique store had a beautiful cedar hope chest that would be a perfect addition to my bedroom furniture.* **2.** A young woman's collection of household items to use in her home after marriage. *Sarah collected linens and sheets for her hope chest in anticipation of her new life as a married woman.*

a hope in hell See [not have a hope in hell \(of doing something\)](#).

hope in hell See [not a hope in hell](#).

horizontal dance The act of sexual intercourse. *My brother spends his weekends cruising the bars around town in hopes of doing the horizontal dance with someone.*

horizontal dancing Sexual intercourse. *My brother spends his*

weekends cruising the bars around town in hopes of taking part in some horizontal dancing.

horizontal jogging Sexual intercourse. *My brother spends his weekends cruising the bars around town in hopes of going for some horizontal jogging.*

horizontal mambo The act of sexual intercourse. *My brother spends his weekends cruising the bars around town in hopes of doing the horizontal mambo with someone.*

horizontal refreshments slang Sexual intercourse. A: *"Did you two have horizontal refreshments last night?"* B: *"Well that's a personal question!"*

horizontally challenged Fat; overweight; obese. A pseudo-politically correct term that may be deemed offensive. *I became a little horizontally challenged after my accident, as I was confined to a wheelchair for nearly a year.*

hormone therapy A medical intervention in which hormones are used as a course of treatment for a particular illness. *My grandmother is now undergoing hormone therapy for her cancer—I sure hope it works.*

hornet's nest 1. A dangerous, complicated situation. *If we do invade, I fear that we will find ourselves in a real hornet's nest.* **2.** A situation that produces angry reactions. *The politician's off-the-cuff remark about pollution stirred up a hornet's nest among environmentalists.*

horror show 1. Literally, a (potentially frightening) film or television show with supernatural and/or macabre elements. *I can't watch these horror shows before bed, they give me nightmares.* **2.** Something disastrous, disorganized, or otherwise unpleasant, often said with a note of dismay or disdain. *Oh boy, that performance was a real horror show. How many people were actually singing the same thing at the same time? I can't have anyone come over right now—I just got back from a business trip, and my house is a horror show!*

horse and rabbit stew A situation comprised of both crude or unpleasant things as well as those which are pleasing or beneficial, usually with the former in greater proportion to the latter. Used especially in reference to economics or business. *The prime minister's plan for the*

economic recovery is little more than horse and rabbit stew, with a few token stimulus incentives greatly outweighed by draconian austerity measures.

horse of a different color Something completely different or separate, especially in comparison to something else. *I've always found math to be easy, but calculus is a horse of a different color.*

horse of another color Something completely different or separate, especially in comparison to something else. *I've always found math to be easy, but calculus is a horse of a another color.*

horse opera A film or theatrical production about the American West (i.e., a western), especially one that is clichéd or formulaic. *My grandfather and I had a tradition of watching old horse operas every Sunday on TV.*

horse pill 1. Any pill or tablet that is unusually or unreasonably large, such that it might be difficult for someone to swallow. *The doctor gave me these horse pills to combat the infection; just looking at them makes my throat hurt!* 2. A story, statement, claim, proposal, etc., that is untrue or difficult to believe or accept (i.e., "hard to swallow"). *Mike tried to feed us some horse pill about how he had inherited the money, but I'm pretty sure he stole it.*

horse pucky 1. Foolish, deceitful, bombastic, or arrogant talk. Primarily heard in US. *Ah, don't listen to Jem, he's just full of horse pucky.* 2. Something that is worthless, terrible, disingenuous, or unfair. Primarily heard in US. *This is horse pucky! I'm supposed to be graduating next spring and instead I've got to repeat my senior year! Can you believe this horse pucky? They're trying to charge us double on our insurance just because of that fender bender we had last month!*

horse-trade To negotiate, trade, or bargain in a shrewd, judicious manner. Primarily heard in US. *You'll have to excuse my cousin, he hasn't had the patience to horse-trade ever since he started working on Wall Street.*

horse trading Negotiation, trading, or bargaining conducted in or characterized by a shrewd, judicious manner. Primarily heard in US. *You'll have to excuse my cousin, he has no patience for horse trading ever since he started working on Wall Street.*

a horseback opinion An opinion that is not well thought out (with the implication that one has not even taken the time to get off one's horse to give

the issue more careful consideration). *Now that I've learned more about the cheating scandal and had time to think about it all, I wish I could take back my initial horseback opinions.*

horse's ass vulgar An extremely or offensively stupid, incompetent, or boorish person. *I can't believe I dated that horse's ass for nearly two years! He's an extremely skilled player, even if he is a bit of a horse's ass in person.*

hospital pass **1.** In sports, especially rugby, a pass to a teammate who will be heavily tackled as a result. *Their scrum half took a devastating blow after that hospital pass from his flanker.* **2.** A task, project, or case (as in law) that will result in or bring a great amount of criticism upon the person to whom it is assigned. *No one likes having to take a case defending the murderer of a child, but every person is entitled to legal representation. I suppose I'll just have to accept that this will be a hospital pass for me.*

hoss opera A film or theatrical production about the American West (i.e., a western), especially one that is clichéd or formulaic. *My grandfather and I had a tradition of watching old hoss operas every Sunday on TV.*

hostage to fortune An act or situation that could create future problems. *A company that publicly supports an unpopular political stance often creates a hostage to fortune.*

hot button Highly politicized or emotionally charged. Often used in the phrase "a hot button issue." Primarily heard in US. *Wealth redistribution is a hot button issue on both sides of the political aisle.*

hot check A written order to a bank for a certain amount of funds that has been dishonored, either because such funds are not available or because the given checking account does not exist. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *A lot of hot checks have been circulating in the area lately, claiming to be from the local university; in reality, they are scams trying to swindle people out of money.*

hot desk **1.** noun A desk or workstation that is shared between employees in an office. *I've never worked at a hot desk in a company before; while it was strange not having my own desk at first, with everything done on laptops you barely notice it after a while!* **2.** verb To share a desk or workstation with other employees in an office. *I've never hot desked in a company before; while it was strange not having my own desk at first, with everything done on laptops you barely notice it after a while!*

hot desking The act or practice of sharing desks or workstations between employees in an office so as to cut down on the amount of office space required. *I've never worked in a company that did hot desking before; while it was strange not having my own desk at first, with everything done on laptops you barely notice it after a while!*

a hot hand A continuous period of great success, luck, or fortune; a winning streak. *I'm not usually any good at poker, but I had a hot hand last night. Their forward seems to have a hot hand in the game tonight!*

hot lunch A meal served to people in an institutional setting, such as a school. *What's on the menu for today's hot lunch?*

a hot mess **1.** Any situation or thing that is in an abject state of disorder, disarray, or chaos. Primarily heard in US. *This film is just a hot mess—the plot doesn't make sense, the acting is terrible, and it's edited so poorly that I can barely tell what's even happening on the screen.* **2.** A person who is disheveled or disordered in life, manner, or appearance. Primarily heard in US. *Josh has been a hot mess lately. He lost his job, took to drinking, and hasn't much looked after himself.*

a hot number **1.** A person who is very sexually attractive. *I met a real hot number last night. I could barely take my eyes off of him!* **2.** Someone or something that is particularly trendy, popular, or fashionable at the moment. *That new talking robotic doll is definitely a hot number going into the holiday season. The movie star has become a really hot number in the media lately.*

hot potato A sensitive situation or controversial issue that is difficult to handle and thus gets passed from one person to the next (like a potato that is too hot to hold). *The political candidate knew the issue was a hot potato, so he deferred to his chief of staff, who directed questions to the committee chairperson.*

hot rod An automobile that has been specially refitted, redesigned, or altered in some way so as to achieve very high speeds and acceleration. *I've spent nearly two years turning this old worn-out Mustang into one heck of a hot rod.*

hot spot **1.** A popular location for entertainment or social activity. *The trendy new restaurant became the city's latest hot spot.* **2.** A place where a particular thing occurs frequently. *City Hall has become a hot spot for*

protests lately—it seems like there's one every week. **3.** A place known to be dangerous due to violence or crime. *The government issued an alert to Americans traveling abroad, warning them about hot spots for terrorism.*

hot stuff **1.** A person who is very sexually attractive. (Sometimes used as a pronoun.) *Man, that supermodel is really hot stuff! Hey, hot stuff. Fancy spending the night with someone like me?* **2.** Someone or something that is particularly popular, fashionable, interesting, exciting, etc. *That new talking robotic doll is hot stuff for gift-seeking parents this holiday season. The movie star has really become hot stuff in the media lately. That new pilot thinks he's hot stuff, but he's got a lot to learn.* **3.** Something that is erotic or salacious, especially media such as books, magazines, videos, etc. *Man, this magazine you swiped from your brother's room is some hot stuff!*

hot tip A piece of advice or information that is timely and helpful, especially if acted upon quickly. *We received a hot tip that the suspect is on his way to the border.*

hot up **1.** To increase in heat; to heat up (something). Primarily heard in UK. *I'm just waiting for this stew to hot up, and then we'll be ready to eat! I'm sorry about that, sir, would you like me to hot up that steak for you?* **2.** To make or become more intense, interesting, or exciting. Primarily heard in UK. *The election campaigns for the local MP are really hotting up. I feel like my relationship with Darren is really beginning to hot up.*

hothead A person with an excitable, fiery, or impetuous temper or disposition; one who is quick to get angry or act rashly. *That lady in the car behind me is a real hothead, honking and shouting at me every time I slow down! He turns into a bit of a hothead when he is drinking, always looking to get into a fight with someone.*

hotline **1.** A telecommunications link, especially a telephone line, that provides fast, direct access to a source of information, confidential assistance, or emergency aid. *We've set up a hotline for any potential witnesses to come forward with information about the incident.* **2.** A direct and immediate line of communication between the heads of different governments, used especially for or during an international crisis. *The hotline between the U.S. and Canada has been in constant use after the terrorist attack at the border of the two countries.*

hound someone **1.** To hunt, chase, or pursue someone relentlessly.

Police hounded the suspect for days, pursuing him as far as the border to Mexico, where he was finally arrested. 2. To badger, hector, or pester someone, especially persistently or relentlessly. *I wish my boss would stop hounding me about that report. The press hounded the president about the country's involvement in the foreign war.*

hounded by See [be hounded \(by someone or something\)](#).

house cooling party A party thrown to commemorate when someone leaves an apartment, flat, or house. *We've loved living in this place, so we've decided to throw a house cooling party for all our friends to celebrate all the good times we've had here.*

a house divided against itself cannot stand If a group's members are in perpetual disagreement, the group will eventually cease to exist. The phrase is derived from a verse in the Bible (Mark 3:25) and was popularized in an 1858 speech by Abraham Lincoln. *The candidate urged the members of his political party to unite because he understood that a house divided against itself cannot stand.*

a house is not a home A house is just a physical structure, while a home is lived-in (often by a family) and full of memories. A: *"I know it hurts to move to a new town, but we'll have a new house there, and—" B: "Oh, a house is not a home! It won't be the same!"*

house nigger highly offensive A disparaging term for a black person, likening him or her to a subservient slave, i.e., one who works in the house of the slavemaster.

house of cards A plan, organization, or other entity that is destined to fail due to a weak structure or foundation (likened to a literal house of cards, which is built by balancing playing cards against one another, and is very easily toppled). *Greg decided against investing in the new technology company because he got the feeling that it was a house of cards. So your plan is to just cram and miraculously get good grades on all of your exams? That sounds like a real house of cards to me!*

house of ill fame A brothel or house of prostitution. *Though obviously in decline in recent years, houses of ill fame can still be found in the seedier parts of the city.*

house poor Having the majority of one's income going towards the high

costs of one's home, such as mortgage or rent, property tax, utilities, etc., leaving very little money remaining for other expenditures. *I love our home, but neither of us can really afford this high rent, and it's making us rather house poor as a result.*

household name A person, thing, or brand that has become widely popular or commonly known. *Because it has made reliable and affordable household appliances for over a decade, the company has become a household name. I knew that winning at the Olympics would change my life, but I didn't realize that I would become a household name!*

household word Something that has become widely popular or commonly known. *Due to the widespread adoption of mobile technology, "smartphone" has become a household word.*

housewarming (party) A party thrown to celebrate when someone moves into a new apartment, flat, or house. *We're having a little housewarming next week to get to know our neighbors and feel a bit more at home here. Are you going to the neighbor's housewarming party? I think it will be a nice way to welcome them to the neighborhood.*

how are you A question commonly posed in greeting or starting a conversation with another person. A: *"Good to see you, John. How are you?"* B: *"I've been well, thanks. How are you, Paul?"*

how can you sleep at night A phrase intended to induce guilt in someone who seemingly commits immoral acts with no remorse. *How can you sleep at night, senator, knowing that you embezzled taxpayer money?*

how-d'ye-do 1. An informal, colloquial greeting (a contraction of "how do you do?"). *Well hey, Bob, how-d'ye-do? Been a long time since I've seen you around here!* 2. An unfortunate, unpleasant, or awkward situation or circumstance; a troublesome or difficult state of affairs. (Often phrased as "a fine how-d'ye-do.") *Well that's a fine how-d'ye-do. I'm on the job for just two days and I find out that the company is going bankrupt!*

how in blazes See [in \(the\) blazes?](#)

how in blue blazes See [in blue blazes?](#)

how in creation See [in creation?](#)

how in Sam Hell See [in \(the\) Sam Hill?](#)

how in tarnation See [in tarnation?](#).

how in thunderation See [in thunderation?](#).

how the cookie crumbles See [that's how the cookie crumbles.](#)

how the mop flops See [that's how the mop flops.](#)

how the wind blows What appears probable or likely; how a certain course or situation is likely to develop. *The politician is waiting to see how the wind blows regarding public opinion on the issue before deciding how to take action. It looks like I might be considered for the job, but I'm waiting to see how the wind blows.*

how the wind lies What appears probable or likely; how a certain course or situation is likely to develop. *The politician is waiting to see how the wind lies regarding public opinion on the issue before deciding how to take action. It looks like I might be considered for the job, but I'm waiting to see how the wind lies.*

howdy-do 1. An informal, colloquial greeting (a contraction of "how do you do?"). Primarily heard in US. *Well hey, Bob, howdy-do? Been a long time since I've seen you around here!* **2.** An unfortunate, unpleasant, or awkward situation or circumstance; a troublesome or difficult state of affairs. (Often phrased as "a fine howdy-do.") Primarily heard in US. *Well that's a fine howdy-do. I'm on the job for just two days and I find out that the company is going bankrupt!*

however much No matter how much. *However much it might embarrass you, you're taking your little sister to that concert!*

however much Regardless of or despite how much; although. *However much he hated the arrogant young man, Jonathan couldn't allow an innocent person to be arrested for a crime he didn't commit. However much I'd like to see Paris or Rome someday, I need to stay here to take care of my mother.*

a howling success See [be a howling success.](#)

how's life (treating you)? How are you? How is everything in your life? (Said as an informal greeting.) *Hey, John, great to see you again! How's life treating you? Hi Murray, how's life?*

how's tricks? How are you? How is everything in your life? Said as an informal greeting. *Hey, John, great to see you again! How's tricks?*

how's tricks? How are you? How is everything in your life? (Said as an informal greeting.) *Hey, John, great to see you again! How's tricks?*

huckleberry above a persimmon dated Better than average among similar things. Primarily heard in US. *I reckon that horse of yours is a huckleberry above a persimmon, but you've got to know how to ride it for it to be of any use to you.*

a huckleberry above her persimmon See [be a huckleberry above \(one's\) persimmon](#).

huckleberry above (one's) persimmon dated Somewhat or slightly beyond one's abilities or talents. Primarily heard in US. *I'd like to help you fellas out, but I'm afraid herding cattle is a huckleberry above my persimmon*

a huckleberry over her persimmon See [be a huckleberry over \(one's\) persimmon](#).

a huckleberry to a persimmon See [bet a huckleberry to a persimmon](#).

hue and cry A large public protest. *The company's decision to send thousands of jobs overseas started a real hue and cry as people threatened to boycott its stores.*

Hulda is making her bed It is snowing. In German mythology, Hulda is the goddess of marriage and fertility, so the image might refer to her preparing a marriage bed (that has shed some feathers in the process). *Hulda is making her bed all right! Some kids are already out there sledding.*

humanly possible Realistically possible. Usually used in the phrase "as fast as humanly possible," meaning as fast as a person could possibly go. *This cab driver needs to go as fast as humanly possible to give us any chance of making our flight! I got ready as fast as humanly possible and still missed the bus.*

humblebrag **1.** noun A seemingly modest statement that ultimately highlights one's accomplishments or status. *A: "He literally said, 'Oh, my job isn't that important—I'm only a cardiothoracic surgeon.'" B: "Geez, nice humblebrag."* **2.** verb To make such a statement. *Please stop humblebragging about how you're only ranked third in the state.*

Humpty Dumptyism The act or practice of misusing or misinterpreting a word, phrase, or article of text to suit one's own meaning or purpose. Taken from the character Humpty Dumpty in Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking-Glass*, who states, "When I use a word it means just what I choose it to mean." *Democrats' misrepresentation of the proposed bill is a blatant case of Humpty Dumptyism, aimed to create anti-Republican sentiment. He's too entrenched in Humpty Dumptyism to realize that socialism is something completely different from what he is decrying.*

a hundred and ten percent An effort towards something that is greater than one believes one is capable of doing, i.e., beyond 100% of one's ability; often used as a motivation in sports. Primarily heard in US. *Alright guys, we all need to dig deep for the second half of the game. Go out there and give a hundred and ten percent and bring home a win!*

hung by the eyelids See [hang by the eyelids](#).

hung hat See [hang \(up\) \(one's\) hat](#).

hung on her sleeve See [hang on \(one's\) sleeve](#).

hung the moon See [think \(one\) hung the moon](#).

hung the moon and the stars See [think \(someone\) hung the moon and the stars](#).

hung up See [hang up](#).

hung up boots See [hang up \(one's\) boots](#).

hung up fiddle See [hang up \(one's\) fiddle](#).

hung up hatchet See [hang up \(one's\) hatchet](#).

hung up her spurs See [hang up \(one's\) spurs](#).

hunger is a good sauce Food tastes better when one is hungry. *Don't worry too much about what to feed the hikers. Hunger is a good sauce, and they're going to love whatever you serve them.*

hunger is the best spice Food tastes better when one is hungry. *Don't worry too much about what to feed the hikers. Hunger is the best spice, and they're going to love whatever you serve them.*

hunk of ass 1. vulgar slang Someone with whom to have sexual intercourse or engage in sexual activity; a potential sexual partner.

(Potentially pejorative or objectionable; usually said of a woman.) *There's a fine-looking hunk of ass down at the end of the bar. I'm going to go over and talk to her, see if I can't make something happen.* **2.** vulgar slang By extension, sexual intercourse or activity in general. (Potentially pejorative or objectionable; usually said of a woman.) *God, I haven't had a hunk of ass in weeks! I must be off my game or something.*

hunk of tail **1.** slang Someone with whom to have sexual intercourse or engage in sexual activity; a potential sexual partner. (Potentially pejorative or objectionable; usually said of a woman.) *There's a fine-looking hunk of tail down at the end of the bar. I'm going to go over and talk to her, see if I can't make something happen.* **2.** slang By extension, sexual intercourse or activity in general. (Potentially pejorative or objectionable; usually said of a woman.) *God, I haven't had a hunk of tail in weeks! I must be off my game or something.*

hunt where the ducks are To pursue or look for one's objectives, results, or goals in the place where one is most likely to find them. *If you're looking to expand your customer base, you need to identify who would benefit from your business the most and then hunt where the ducks are.*

hurler on the ditch A person who offers unsolicited criticism or advice about something in which they are not an active participant. Taken from the sport of hurling, a player of which is a hurler. Primarily heard in Ireland. *All these people condemning the political process from social media, many of whom I'm sure don't vote, are just hurlers on the ditch in my opinion.*

hurrah's nest A mess; a disorganized pile. *Boy, these clothes are a hurrah's nest right now—can you help me sort them?*

hurt for **1.** To feel a strong desire for someone or something. *She hurt for the companionship of her husband when he was deployed overseas.* **2.** To feel sadness and/or empathy for someone. *I hurt for those little children who just lost their parents in a car accident.*

hush fell over A sudden silence occurred (among those present) in an otherwise noisy setting. *A hush fell over the audience as the famous pianist took the stage.*

hustle (one's) bustle To increase one's pace or sense of urgency; to hurry up; to get moving quickly. *We'd better hustle our bustle if we want to get to the movie theater on time!*

hydraulic ram A type of water pump in which the natural flow of water is periodically redirected upward into a pipe and reservoir. A: *"Why can't I get any water out of this thing?"* B: *"Hmm, maybe the hydraulic ram isn't working."*

hygge The state of happiness and contentment that one feels in a cozy, relaxing environment. This Danish word, pronounced "HOO-guh," describes the penchant in Denmark for appreciating life's simple pleasures. *For me, hygge is sitting by the fireplace and listening to classical music with my husband.*

hyggeligt Cozy, relaxing, and enjoyable. This term comes from the Danish word "hygge," which describes an appreciation of life's simple pleasures. *It's been so gloomy and cold this winter that I appreciate hyggeligt moments at home more than ever.*

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I

I beg your pardon **1.** I apologize for what I just did or said. *Oh, I beg your pardon. I wasn't looking where I was going.* **2.** What did you just say? Could you please repeat that? *I beg your pardon, I couldn't quite hear you.* **3.** An expression or exclamation of indignation or incredulous disbelief. A: *"I'm afraid we're going to have to cut your funding, effective immediately."* B: *"I beg your pardon? Who on earth decided that?"* **4.** Could you please give me your attention. *I beg your pardon, everyone, but I'd like to get tonight's proceedings underway.* **5.** I believe you are mistaken or incorrect; I beg to differ; I don't agree with you on that. *I beg your pardon, but I believe you'll find that our school is actually one of the best in the state.*

I can tell you Used to emphasize a statement. *There's going to be trouble in the city if our team loses this championship, I can tell you. I can tell you, I've never seen a rat this big in my whole life!*

(I) can't rightly say I don't know with certainty. A: *"How many people are coming to dinner tonight?"* B: *"I can't rightly say—my family tends to just show up without responding to invitations."*

(I) can't say as I do(, can't say as I don't) I don't know with certainty. A: *"How many people are coming to dinner tonight?"* B: *"Hmm, can't say as I do, can't say as I don't."* *They asked me if I know how to create a spreadsheet like that, but I can't say as I do.*

(I) can't say for sure I don't know with certainty. A: *"How many people are coming to dinner tonight?"* B: *"I can't say for sure—my family tends to just show up without responding to invitations."*

(I) can't say that I do I do not. *They asked me if I know how to create a spreadsheet like that, but I can't say that I do—it doesn't look familiar to me.*

(I) can't say that I have I have not. *They asked me if I've ever created a spreadsheet like that before, but I can't say that I have.* A: *"Have you ever been to that part of the city before?"* B: *"Nope, can't say that I have."*

(I) can't thank you enough Said when one is very appreciative of another's words or actions. *Wow, what a generous gift! I can't thank you enough. I can't thank you enough for picking up my kids—the traffic was awful, and I knew I'd never make it to the school in time.*

(I) can't wait I am very excited or eager for something to happen; it will be difficult to wait for it. The phrase can be used as part of a sentence or by itself as an exclamation. *I can't wait to see you and the girls—it's been way too long! See you tomorrow! Can't wait! Mom can't wait for the flowers to bloom and brighten up our yard.*

I do A phrase typically spoken at the end of traditional wedding vows, affirming that the speaker intends to adhere to those vows. A: *"Do you take this man to be your lawfully wedded husband to have and to hold from this day forward?"* B: *"I do."*

I don't fancy yours (much) Said by one man to another to indicate a woman he thinks is unattractive. Primarily heard in UK. *I was mortified when Bob said, "I don't fancy yours much," as a young woman passed by us on the street.*

I know that feel slang A common expression of sympathy among friends. It is thought to have originated in the meme often captioned "I know that feel, bro." A: *"I'm so tired today.* B: *"Ugh, I know that feel."*

I know you are but what am I A childish, teasing response to an insult. A: *"Monkey brain!"* B: *"I know you are but what am I?"*

I never did A (largely outdated) expression of surprise. Often shortened to "I never!" or "Well, I never!" *The way kids talk to their elders today, I never did!*

I see what you did there An expression used to acknowledge that one understands a joke made by someone else, and to either show appreciation or a lack thereof for the wit employed. *Ah, I see what you did there: you compared me to a pig because I'm a little overweight. Very funny, jerk.*

"I see," said the blind man A humorously contradictory statement used to express either confusion over or understanding of something. Based on a pun of "see," meaning both to understand and to have physical sight. A: *"It's quite simple, Dad. You just have to reformat the hard drive, so be sure to*

back up your computer to the cloud first." B: "Hmm, 'I see,' said the blind man."

I should cocoa! dated No way; there's no chance; you must be joking; I think not. From rhyming slang of the sarcastic phrase "I should say so," meaning the same. Primarily heard in UK. Bob: "So, are you going to finally join us for some karaoke?" Janet: "I should cocoa!"

I shudder to think It is too worrying or unpleasant for me to think about something that might happen or might have happened. *I shudder to think what my boss will say when I tell him I lost our biggest client.*

I suppose (so) An expression of vague affirmation or assent. A: "It's starting to get dark out, should we start heading home?" B: "I suppose so." Bob: "You look a little down today. Everything alright?" Mary: "I suppose. I've just been feeling vaguely melancholy lately."

I take it I imagine this is the case; I presume it to be true (that); it is my understanding (that). *So I take it that you're looking for a new job now that the company has declared bankruptcy? Your mother will be moving in with us once her house is sold, I take it?*

I told you so! I warned you that this would happen; I told you things would turn out this way. A: "That car I bought online turned out to be a complete piece of junk!" B: "See? I told you so!"

I wish An exclamation that shows the speaker's belief that something will not happen in the ideal way another person proposes. A: "Do you think you'll get an A in this class?" B: "I wish! I would need to ace my final project and my exam just to have a chance of bringing my average up."

I wouldn't touch (something or someone) with a barge pole I do not want to become in any way involved in or with something or someone. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *Get that cocaine away from me, I wouldn't touch that junk with a barge pole! You might think John is attractive, but I wouldn't touch him with a barge pole. He seems like a creep.*

ice cube A small piece of ice molded into a cube shape. Ice cubes are often added to drinks to keep them cold. *Hey, can you throw a couple of ice cubes in my drink here? I'm just wrapping up a few ice cubes so you can put them on your injured knee.*

ice maiden pejorative A coolly composed, unemotional woman; a woman

without affection or warmth of feeling. *I don't know how Janet can go out with an ice maiden like Mary. Many see the prime minister as some kind of ice maiden, but I think she's just being as tough as she needs to be.*

ice queen pejorative A coolly composed, unemotional woman; a woman without affection or warmth of feeling. *I don't know how Janet can go out with an ice queen like Mary. Many see the prime minister as some kind of ice queen, but I think she's just being as tough as she needs to be.*

ice the puck In ice hockey, to commit an icing, a minor infraction that occurs when the puck is advanced from behind one's own team's red line to beyond the other team's goal line without being touched by the other team. *Come on, man, how could you ice the puck at a crucial time in the game like this?*

I'd better be going See [\(one had\) better be going](#).

I'd better get moving See [\(one had\) better get moving](#).

I'd better get on my horse See [\(one had\) better get on \(one's\) horse](#).

I'd better keep quiet about it See [\(someone had\) better keep quiet about it](#).

I'd better keep still about it See [\(someone had\) better keep still about it](#).

I'd say In my opinion; it is my estimation that. *I'd say we have about a 50-50 chance of winning this game today.*

the idiot box slang A television set, or television in general. *We need to start encouraging our children to play outside, instead of just spending hours in front of the idiot box. It saddens me that people would rather watch the idiot box than explore the world around them.*

idiot gloves Mittens or gloves that are attached to one's sleeves by a length of yarn or string so as to prevent their being lost. *I always hated the idiot gloves my mom made me wear when I was a kid. They made me feel like such a dope!*

idiot light slang A warning light on the dashboard of an automobile meant to alert the driver to a potential problem, such as engine trouble, low fuel, overheating, etc. *See? You ignore the idiot light, and the car ends up breaking down in the middle of nowhere.*

idiot mittens Mittens or gloves that are attached to one's sleeves by a length of yarn or string so as to prevent their being lost. *I always hated the idiot mittens my mom made me wear when I was a kid. They made me feel like such a dope!*

idle hands are the devil's playthings When one has nothing to do, one is more likely to get into trouble. *When I'm off from school, my grandmother is always trying to get me out of the house, while reminding me that idle hands are the devil's playthings.*

idle hands are the devil's tools When one has nothing to do, one is more likely to get into trouble. *When I'm off from school, my grandmother is always trying to get me out of the house, while reminding me that idle hands are the devil's tools.*

idle hands are the devil's workshop When one has nothing to do, one is more likely to get into trouble. *When I'm off from school, my grandmother is always trying to get me out of the house, while reminding me that idle hands are the devil's workshop.*

if all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail One might not see things clearly if one relies too much on a particular tool, method, or mindset. This phrase is typically attributed to 20th-century psychologist Abraham Maslow. *The trouble with these Freudian scholars is that they don't realize some things can be taken at face value. If all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail, you know?*

if anything If nothing else; if in any amount or degree; if at all. Often used to indicate a certain deviation, choice, or outcome that is contrary to that which was previously mentioned or suggested. *I don't think we should be waiting for help to arrive—if anything, we need to keep moving. Thank you for the compliment, but if anything, I've put on weight lately!*

if he had his druthers See [have \(one's\) druthers](#).

if I'm honest A phrase used to underscore that one is sharing one's true feelings. It is often used when the speaker is reluctant to speak truthfully. A: *"So how do you feel about this plan?"* B: *"Well, if I'm honest, I think it's a big mistake."*

if it's all the same If all things are equal; if it's not a big deal. A phrase often used as a polite way show the speaker's disagreement with another

person. *If it's all the same to you, I think I'd like to get my own dessert, rather than share.*

if needs be If it is or becomes necessary (to do something). *I'm pretty confident in my report, but once I talk to the boss about it, I can certainly make changes, if needs be.*

if nothing else A phrase used to indicate that something is a priority or the most important thing. *I know you're busy today, so if nothing else, please make sure you respond to these messages. If nothing else, we'll at least get our money back.*

if (one's) life depended on it Under any circumstances; no matter what. (Used almost exclusively with a negative statement regarding something that one couldn't or wouldn't do.) *No way am I going to karaoke night. I couldn't sing if my life depended on it! No thanks, I wouldn't see that film if my life depended on it.*

if only I wish (that). *If only I had left the house 10 minutes earlier, I would have gotten to the store before they closed!* A: "So, will you be going on any exotic vacations this summer?" B: "If only!"

if opportunity knocks See [opportunity knocks](#).

if pigs had wings A situation that will never come to pass. (Used to show skepticism or cynicism over someone's hypothetical remark.) Sometimes used in the full phrase "if pigs had wings, they would/could fly." *Bob: "If we could just get Democrats and Republicans to agree on a tax reform bill, we could bring the deficit down in no time." Dave: "Sure, if pigs had wings!"*

if pigs had wings, they would/could fly There is no chance of that ever happening. (Used to show skepticism or cynicism over someone's hypothetical remark.) *Bob: "If we could just get Democrats and Republicans to agree on a tax reform bill, we could bring the deficit down in no time." Dave: "Sure, and if pigs had wings, they would fly!"*

if the going gets rough If things become too difficult or unpleasant to deal with; if it becomes too hard to keep carrying on. *Everyone in our neighborhood is very close, so if the going gets rough for anyone, there's always someone to lend a hand. I trust you'll be able to handle this on your own, but give me a call if the going gets rough.*

if the going gets tough If things become too difficult or unpleasant to deal with; if it becomes too hard to keep carrying on. *Everyone in our neighborhood is very close, so if the going gets tough for anyone, there's always someone to lend a hand. I trust you'll be able to handle this on your own, but give me a call if the going gets tough.*

(if the) truth be known I must admit; to be honest; in actuality. *Truth be known, even though I majored in English literature, I've never read anything by Hemingway! I know I said I wanted to go out to the bars tonight, but if the truth be known, I'd rather just stay home and watch a movie.*

(if the) truth be told I must admit; to be honest; in actuality. *Truth be told, even though I majored in English literature, I've never read anything by Hemingway! I know I said I wanted to go out to the bars tonight, but if the truth be told, I'd rather just stay home and watch a movie.*

if (the) word gets out If or as soon as people start finding out (about this); if or as soon as information (about this) begins to spread. *If the word gets out that our company is in debt, our share prices are going to plummet! This scandal is going to ruin me if word gets out!*

if there's grass on the field, play ball vulgar slang Once one has pubic hair, it is acceptable to engage in sexual activity with that person.

if there's grass on the pitch, play ball vulgar slang Once one has pubic hair, it is acceptable to engage in sexual activity with that person.

if you can't do the time, don't do the crime Do not misbehave if you are unprepared or unwilling to accept the punishment. *A: "Dad, I can't be grounded for a month, I need to see my friends!" B: "Yeah, well, you're the one who keeps breaking curfew. If you can't do the time, don't do the crime!"*

if you lie with dogs, you will get fleas If one spends time with bad people, one will suffer in some way (often by becoming like said associates). *I worry about my brother hanging out with all those troublemakers—if you lie with dogs, you will get fleas, you know?*

If you play with fire, you get burnt A warning that dangerous or risky actions often lead to pain and injury. *It's no surprise that Jeff ended up in jail after getting involved in that counterfeiting scheme. If you play with fire, you get burnt. Asking out Dave's ex-boyfriend seems like a bad idea. If you play with fire, you get burnt, you know?*

IG An abbreviation for the social media platform Instagram. *Did you see that awful picture of me he posted on IG?*

I'll be See [\(well,\) I'll be!](#)

I'll be damned if I (do something) I am determined not to do something. *I'll be damned if I let some young upstart like you take control of my company!*

I'll be hanged See [\(well,\) I'll be hanged!](#)

I'll be hanged if I (do something) I am determined not to do something. *I'll be hanged if I let some young upstart like you take control of my company!*

(I'll be) hanged if I know! I have absolutely no idea! A: *"How are you supposed to turn on this newfangled computer?"* B: *"Hanged if I know!"* *I'll be hanged if I know how to fill out these tax forms!*

(I'll) be seeing you Goodbye; see you soon. *Have a safe trip. I'll be seeing you.* A: *"Thanks for such a fun night! See you later!"* B: *"Be seeing you!"*

ill health A state of sickness. *It's always sad to lose a loved one, but my grandmother was in ill health for a long time, so at least her suffering is over now.*

I'll rue the day See [rue the day \(that something happened\)](#).

(I'm) (a)fraid not A response used to reluctantly decline an invitation or politely answer a question in the negative, indicating regret that the answer is "no." When the phrase is abbreviated to "'fraid not," an apostrophe is sometimes used in place of the missing letter. A: *"Will you be able to attend the meeting tomorrow?"* B: *"I'm afraid not. I'm going to be out of town."* A: *"Could you loan me a hundred bucks?"* B: *"'Fraid not. I'm broke."*

(I'm) (a)fraid so A response used to politely answer a question in the affirmative when the speaker regrets that this is the case. When the phrase is abbreviated to "'fraid so," an apostrophe is sometimes used in place of the missing letter. A: *"Are you really moving all the way across the country?"* B: *"I'm afraid so."* A: *"Are you going to be working late again tonight?"* B: *"'Fraid so."*

I'm all in See [be all in](#).



I'm beat See [be beat](#).

I'm hanged if I know! I have absolutely no idea! *I'm hanged if I know how to fill out these tax forms!*

I'm not in Kansas anymore See [be not in Kansas anymore](#).

I'm shot See [be shot](#).

imagine that See [\(well,\) imagine that!](#)

in a bad light Negatively; under unfavorable circumstances. (Typically used with the verbs "see" or "show," or some similar variation.) *I'm flattered that he based a character in his novel on me, but I think I was shown in a bad light. The once-beloved mayor has been seen in a bad light ever since news of his tax-evasion scandal came to public attention.*

in a bad spot In a challenging or problematic situation; in a predicament. *I'm in a bad spot here—I need to be at a job interview in an hour, and my car won't start.*

in a blink of an eye See [in the blink of an eye](#).

in a brace of shakes Instantly, quickly, or in an extremely short amount of time, as of a task or event. "Brace," taken from the old French for the arms' breadth from hand to hand, means twice; the phrase as a whole refers either to an old nautical term, meaning the time it takes the sail to shake twice as it takes up the wind, or else the short time it takes to shake a dice-box twice. *I'll have that ready for you in a brace of shakes. We'll be there in a brace of shakes.*

in a breeze Easily; handily; without much or any effort. *Enjoying the benefit of a week off between games, the home team won this match in a breeze.*

in a canter Done or accomplished with ease or minimal effort. (A canter is a smooth, steady gait, as of a horse, which is between the pace of a trot and a gallop.) *He was in such better condition than his competitors that he won the race in a canter.*

in a class by (one)self Having no equal. *She is the best director in Hollywood right now—she is simply in a class by herself. This new concept car is in a class by itself. It is years ahead of the competition.*

in a class of (one's)/its own Completely superior to others of one's

or its kind. *As a lawyer, Janice is truly in a class of her own. The reigning Super Bowl champions continue to play as if they're in a class of their own. The newest car from Ferrari is in a class of its own.*

in a fashion **1.** dated To some extent but crudely, imperfectly, or not very well. (This phrase has largely been replaced with the phrase "after a fashion," meaning the same.) *Well, I mended your pants, in a fashion. They may not look great, but at least there isn't a hole anymore!* **2.** dated Of a lower caliber, order, or class. (This phrase has largely been replaced with the phrase "after a fashion," meaning the same.) *He might think highly of himself, but he's only a writer in a fashion if you ask me.*

in a flap In a panic or frenzy. *Mom, I'll help you with getting dinner ready for the party, OK? So don't get in a flap about it—everything will be fine.*

in a flutter In a nervous, confused, or agitated state. *We were all in a flutter waiting to meet the President at our school rally. The economy is still in a flutter after news that the country's largest corporation has filed for bankruptcy.*

in a holding pattern **1.** Literally, of an aircraft, in a continuous, generally circular flight pattern over an airport, as while awaiting clearance to land. *Due to a security breach in the airport, our plane was kept in a holding pattern for nearly 45 minutes.* **2.** In a state or condition of inactivity or stagnancy, leading to little or no change, advancement, or development. *Relying solely on derivative sequels, many feel that the video game company has been in a holding pattern in recent years.*

in a hole slang In a disadvantageous position. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *I'm in a hole here, trying to fix my car on the side of the road with no clue what to do! I've been in a hole with some of my friends ever since they heard that I started a rumor about them.*

in a league of (one's)/its own Completely superior to others of one's or its kind. *As a lawyer, Janice is truly in a league of her own. The reigning Super Bowl champions continue to play as if they're in a league of their own. The newest car from Ferrari is in a league of its own.*

in a measure To a certain degree or extent; somewhat. *While hard work and perseverance will take you far, success also depends in a measure on good fortune.*



in a pig's arse An exclamation of emphatic denial, dissent, or disbelief of something. Likely a variant of "in a pig's eye," meaning the same. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *Step down from the board of directors? In a pig's arse I will! This little pill is supposed to help you lose 20 pounds? Yeah, in a pig's arse it does.*

in a pig's ear An exclamation of emphatic denial, dissent, or disbelief of something. Likely a variant of "in a pig's eye," meaning the same. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *Step down from the board of directors? In a pig's ear I will! This little pill is supposed to help you lose 20 pounds? Yeah, in a pig's ear it does.*

in a pig's whisper Very quickly; in a very short amount of time. *Sorry for the wait. Your lunch will be out in a pig's whisper.*

in a rage Furious; very angry. *I'd steer clear of dad right now—he's in a rage because of some problem at work. I can't stand sitting in traffic, it totally gets me in a rage.*

in a round figure See [in round figures](#).

in a round number See [in round numbers](#).

in a scrape In a challenging or problematic situation; in a predicament. *I'm in a bit of a scrape here—I need to be at a job interview in an hour, and my car won't start.*

in a sense Partly; in some way(s); in a certain way of looking at it. A: "So all you need to do is get married and they'll let you stay in the country?" B: "In a sense, but there's a lot more work involved than just that." *In a sense, the book's story stands as a metaphor for the American dream.*

in a sorry state In a very poor, pitiful, dysfunctional, or sad state or condition. *My no-account brother left the company in a sorry state after being put in charge last month. Their house has been in a sorry state ever since Dan's wife passed away.*

in a sorry state In a pitiful or abject condition. *My business was in a sorry state after I left it under the control of my brother. John's been in a sorry state lately—I think he's taken up drinking again.*

in a sound sleep Deeply asleep and difficult to rouse. *Jen was in a sound sleep and didn't hear her alarm this morning. I've been having such*

strange dreams lately that I'm thrilled to have spent last night in a sound sleep!

in a spot of bother See [be in a spot of bother](#).

in a state 1. Agitated, anxious, or upset. *Tommy's been in a state ever since we took his video games away from him.* 2. Chaotic or unruly; disheveled; very messy or untidy. *I'd invite you in for a cup of tea, but the house is in a state at the moment. My hair was in a state when I woke up this morning, and I haven't been able to do anything with it all day!*

in a sticky situation In the midst of a particularly awkward, embarrassing, precarious, or difficult situation or circumstance. *I found myself in a bit of a sticky situation when the boss saw me kissing his daughter at the movies. I'll be in quite a sticky situation if I arrive at the train station and don't have enough money for the tickets!*

in a tiff In a state of disagreement, often over something minor or petty. *Oh, your sisters are in a tiff over who is bringing dessert to the party. Can you please tell them it's not a big deal?*

in a tight corner In a particularly difficult or awkward situation, especially one that is not easy to get out of. *Jeremy's found himself in more tight corners since he left college than I care to recount. I just don't know what's going to become of that boy if he doesn't clean up his act soon. I'm going to be in quite a tight corner if this loan isn't approved.*

in a tight spot In a particularly difficult or awkward situation, especially one that is not easy to escape from or resolve. *Jeremy's found himself in more tight spots since he left college than I care to recount. I just don't know what's going to become of that boy if he doesn't clean up his act soon. I'm going to be in quite a tight spot if this loan isn't approved.*

in a tough spot In a particularly difficult or awkward situation, especially one that is not easy to get out of. *Jeremy's found himself in more tough spots since he left college than I care to recount. I just don't know what's going to become of that boy if he doesn't clean up his act soon. I'm going to be in quite a tough spot if this loan isn't approved.*

in a walk See [win \(something\) in a walk](#).

in a/the flash of an/the eye So quickly as to seem almost imperceptible (i.e., in the space of time it takes a person to blink). *In the flash*

of an eye, the home team has taken total control of this match. Working on Wall Street, you get used to massive financial changes happening in a flash of the eye.

in Abraham's bosom In heaven (deceased). *After a long, terrible fight with cancer, my mother is finally at peace in Abraham's bosom.*

in (all) conscience Without guilt. Usually said to emphasize fairness in a transaction. Primarily heard in UK. *In all conscience, I can't charge you more than the car is worth. No, I can't, in conscience, give you a better grade when you put such little effort into the assignment!*

in all honesty In one's sincere opinion; without any disingenuousness. *In all honesty, I think this project plan is severely flawed.*

in all (one's) (born) days Ever; in one's entire life. Often used with a negative modifier, especially never, to express something one has never before seen, experienced, felt, etc. *Having grown up on the farm, I had never seen a city this size in all my born days. In all our days, this is the best specimen of a woolly mammoth we've ever come across.*

in all seriousness In one's sincere opinion; without any disingenuousness. *In all seriousness, I think this project plan is severely flawed.*

in all truthfulness In one's sincere opinion; without any disingenuousness. *In all truthfulness, I think this project plan is seriously flawed.*

in and out 1. Thoroughly; down to the last detail. *I've been studying this material for weeks now, so I know it in and out.* **2.** Alternating between being at or in a location and being gone from it. *The boss has been in and out of the office all day.*

in any way, shape, or form In any way, style, or manner at all. *I've been doing this job for 30 years, so I know I'm the most qualified candidate in any way, shape, or form! I will not tolerate rudeness in any way, shape, or form.*

in arms 1. Bearing weapons for a fight, as a soldier or military person. *With only 40 men in arms, our tiny battalion had little hope of withstanding the siege.* **2.** In a state of agitated hostility, especially leading to or preparing for conflict. *Everyone in the company was in arms after we found out our*

pensions had been dissolved by the board of directors.

in as much as See [inasmuch as](#).

in at the deep end **1.** Literally, in a deep part of a pool or other body of water. *The kids were in at the deep end of the pool when Timmy started having trouble staying afloat.* **2.** In a particularly troublesome, difficult, or dangerous situation, especially one from which it is difficult to extract oneself. *Though we were the newest army recruits, we found ourselves in at the deep end when our squad was sent to the front lines of the battle. As my small gambling habit became an addiction, I was soon in at the deep end of an insurmountable debt.*

in bad books See [in \(someone's\) bad books](#).

in bad form **1.** Acting or behaving in a way that is considered socially inappropriate, distasteful, rude, or generally unpleasant. *I'm sorry I was in such bad form last night, I hadn't gotten very much sleep from the night before.* **2.** In a bad condition or state, especially as relates to sports or athletics. *Their goalkeeper is in bad form tonight. I think she is still recovering from that broken ankle.*

in bad odor In a state in which one is the subject of another's displeasure or ire. *I've been in bad odor with my next door neighbor ever since my dog destroyed her garden. Unless you like being in bad odor with your teachers, you should stop disrupting their classes!*

in bed **1.** Physically in one's bed without necessarily being asleep. *I was in bed for a week when I had the flu. I didn't have the energy to do much of anything. I like to spend some extra time in bed on Saturday morning, just relaxing and reading a book.* **2.** Asleep in one's bed. *Jenna's in bed already—she had a rough week. Your brother was looking for you last night, but you were already in bed, and he didn't want to wake you.* **3.** Having sex. *I can't believe I caught them in bed together! How am I supposed to keep this a secret?*

in bed with (one's) boots on Extremely drunk or passed out from excessive drinking. The phrase suggests that one was too intoxicated to remember to take one's shoes off before getting into bed. *You were in bed with your boots on when I got home—how hungover are you today?*

in behalf See [in \(someone's\) behalf](#).

in behalf See [in \(someone's\) behalf](#).

in between In an intermediate place, position, or situation. *My fiancé and my best friend had a falling out, and unfortunately, I found myself caught in between.*

in-between **1.** adjective (used as a modifier before a noun) Being between two positions, conditions, situations, etc. *During the interval of the play, the theater put on a small in-between performance. After college, many people struggle with the awkward in-between status of no longer being a student but not yet being a fully realized adult.* **2.** noun A person or thing who holds an intermediate position between two opposites or extremes. *Personally, I feel like all the in-betweens who wouldn't vote one way or another were simply being weak-willed. I don't agree fully with the Democrats or the Republicans, so I guess I'm just an in-between.*

in between times At intervals or periods of time between other events or activities. *I'm a full-time student and a waiter at a local restaurant, but in between times, I've been trying to write a novel.*

in bits and pieces In many small fragments. *Look what you've done! My favorite lamp is in bits and pieces on the floor! We heard about the boss's affair in bits and pieces from her secretary.*

in black books See [in \(someone's\) black books](#).

in blazes See [in \(the\) blazes?](#)

in blue blazes? Used as an intensifier after a question word (who, what, where, when, why, and how) to express extreme confusion, surprise, or aggravation. Primarily heard in US. *And just how in blue blazes am I supposed to have three reports done by 9 AM tomorrow? Where in blue blazes did you find that rusty old car? Who in blue blazes is making all that noise?*

in bud See [in \(the\) bud](#).

in cement See [set in cement](#).

in chancery **1.** Literally, in a court of chancery, which is the Lord Chancellor's court (in the UK) or a court of equity (in the US). *I'm in chancery today, waiting for the decision in our case to be announced.* **2.** Faced with a hopeless or challenging situation. *I'm in chancery here, trying to*

fix my car on the side of the road with no clue what to do!

in circumstance See [in the circumstances](#).

in commission **1.** In service; in functional operating order. *After three weeks in the shop, my car is finally in commission again.* **2.** Of a Navy vessel, manned, armed, and in condition for active service. Also phrased as "into commission." *The new capital ship went into commission this Friday after a ceremonial launch. The cruiser is the oldest vessel still in commission in the entire Navy's fleet.*

in concrete See [cast in concrete](#).

in conscience See [in \(all\) conscience](#).

in contention Among those eligible to win something; in competition. *Don't count them out just because they've been on a losing streak—they're still in contention for that final playoff spot.*

in control **1.** In charge; possessing the final authority in a hierarchy or situation. *Who's in control here? I want to talk to the ranking officer.* **2.** Confident and capable, often when faced with a stressful situation. *Your mother was terrified when she first learned to drive, but now she is completely in control behind the wheel.*

in creation? Used as an intensifier after a question word (who, what, where, when, why, and how) to express extreme confusion, surprise, or aggravation. *And just how in creation am I supposed to have three reports done by 9 AM tomorrow? Where in creation did you find that rusty old car? Who in creation is making all that noise?*

in default of (something) Due to the absence or lack of something; through the failure of something. *Though it was only a speeding ticket, Janet was imprisoned in default of paying the fine. In default of concrete evidence, the jury was obligated to acquit the defendant of murder.*

in despite of In spite of; disregarding. *You want to sell the house now, in despite of all the renovations we've done to make it our dream home?*

in Dickie's meadow In danger. Primarily heard in UK. *I knew I was in Dickie's meadow when I found myself between the mother bear and her cub.*

in donkeys In an exceptionally long period of time. The phrase likely originated as the rhyming slang, shortened to simply "donkeys," of "donkey's

ears" —where "ears" rhymes with "years" and alludes to the length of a donkey's ears. *I haven't seen Jim in donkeys! How's he doing these days?*

in dotage See [in \(one's\) dotage](#).

in doubt Uncertain; not concrete or definitive. *If you keep missing meetings, your future with this company will be in doubt.*

in dreams See [in \(one's\) dreams](#).

in duplicate Duplicated. Typically referring to a copy of a document. *I need this report in duplicate by my 3 PM meeting. I need this resignation letter in duplicate—one for the main files and one for the personnel files.*

in effigy Symbolically; publicly in the form of an effigy. (Typically used with the verbs "burn" or "hang.") *In protest of the war, a large group has set about burning the president in effigy outside the White House.*

in error Mistakenly or by accident. *My apologies, I sent you that document in error. So I just found out that the doctor's office called me in error—I'm so relieved!*

in escrow Held as an escrow, that is, in the custody of a third party until some condition or conditions (of an agreement, bequest, etc.) have been fulfilled. *The sum of money my late grandfather bequeathed to me will be in escrow until I turn 18.*

in excess of Over; greater or more than. *The retail giant predicts earnings for the past year in excess of \$4 million.*

in favor See [in \(one's\) favor](#).

in favor (with someone) Highly regarded (by someone); widely accepted or enjoyed (by someone). Primarily heard in US. *John had been in favor with his boss ever since he managed to secure that lucrative client. Though many were skeptical of its success, the sequel is largely in favor with the devoted fanbase. The new fashion has been in favor for a few weeks now.*

in fee law (specifically of land) In absolute legal ownership or subjection. *The courts have found that as the estate is in fee by Mrs. Williams, as arranged in the prenuptial agreement, Mr. Williams has no legal claim to the grounds or anything built thereon.*

in fine fettle In good physical and/or mental health. A: *"I heard you had the flu last week, so how are you feeling now?"* B: *"I'm finally back in fine*

fettle, thank goodness!" I had been in fine fettle for a while, but now that school is over I'm feeling pretty sad.

in flames Of a failure, spectacularly and permanently. Used in the phrases "down in flames" and "up in flames." *My campaign speech went down in flames after I forgot everything I had rehearsed and just stood on stage sweating. If we don't get that shipment by Monday, our whole business plan will go up in flames.*

in for See [be in for](#).

in for a bumpy ride See [a bumpy ride](#).

in for a rough ride See [a rough ride](#).

in for a shock See [be in for a shock](#).

in for a surprise See [be in for a surprise](#).

in for a treat See [be in for a treat](#).

in for it See [be in for it](#).

in for it Very likely or guaranteed to face trouble, punishment, or retribution. *I'm telling mom and dad that you broke the window. You're in for it now! I'll be in for it once they realize the money is gone.*

in front **1.** At the entrance of a building. *I know you can't walk far on your crutches, so I'll pull the car in front.* **2.** Positioned as the first or leader of a group. *As your tour guide, I'll walk in front, and you can all just follow me. Here they come down the home stretch, and the underdog is still in front!*

in front of (one's) nose Immediately obvious or clearly apparent. *Even people with plenty of money will complain about what they don't have, rather than be grateful for the blessings that are right in front of their noses. The solution was right in front of my nose, but I just couldn't grasp it.*

in front of (one's) very eyes Right in plain sight or while one is watching. *Someone smashed into my parked car in front of my very eyes. Each day, in front of our very eyes, we see signs of poverty and need on our city's streets.*

in full In, to, or for the total or requisite amount; without reduction, omission, or curtailment. *Make sure there are enough funds in the bank so that the contractors can be paid in full. The president's speech is being made available in full to the public.*

in full feather In fancy or elaborate dress. *I love seeing my students in full feather at the prom—they look so grown up! Did you read the dress code on this invitation? We're going to need to be in full feather!*

in full gear At the highest or maximum level of function, operation, or performance. *The project is in full gear now that we have Sally on board.*

in good odor In a pleasant or favorable relationship with someone. *I've been in good odor with my next door neighbor ever since I brought her some of my homemade cookies. Your sister is in good odor with her teachers because she always completes her homework on time.*

in good part 1. Mostly; to a great extent; in large part. *While we've all been working very hard, our team's success on this project is in good part due to Sally's efforts.* 2. Without offense; amiably or good-naturedly; in good humor. (Especially in the phrase "take in good part.") *My friends sometimes tease me about my interest in calligraphy, but I've learned to take it in good part.*

in good season In a timely manner. *You are all fine candidates for the position, and I will inform you of my decision in good season.*

in half Into halves; into two pieces of relatively equal size or portion. *I'm not going back in the store to buy another cookie, so just break that one in half and share it with your sister! The desk split in half from the weight of everything on it.*

in hay day See [in \(one's\) heyday](#).

in (high) hopes that With the expectation, intention, or desire that (something will happen). *He strove to be well-behaved in prison, in hopes that he would be let out early on parole. I'm being extra nice to my sister all through December, in high hopes that Santa will bring me a new video game for Christmas.*

in hospital Receiving medical or surgical treatment, care, or attention at a hospital. Primarily heard in UK. *My grandmother is in hospital again for hip surgery. I heard you were in hospital last week! Are you all right?*

in Indian file In a line one person or one thing in width; in single file. (Potentially offensive due to the politically incorrect reference to Native Americans.) *The students lined up and marched in Indian file toward the auditorium.*

in it for See [be in it for](#).

in its infancy In the early, nascent period of development or implementation. (Typically of an area of activity, interest, research, etc.) *Despite social media's ubiquity in modern life, research on its effects on human behavior is still in its infancy.*

in its place See [in \(someone's or something's\) place](#).

in itself Without the consideration of anything else. (A shortening of the full phrase "in and of itself.") *The defendant's story seems plausible in itself, but when taken alongside the testimony of the witnesses, it starts to look less and less believable. As a sequel, the movie does an good job of continuing the story of the first, but it fails as a cohesive, enjoyable film in itself.*

in key In consonance or accordance with other elements, factors, or styles. A reference to musical tonality. *Jonathan's fashion sense is impeccable, with each facet of his ensemble in key with the others.*

in large measure To a great or considerable extent, proportion, or degree. *In large measure, this bill will eliminate existing tax loopholes for large multinational companies.*

in layman's terms In words that can be understood by people outside of a given profession or field of expertise, i.e., without the use of jargon or highly technical terms. *Chronic atherosclerosis in the coronary arteries has stopped oxygen-rich blood from reaching the heart, leading to a myocardial infarction. In layman's terms, you've suffered a heart attack. I wish these software agreements would be written in layman's terms, rather than this legalese gobbledygook.*

in leaf Covered in leaves. *In the summer, I love seeing all the beautiful trees in leaf.*

in leaps and bounds By very large degrees; rapidly or in quick progress forward. *Our small company has been growing in leaps and bounds over the past year, thanks in no small part to our aggressive new marketing campaign. What was once a tiny local choir club has expanded in leaps and bounds over the years.*

in low water Having little to no money. *I'm in low water until I get paid next week, so is there any chance we can postpone our night out?*

in merry pin Happy; in good spirits. *I'm glad to see my sister in merry pin on our vacation because she's usually so stressed out these days.*

in miniature On a small scale. The phrase is often used to describe a model of something much larger. *For my science project, I made a volcano in miniature. Pat's daughter is like Pat in miniature! I can't believe how much they look alike! Some parts of our seaside town are like a tropical resort in miniature.*

in mothballs In storage, either literally or figuratively. Mothballs—little balls composed of a pungent chemical used to deter moths—are often kept in closets, attics, and other places where clothes are stored. *I'm so glad that I can finally get my summer clothes out and put my winter clothes back in mothballs. That plane is in mothballs while we wait for a new shipment of parts. I did like your idea, Tom, but we have to keep it in mothballs for now while we finish our outstanding projects.*

in my bad books See [in \(someone's\) bad books](#).

in my behalf See [in \(someone's\) behalf](#).

in my behalf See [in \(someone's\) behalf](#).

in my black books See [in \(someone's\) black books](#).

in my view See [in \(someone's\) view](#).

in my wheelhouse See [in \(someone's\) wheelhouse](#).

in no case Under no condition or circumstances; by no means; never. *The defendant has a long history of violent, psychopathic behavior and should be in no case allowed to remain free. I will in no case allow my company to fall into the hands of someone like you!*

in no circumstances Never; in no case or situation; irrespective of events or conditions. *In no circumstances are you allowed to drive home after you've had more than one drink! I'm sorry for my sudden resignation, but in no circumstances will I work for some sexist manager like him.*

in no time flat In a very little amount of time. *That test was so easy, I was done in no time flat.*

in no way Not at all; not by any means. *We are in no way blaming you for what happened, but you still have to cooperate with the police investigation.*

in no way, shape, or form In no possible manner; under no circumstances; not by any means. *In no way, shape, or form is this kind of behavior acceptable!*

in nothing flat In a very little amount of time. *If I leave after rush hour traffic ends, I can be there in nothing flat.*

in one blow All at once, with a single decisive or powerful action. *When the economy crashed, thousands lost their jobs, their homes, and their pensions in one blow.*

in one hell of a hurry Extremely rushed. *You must be in one hell of a hurry, driving that fast! Look, I'm in one hell of a hurry, so I can't chat right now!*

in one's altitudes See [be in \(one's\) altitudes](#).

in (one's) dotage In a state of senility or mental decline due to old age. *My grandfather in his dotage has lately had trouble remembering our names.*

in (one's) dreams A derisive phrase said in response to something that is far-fetched or unlikely to happen. *You think you can get a date with the head cheerleader? Yeah, in your dreams! Matt is only getting a promotion in his dreams. I'm much more qualified for the job than he is.*

in (one's) favor To one's advantage or for one's benefit. *I'm so relieved that the court ruled in my favor! My mom being away when report cards were mailed home has really worked out in my favor—I'm not grounded for my bad grades yet!*

in (one's) heyday In, at, or during the period of one's greatest success, power, vigor, etc. *In my heyday as a stock broker, I was making millions of dollars each year, but when the economy crashed, I lost nearly everything.*

in one's place See [in \(someone's or something's\) place](#).

in (one's/someone's) tracks **1.** Of one's own tracks, in the location one occupies at a given moment in time. *We were all frozen in our tracks at the sight of the mountain lion. It looks like the reigning champions have been stopped in their tracks in this year's tournament.* **2.** Of someone else's tracks, according to that person's guidance, example, or experience, as through life; in someone's role or occupation. *I hope my son decides to follow in my tracks and become a doctor. The new government has decided to lead the country in*

the previous administration's tracks.

in order that So that; with the particular aim or purpose of. *In order that your application be processed in a timely manner, please be sure to include all required documentation. I make a point of taking a family vacation in the country each year, in order that my children learn to appreciate nature's beauty.*

in ordinary **1.** In regular or active service (to another person). Primarily heard in UK. *I'm the counsel in ordinary to the prime minister—please let me through!* **2.** Of a naval vessel, not currently being used. *No, that ship is in ordinary these days—it needs some extensive repairs.*

in petto **1.** In private. This Italian phrase translates literally to "in the breast" in English. A: *"Why did you want me to meet you in the basement?"* B: *"Because I have something important to tell you—in petto."* **2.** An Italian phrase used to describe the private appointment of cardinals by the pope. *He was appointed by the pope in petto, which is why none of us knew about it.*

in plain English In clear, straightforward, and uncomplicated English. *Chronic atherosclerosis in the coronary arteries has stopped oxygen-rich blood from reaching the heart, leading to a myocardial infarction. In plain English, you've suffered a heart attack. I wish these software agreements would be written in plain English, rather than this legalese gobbledygook.*

in plain view In full, unrestricted view; visibly, openly, or publicly. *I can't believe you go outside in plain view of the neighbors with your bathrobe open! Law enforcement spends so much time and resources going after petty criminals, while all these white-collar crooks on Wall Street are swindling people for millions in plain view!*

in point That is germane, applicable, or pertinent. (Obsolete other than in the idiom "case in point.") *Jeremy is just the laziest person I've ever met. As a case in point, he spent the entire day watching TV in his pajamas!*

in point of With regards to; in reference to. *Many of you in the jury may sympathize with the defendant's actions, but in point of law, he has committed murder. I know this seems unfair, but in point of fact, this punishment is for your own good!*

in process of time As time passes; at a later time. *So we'll wrap your foot for now and see how it feels in process of time.*

in prospect In sight; as a possibility. *I hope this job interview goes well, but, if not, at least I've got a few more in prospect. Folks, I wanted to let you know that we have an exciting new client in prospect—I'll be sure to give you more details once everything is finalized.*

in quite a sticky situation See [in a sticky situation](#).

in range nautical Positioned one behind the other. *The ships are in range now, Captain. How shall we proceed?*

in real life A phrase used to indicate the existence or qualities of someone or something in reality, specifically as opposed to online. *We've been texting, and he seems nice enough, but I just don't know what he's like in real life. The picture doesn't do it justice—her gown was absolutely gorgeous in real life.*

in real time Instantaneously; as things develop; at the moment something happens. *Luckily, because of our undercover reporter, we can get updates on the situation in real time.*

in residence Appointed to live and work in a specific place, especially a college or university, for a certain length of time so as to be a source of inspiration, interest, and knowledge to others in the field. (Usually said of creative artists.) *The university is so fortunate to have a writer in residence of your unmatched intellect and ability.*

in respect to In reference to. *In respect to the defense's claim that Ms. Smith acted alone, we have evidence to the contrary.*

in round figures In or as a rounded, approximate number. *And what do you think an expansion on the house like that would set us back, in round figures at least? In rough figures, it looks like Katie's childcare is going to cost about \$1,000 a month.*

in round numbers In or as a rounded, approximate number. *And what do you think an expansion on the house like that would set us back, in round numbers at least? In round numbers, childcare is going to cost us about \$2,000 a month.*

in sackcloth and ashes Behaving in a way that shows one's penitence or remorse for one's misdeeds or poor behavior. *Darren has been in sackcloth and ashes ever since his girlfriend broke up with him for cheating on her. There's no way to turn back time on the way I treated my brother growing up. All I can do now is stay in sackcloth and ashes.*

in Sam Hell See [in \(the\) Sam Hill?](#).

in seed Covered in grass seed. *I'm really glad we're getting all this rain now that the yard is in seed. It will be lush with grass soon enough!*

in shape See [in\(to\) shape](#).

in simple English In clear, straightforward, and uncomplicated English terminology. *Chronic atherosclerosis in the coronary arteries has stopped oxygen-rich blood from reaching the heart, leading to a myocardial infarction. In simple English, you've suffered a heart attack. I wish these software agreements would be written in simple English, rather than this legalese gobbledygook.*

(in) so far as To such an extent that; to the degree that. *In so far as money is concerned, our project will be completely funded by private donations. So far as I can guess, we should be finished filming by late spring.*

in so much as See [insomuch as](#).

in soaped-pig fashion Unclear and/or vague. The phrase refers to a now-outdated form of entertainment in which people tried to catch soaped pigs. *Please make a decisive statement somewhere in your next paper because writing in this soaped-pig fashion won't get you a good grade!*

in some measure To a certain degree or extent; somewhat. *While hard work and perseverance will take you far, success also depends in some measure on good fortune.*

in some sense Partly; in some or certain way(s). A: *"So all you need to do is get married and they'll let you stay in the country?"* B: *"In some sense, but there's a lot more work involved than just that." In some sense, the book's story stands as a metaphor for the questionable ideals of the so-called American dream.*

in somebody's tracks See [in \(one's/someone's\) tracks](#).

in (someone's) bad books Having fallen out of favor with someone. *I don't think I'll come to the party on Saturday, I'm in Jenny's bad books at the moment.*

in (someone's) behalf For the benefit, interest, or support of someone; as an agent, representative, or in place of someone. *Our lawyer will be telephoning the department tomorrow in our behalf, to ensure our*

application goes through as planned. This decision is in your behalf, so don't act so ungrateful!

in (someone's) behalf **1.** As the representative of someone else; in lieu of someone. *The boss isn't here at the moment, but I'd be happy to sign for the package in her behalf.* **2.** In the interest or for the benefit of someone else. *Children don't understand until they're older that everything their parents do is in their behalf.*

in (someone's) black books Having fallen out of favor with someone. *I don't think I'll come to the party on Saturday, I'm in Jenny's black books at the moment.*

in someone's hay day See [in \(one's\) heyday](#).

in (someone's or something's) place **1.** Literally, in someone's or something's physical location. *Hey, you're in my place! You know I always sit here! You can't put the television in the sofa's place—it messes up the whole décor of the room!* **2.** Instead of someone or something else; as a substitute for someone or something. *Janet is really sick, so I'm going to lead the meeting in her place. After our dog died, my parents got me a pet hamster in its place.*

in (someone's) view In someone's opinion. *And what, in your view, would be the best way to go about solving this problem? In my view, this tax should be abolished altogether!*

in (someone's) wheelhouse In, related to, or matching someone's general interests, abilities, or area of familiarity; in someone's comfort zone. *It's clear, however, that the political implications of this issue are well in the author's wheelhouse. Jeff's always stayed in his wheelhouse when it comes to dating women. He doesn't usually go for anyone very different from himself.*

in specie **1.** Of money, in coin(s). *To prevent a national buildup and subsequent devaluation of 1 and 2 cent coins, the Irish government is urging people to pay for more things in specie.* **2.** In the same or a similar manner; in kind. *Many are demanding that the dictator be punished in specie for the brutal murders of his regime.* **3.** Of law, in the actual form or manner; as specified. *In lieu of cash repayment, the assets of the property will be distributed in specie following liquidation.*

in spitting distance (of someone or something) In close

proximity to or a short distance away from some desired thing, person, goal, or objective. *A victory was in spitting distance, but a last penalty kick robbed them of their prize. My grandmother's house is rather old and a bit spooky, but since it is in spitting distance of the ocean, it was always a favorite summer destination when we were kids.*

in state With great pageantry and ceremonial splendor. *The royal couple is traveling in state across the country, with great fanfare expected at each of their destinations.*

in stays A nautical term used to describe a vessel that has its sails flapping as it moves into the wind. *The captain says we need to keep the ship in stays for now!*

in stride Without becoming upset or disheartened. Typically used in the phrase "take (something) in stride." *I'm glad to see that you've taken my constructive criticism in stride, Stu—I know that working on those areas of your game will make you a better player.*

in striking distance (of someone or something) In close proximity to or a short distance away from some desired thing, person, goal, or objective. *A World Cup victory was in striking distance for Germany, but a last penalty kick robbed them of their prize. My grandmother's house is rather old and a bit spooky, but as it is in striking distance of the sea, it was always a favorite summer destination when we were kids.*

in substance 1. Concerning or related to the essential elements; fundamentally or substantially. *In substance, the proposed bill would reduce the amount of calories in meals served at school cafeterias, though the details of how this would be implemented aren't yet clear.* 2. Actually; in reality. *I was promoted to a managerial role in the restaurant, but in substance, I'm just a shift supervisor.*

in tall cotton See [be in tall cotton](#).

in tarnation? Used as an intensifier after a question word (who, what, where, when, why, and how) to express extreme confusion, surprise, or aggravation. Primarily heard in US. *And just how in tarnation am I supposed to have three reports done by 9 AM tomorrow? Where in tarnation did you find that rusty old car? Who in tarnation is making all that noise?*

in the aggregate Considered in full; taken as a whole. *Despite a dip in*

the economy, our company has continued to see a profit in the aggregate this year.

in the altitudes Intoxicated, with the connotation of being "high" (overly cheerful, unable to focus) as well. A: *"Don't mind him, he's just in the altitudes."* B: *"Seriously? How is he drunk already?"* Once I get in the altitudes, I usually can't stop giggling!

in the background In a (literal or figurative) place where someone or something is not very noticeable. *I'm not the best dancer, so the director has put me in the background for most scenes. The more new people get hired, the more I feel ignored and lost in the background!*

in the biblical sense In a sexual way. Typically used in the phrase "know (someone) in the biblical sense." (In the Bible, the phrase "to know" usually indicates a sexual relationship between two people.) A: *"So I hear that you and Liz are closer than I thought."* B: *"I don't know her in the biblical sense, if that's what you're hinting at!"*

in (the) blazes? Used as an intensifier after a question word (who, what, where, when, why, and how) to express extreme confusion, surprise, or aggravation. Primarily heard in US. *And just how in blazes am I supposed to have three reports done by 9 AM tomorrow? Where in the blazes did you find that rusty old car? Who in blazes is making all that noise?*

in the blink of an eye So quickly as to seem almost imperceptible (i.e., in the space of time it takes a person to blink). *The high-speed camera reveals how the frog uses its specialized tongue to capture the insect in the blink of an eye. Working on Wall Street, you get used to massive financial changes happening in the blink of an eye.*

in the box seat In the most desirable, superior, or auspicious position available. Primarily heard in Australia, New Zealand. *This latest promotion really puts me in the box seat.*

in (the) bud In an undeveloped, immature, or incipient state. *Tommy has become quite a little painter in bud recently. The young dramatist's style led one reviewer to liken him to an Ibsen in the bud.*

in the cactus A difficult situation, often one that is uncomfortable and/or unsettling. Primarily heard in Australia. *Oh boy, he's in the cactus now that his girlfriend has seen him kissing another girl!*

in the can 1. Successfully completed; ready for public viewing or consumption. Originally used in reference to filmmaking, its use has expanded to any other creative endeavor. *With the last chapter of his novel in the can, Jeremy decided to celebrate with a bottle of champagne. The whole movie's in the can, but we've had some issues securing theaters to show it.* 2. In the restroom, lavatory, etc. *Mike: "Has anyone seen John? I need him to finish that report." Bob: "I think he's in the can."* 3. In jail or prison. *My uncle spent five years in the can for money laundering. I can't believe I got thrown in the can for an unpaid parking ticket!*

in the cards Very likely or certain to happen, occur, or take place. *If you keep performing at this level, I think a promotion is in the cards. They've played very well today, but it doesn't look like a championship title is in the cards for this team today.*

in the circumstances Due to the conditions or particular situation; such as the case is. *Of course we wish that we could pay each employee a proper Christmas bonus, but in the circumstances, that is just not feasible. I'm sorry for my sudden resignation, but I'm afraid that, in the circumstances, I just can't work here any longer.*

in the clouds 1. Detached from reality; in a fanciful or imaginative state; in a reverie. *Jonathan has been more and more in the clouds lately; I just can't seem to get through to him. Janet's been in the clouds ever since she and Jim started going out.* 2. Impractical or unrealistic. *Your wild business ideas are always in the clouds, but this one is downright ridiculous!*

in the course of In or during the process of. *In the course of your employment in the company, were you ever aware or suspicious of any illicit financial activity going on? I learned in the course of the meeting that our department was being downsized by over 50 percent.*

in the days of Queen Dick dated At no point ever. (Used to show skepticism over an absurd or unbelievable story.) *John: "And after a half-hour struggle, I managed to haul in a fish that weighed over 30 pounds!" Charlie: "Sure, John. That happened in the days of Queen Dick."*

in the depths of (something) In the middle of and wholly consumed by a particularly negative and/or difficult situation or emotional state. *The country was in the depths of the worst economic disaster of the last century. While I was in the depths of depression, I found that I couldn't even get out of*

bed in the morning.

in the dock **1.** On trial in a court, especially for a criminal case. *The once all-powerful executive has been in the dock for the past month over allegations of money laundering within his company.* **2.** Subjected to intense scrutiny or examination. *John found himself in the dock after his wife caught him having an affair with another woman.*

in the driving seat In control of a situation; in a position of power. Primarily heard in UK. *Make sure to get good grades now, so that you're in the driving seat when it comes time to choose a college. We're still leading in the polls, so nobody panic—we're in the driving seat here.*

in the event that If it should happen or be the case that. *In the event that we get stuck in traffic, there's no way I'll make my flight. I'd like to see you again, so give me a call in the event that you ever come back through Detroit.*

in the eye of (something) At, in, or amidst the central or focal point of something. *The social advocate found herself in the eye of the debate regarding abortion law.*

in the final analysis When everything has been considered; when all the facts are known or the truth has come to light. *In the final analysis, it is the lowest earners in society who have been worst hit by this economic downturn. Rebarbative though he may be, in the final analysis, his dismissal comes down to his incompetency at the job.*

in the flash of an eye See [in a/the flash of an/the eye](#).

in the game **1.** Actively participating in something (not necessary sports-related). *Look, my first published short story! I'm in the game now, like a real writer! Do you want to get in the game as a serious politician, or not?* **2.** In a position in a game in which winning is still attainable. *Melissa's goaltending has kept us in the game so far—now it's time to get a goal and tie this thing up!*

in the here and now In the present; at this point in time. *Yes, but I'm not worried about his past production—I'm worried about his low sales in the here and now! Try to be in the here and now, instead of focusing so much on what the future may bring.*

in the hope of With the expectation, intention, or desire of (something or something happening). *He strove to be well-behaved in prison, in the hope of*

an early release. I'm being extra nice to my sister all through December, in the hope of getting a new video game for Christmas.

in the hope that With the expectation, intention, or desire that (something will happen). *He strove to be well-behaved in prison, in the hope that he would be let out early on parole. I'm being extra nice to my sister all through December, in the hope that Santa will bring me a new video game for Christmas.*

in the hospital Receiving medical or surgical treatment, care, or attention at a hospital. *My grandmother is in the hospital again for hip surgery. I heard you were in the hospital last week! Are you all right?*

in the interest of justice In order to be just or fair. *You broke the law and, in the interest of justice, I must punish you accordingly.*

in the Land of Nod Asleep. The phrase likely alludes to how one's head nods when one is falling asleep. *I would have told you this last night, but you were already in the Land of Nod, and I didn't want to wake you.*

in the last analysis When everything has been considered; when all the facts are known or the truth has come to light. *In the last analysis, it is the lowest earners in society who have been hit worst by this economic downturn. Rebarbative though he may be, in the last analysis, his dismissal comes down to his incompetency at the job.*

in the lead Ahead of other competitors or entities (often in a race or game). *If we can get in the lead early, I think we'll have a good shot at winning this relay. According to the polls, we're still in in the lead by a large margin.*

in the next breath (especially when speaking) In or at the very next moment or opportunity; in a very short space of time. *The boss spent nearly an hour talking about how we had to cut spending in the office, but in the next breath, he was telling his secretary to upgrade his company car.*

in the nip Naked. Primarily heard in Ireland. *You may love fashion now, but as a kid you wanted nothing to do with clothes and were always running around in the nip!*

in the pocket of (someone) Under the direct control or influence of someone or some group. *It's pretty obvious that our national legislators are all in the pockets of corporate bigwigs! The principal has been in the pocket*

of the superintendent ever since he started the job.

in the post 1. In the process of being sent or delivered by the public mail system. Primarily heard in UK. *I hope my mother's letter hasn't gotten lost in the post! They said that my work permit is in the post. I hope it arrives soon!*

2. In a letterbox or other point of collection for delivery by the public mail system. Primarily heard in UK. *I put your cheque in the post yesterday, so it should reach you the end of the week.*

in the reign of Queen Dick dated At no point ever. (Used to show skepticism over an absurd or unbelievable story.) *John: "And after a half-hour struggle, I managed to haul in a fish that weighed over 30 pounds!" Charlie: "Sure, John. That happened in the reign of Queen Dick."*

in the right place at the right moment See [be in the right place at the right moment](#).

in the right spot at the right time See [be in the right spot at the right time](#).

in the round 1. Of a theater, having a stage that is surrounded on all sides by the audience; performed or staged in such a manner. *I've never seen a play that's done in the round like this before. I love theaters that are in the round.* **2.** From all angles, perspectives, or aspects. *The new biography of the former president is the first body of work to really show him in the round.* **3.** Of a sculpture, shaped or crafted in complete detail, so as to be independent of a supporting background. *The artist was commissioned to create a bust of the new prime minister in the round.*

in (the) Sam Hill? Used as an intensifier after a question word (who, what, where, when, why, and how) to express extreme confusion, surprise, or aggravation. Often erroneously written or pronounced as "in Sam Hell." Primarily heard in US. *And just how in Sam Hill am I supposed to have three reports done by 9 AM tomorrow? Where in the Sam Hill did you find that rusty old car? Who in Sam Hill is making all that noise?*

in the same mold Of or in the same or similar style, fashion, or manner. Primarily heard in US. *The author's newest novel is very much in the same mold as his previous work.*

in the short strikes See [be in the short strokes](#).

in the sticks In the countryside, especially in a rustic or particularly

unsophisticated area. *Jane was sick of living in the sticks and dreamed of spending her life in New York City.*

in the thick of things Very busy; in the middle of or preoccupied with something or several things. *Sorry I couldn't make it to your birthday lunch on Wednesday—I'm afraid I'm really in the thick of things at the moment. Even when you find yourself in the thick of things, try to take a moment each day and take a deep, calming breath.*

in the trouser department **1.** Literally, relating to or having to do with trousers or pants. *Of course, in the trouser department, a nicely fitted pair of slacks will always look more respectable than tracksuit bottoms.* **2.** slang Relating to or concerning a man's penis or its physical aspects. *Look at that guy in his big flashy sports car. I reckon it's compensation for not having much in the trouser department, eh?*

in the twinkle of an eye Immediately; very quickly; at once. (A variant of the more common "in the twinkling of an eye.") *Just call us on this number if you have any problems, and we'll be back in the twinkle of an eye. Don't worry, boss, I'll have this report typed up in the twinkle of an eye!*

in the twinkling of an eye Immediately; very quickly; at once. *Just call us on this number if you have any problems, and we'll be back in the twinkling of an eye. Don't worry, boss, I'll have this report typed up in the twinkling of an eye!*

in the unlikely event (that) (something) happens If a very improbable outcome turns out to be the case. *I wouldn't worry too much, but in the unlikely event that you lose your job, you can always come live with us for a while. In the unlikely event I win the lottery, the first thing I would do is travel to Jamaica.*

in the view of (someone) In someone's or some group's opinion. *And what, in the view of your administration, would be the best way to go about solving this problem? Many see this tax as another unjust burden on the citizens, but in the view of the government, it is the only chance at keeping the economy afloat.*

in the weeds See [\(deep\) in the weeds](#).

in the wild In naturally occurring conditions or environments. *The snow leopard is in such danger of extinction that only a few people have ever seen*

one in the wild.

in the wilds of (some place) In an area of a place that is especially remote and in which it is difficult or dangerous to live. *It was only after my summer abroad in the wilds of Cambodia that I came to truly appreciate the modern comforts that I'm used to.*

in the wink of an eye So quickly as to seem almost imperceptible (i.e., in the space of time it takes a person to wink). *And in the wink of an eye, the home team has taken total control of this match. Working on Wall Street, you get used to massive financial changes happening in the wink of an eye.*

in the wink of an eye Immediately; very quickly; at once. *Just call us on this number if you have any problems, and we'll be back in the wink of an eye. Don't worry, boss, I'll have this report typed up in the wink of an eye!*

in these circumstances See [in the circumstances](#).

in thrall **1.** Very interested in and/or paying close attention (to something). *I was thrilled to see my students in thrall during the assembly, instead of talking or passing notes.* **2.** Under one's or something's control or influence to an extreme degree. *My daughter's new boyfriend has her totally in thrall. She seems to go along with everything he says.*

in thunderation? Used as an intensifier after a question word (who, what, where, when, why, and how) to express extreme confusion, surprise, or aggravation. Primarily heard in US. *And just how in thunderation am I supposed to have three reports done by 9 AM tomorrow? Where in thunderation did you find that rusty old car? Who in thunderation is making all that noise?*

in tight corners See [in a tight corner](#).

in tight spots See [in a tight spot](#).

in too deep Too involved in something to easily extract oneself or make reasonable decisions. *I know you think you're in control of this undercover operation, but you're in too deep now—you care about these people too much to arrest them! Now that we're engaged, I've realized I'm in too deep with a man I don't really love.*

in toto Totally; completely. *If you want to do well on your next paper, I suggest incorporating my feedback in toto and making all of the appropriate changes.*

in tough spots See [in a tough spot](#).

in tracks See [in \(one's/someone's\) tracks](#).

in trust Especially of money or property, in the protection, care, or guardianship of a trustee. *Following her parents' sudden deaths, the young heiress's fortune was held in trust by her paternal grandfather.*

(in) up to (one's) elbows Extremely busy; deeply involved or engrossed (in or with something). *I'd love to come for a pint, but I'm in up to my elbows with work for my class on Monday. John has been up to his elbows with the kids lately.*

(in) up to (one's) eye(ball)s Extremely busy; deeply involved or engrossed (in or with something). *I'd love to come for a pint, but I'm in up to my eyeballs with work for my class on Monday. John has been up to his eyes with the kids lately.*

in view See [in \(someone's\) view](#).

in view 1. Within the range of vision; able to be seen; visible. *Wait until the enemy soldiers are in view before beginning your attack.* **2.** As a point of regard, deliberation, or careful attention; under consideration. *Let's keep that idea in view for the board meeting next week.* **3.** As a goal, end, or achievement being sought. *With the championship in view, the team began training harder than ever before.*

in vino veritas A Latin phrase meaning "in wine, there is truth," alluding to how people are said to be more truthful or open when they are intoxicated. *Whenever I need to get the truth out of someone, I just open a bottle of wine—in vino veritas, it works every time!*

in vino veritas Latin for "in wine, there is truth," meaning that one who is intoxicated is more apt to speak honestly. *Make sure that Mark's cup is never empty tonight—I need to find out why he's getting divorced, and in vino veritas.*

in virtue of (something) Due to something; because of something; by reason of something. *In virtue of your years of hard work and experience in the company, we think you would be well-suited to a managerial role within the company. I know that you feel the need to intervene in virtue of your role as a father, but you need to allow your children a greater degree of independence.*

in waiting In attendance or accompaniment, especially as upon a royal or noble personage. *The Duke sent one of his servants in waiting to admit his guests into the banquet hall.*

in wheelhouse See [in \(someone's\) wheelhouse](#).

in with See [be in with \(someone\)](#).

in with a chance See [be in with a chance](#).

in with a chance Having a good chance or high probability of doing or accomplishing something. Primarily heard in UK. *Since most of the other candidates have been ruled out, I think Margaret is in with a chance of getting the promotion. If we can score one more time without letting up any points, I think we'll be in with a chance!*

in working order Of a machine, functional; not broken. *I just picked up my car from the shop, and it's in working order again, thank goodness!*

in your face An aggressive exclamation of triumph said after one has defeated someone or proven someone wrong. Although rude, the phrase is often used jocularly, without actual hostility. *You said I wouldn't make the team, and guess who's the newest member of the pitching staff? Yeah, that's right, in your face! I beat you, just as I predicted—in your face!*

in your face! A smug or arrogant exclamation of victory or success over another person. (Can also be used with other pronouns.) *Ha! In your face, John! There's no way your team can beat mine now. I told Janet I would get promoted before her. In her face!*

inasmuch as **1.** Due to; because of; since. *I know you and I don't get along particularly well, but inasmuch as we are to be colleagues, we should at least try to be civil to one another.* **2.** To such an extent that; to the degree that. *Inasmuch as money is concerned, our project will be completely funded by private donations.*

inch-perfect Extremely accurate; very well placed or perfectly judged. (Used especially of maneuvers, moves, or shots in sport.) Primarily heard in UK. *With only a few seconds left, the striker managed an inch-perfect goal from midfield.*

inclusive of Including for consideration. *Your grade will be inclusive of everything listed on the syllabus.*

incumbent (up)on (someone) Imposed or expected as an obligation, duty, or requirement on someone. *As the wealthier citizens of the country, it's my firm belief that it is incumbent upon us to contribute toward the welfare of those who are less fortunate. He felt it was incumbent on him to take over the responsibilities of his father's business.*

independent as a hog on ice Unable to be controlled. The phrase was originally used in the sport of curling to describe the movement of the stones on the ice. *I want to keep this meeting from happening, but it's independent as a hog on ice now, with so many people involved. I worry about my daughter's rebelliousness, but she's as independent as a hog on ice—there's no stopping her from doing what she wants to do.*

independent of Excluding (something); without taking something into account. *My contract was written independent of overtime—I got a higher base salary instead. I need you to make a decision independent of your personal feelings on this issue.*

Indian file **1.** noun A line one person or one thing in width; single file. (Possibly deprecatory due to the politically incorrect reference to Native Americans.) *An Indian file of geese—such an unusual flight pattern for the bird—crossed overhead as we traversed the field.* **2.** adverb In such a line. *The students lined up and walked Indian file into the auditorium.*

an Indian giver A person who asks the return of or takes back a gift after they have given it. (Potentially offensive due to the politically incorrect reference to Native Americans.) *I'm sorry to be an Indian giver like this, but I'm afraid I need the \$50 back that I gave you last week.*

the Indian sign A curse or spell placed upon a person that causes persistent misfortune or a loss of volition. (Potentially offensive due to the politically incorrect reference to Native Americans.) *With my business crumbling, my wife having left me, and now this car accident, it feels like I've got the Indian sign on me. Be careful of a woman like that, son—she'll hang the Indian sign on you.*

Indian summer **1.** A period of unseasonably warm weather in early fall. *I know it's September, but don't get out your winter clothes just yet—this area often has an Indian summer. I hate the cold weather, so I'm hoping for an Indian summer.* **2.** A particularly peaceful, successful, or enjoyable time as something nears its end. *As her illness worsened, my grandmother still*

enjoyed painting, so I think she had an Indian summer before her death. I wonder if people sensed that they were in an Indian summer just before the Great Depression.

ink-slinger slang A writer, especially one who produces a large amount of low-quality material for a living. *I spent a lot of time after college as an ink-slinger for various newspapers and magazines while working on my first novel.*

inkhorn term An obscure term from another language (most often Latin or Greek), typically used in an attempt to highlight the speaker's intelligence. *I can't stand that guy and his inkhorn terms—I feel like I need to have a dictionary on hand just to talk to him!*

the inmates are running the asylum The people least capable of running a group or organization are now in charge. Said especially when the result is total chaos or calamity. *With the primary schools giving their young students complete control over the curriculum, it seems as though the inmates are running the asylum. After the recent election, a new wave of political extremists have taken power in Congress. It looks like the inmates are now running the asylum.*

the inmates have taken over the asylum The people least capable of running a group or organization are now in charge. Said especially when the result is total chaos or calamity. *With the primary schools giving their young students complete control over the curriculum, it seems as though the inmates have taken over the asylum. After the recent election, a new wave of political extremists have taken power in Congress. It looks like the inmates have taken over the asylum.*

inner circle A small, exclusive, and intimate group of like-minded people sharing a common goal, pursuit, or purpose. *After nearly 20 years working for the company, I was finally brought into the board of directors' inner circle. John, Samantha, Mary, and I are kind of the inner circle of our wider group of friends.*

inner core The innermost part of something. The term is used both literally and figuratively. *What is the Earth's inner core made of? At his inner core, he's a good person, I just know it.*

inner strength One's resolve or determination. *You have to draw on your inner strength—it will carry you through an experience like this.*

inopportune moment An unfortunate or inconvenient moment in time. *I'm afraid you've caught me at an inopportune moment, as I'm just about to leave for the airport.*

inside and out Thoroughly; down to the last detail. *I've been studying this material for weeks now, so I know it inside and out.*

inside baseball **1.** adjective (hyphenated and used as a modifier before a noun) Relating to or containing nuanced details and minutiae that require such specific knowledge or insight as to be unintelligible or irrelevant to outsiders. *The novel is so overwrought with long, inside-baseball descriptions of the publishing world that the plot, as may be appreciated by the common reader, is largely lost in the process.* **2.** noun An approach containing or concerned with nuanced details and minutiae requiring such specific knowledge or insight as to be unintelligible or irrelevant to outsiders. *I hate going to dinner with my wife's economist friends. There's always so much inside baseball between them that I'm always left with nothing to talk about.*

an inside job A set phrase for a crime committed by someone who is closely involved with the targeted person or group. *The robbery must have been an inside job—only three people have access to the safe.*

inside of Within a given range of distance or period of time. *We were inside of a mile from town when we ran out of gas. We should arrive at grandma's house inside of an hour.*

inside out **1.** adjective Having the inside part or surface turned outward; reversed. *I was in such a rush this morning that I didn't even notice that my pants were inside out!* **2.** adverb With the inside part or surface turned outward. *I had been wearing my shirt inside out all day and nobody bothered to tell me!* **3.** adverb Thoroughly; down to the last detail. *I've read this book inside out again and again, but I still enjoy it every time. I've been studying this material for weeks now, so I know it inside and out.*

inside the box Standard or derivative, as opposed to creative or innovative; the opposite of "outside the box." *Please abandon any inside the box thinking because we need to come up with an attention-getting, innovative ad campaign. Don't give me inside the box choreography—I want to see something mind-blowing!*

insofar as To such an extent that; to the degree that. *Insofar as money is*

concerned, our project will be completely funded by private donations. We should be finished filming by late spring, at least insofar as I can guess.

insofar as To such an extent that; to the degree that. *Insofar as money is concerned, our project will be completely funded by private donations.*

insomuch as **1.** Due to; because of; since. *I know you and I don't get along particularly well, but insomuch as we are to be colleagues, we should at least try to be civil to one another.* **2.** To such an extent that; to the degree that. *Insomuch as money is concerned, our project will be completely funded by private donations.*

Instagram See [IG](#).

install(ed) base business jargon The number units of a particular product or service that are currently in use, especially software or an Internet or computing platform. (Also referred to as "install(ed) user base" or simply "user base.") *There have been fears that the computer giant's existing installed base may decline after their newest operating system is implemented.*

install(ed) user base business jargon The number units of a particular product or service that are currently in use, especially software or an Internet or computing platform. (Also referred to as "install(ed) base" or "user base.") *There have been fears that the computer giant's existing installed user base may decline after their newest operating system is implemented.*

Internets An intentionally incorrect pluralization of "Internet" used for comedic effect. A: "Where did you hear about this?" B: "Oh, on the Internets, so it's you know it's true!"

intestinal fortitude Strong courage, conviction, or determination; gumption; guts. *Not everyone has the intestinal fortitude necessary to survive in the world of politics.*

into commission See [in commission](#).

into high gear To a faster or more intense pace. *All right, let's kick it into high gear for the last part of today's workout! I've always been a good student, but now that I'm trying to get a scholarship for college, my studying has gone into high gear.*

in(to) shape In good, robust health; strong or fit. *Boy, I really need to get into shape. Ten years working behind a desk have given me quite a belly!*

Wow, Jim is really in shape lately.

into the background Into a (literal or figurative) place where someone or something is not very noticeable. *I'm going to move all of our less-experienced dancers into the background for this scene. The more new people get hired, the more I get pushed into the background and ignored!*

into the blue Completely gone or disappeared; entirely out of sight or reach; without a trace. (Usually preceded by "vanish" or some similar verb.) *The brutal dictatorship was so mercilessly efficient that anyone who stood up against it soon vanished into the blue. I have no idea where my keys have gone. They seem to have disappeared into the blue!*

into the weeds See [\(deep\) into the weeds](#).

introduce the shoemaker to the tailor To kick someone in the buttocks. Primarily heard in UK. *If you don't leave me alone, I'll introduce the shoemaker to the tailor!*

Irish hint A straightforward statement. *I'm positive I'm getting the promotion—the boss gave me an Irish hint to that effect!*

IRL An abbreviation for "in real life," indicating the existence or qualities of someone or something in reality, specifically as opposed to online. *We've been texting, and he seems nice enough, but I just don't know what he's like IRL. The picture doesn't do it justice—her gown was absolutely gorgeous IRL.*

iron curtain **1.** (usually capitalized) The geographical border and military, political, and ideological barrier established and enforced by the Soviet Union that separated the countries of the Soviet bloc from the rest of Europe from 1945 to 1990. *My great-grandfather used to live in East Germany before the Iron Curtain fell, back when the Soviet Union controlled every aspect of day-to-day life.* **2.** By extension, any barrier that excludes or prevents the free exchange of ideas, information, or communication from or between certain groups. *Even though our company is a subsidiary, there seems to exist an iron curtain between our staff and the management of the larger corporation. For all our righteous calls for free speech and freedom of the press, it's important to remember that America had an iron curtain of its own during the Cold War, when even the slightest association with the Communist party was enough to get you blacklisted for life.*

an iron fist in a velvet glove A person who has a gentle, sweet, or unassuming appearance or disposition, but who in reality is particularly severe, forceful, and uncompromising. *Tom is in for it now with his wife. She might seem like a nice lady to us, but she's an iron fist in a velvet glove. The new leader of the country rose to power by promises of democracy and equality to its citizens, but as his despotic intentions came to light he soon proved to be an iron fist in a velvet glove.*

an iron hand in a velvet glove A person who has a gentle, sweet, or unassuming appearance or disposition, but who in reality is particularly severe, forceful, or uncompromising. *Tom is in for it now with his wife. She might seem like a nice lady to us, but she's an iron hand in a velvet glove when they're at home. The new leader of the country rose to power by promises of democracy and equality to its citizens, but, as his despotic intentions came to light, he soon proved an iron hand in a velvet glove.*

iron man One who is in peak physical condition and thus is rarely sick or injured. *Marty has played in 500 straight games—he's a real iron man. With an iron man like Jack helping us move all this equipment, I think we'll be done in an hour.*

iron out the wrinkles (of/in something) **1.** Literally, to remove wrinkles from something, especially a piece of fabric, using a flatiron. *Your new dress shirt is all rumped! You'll need to iron out the wrinkles before you go to the ceremony this evening. I have to iron out the wrinkles in this tablecloth before our guests arrive.* **2.** By extension, to ease, solve, or remove minor difficulties, troubles, or problematic details (of or in something). (Sometimes worded as "some wrinkles," "a few wrinkles," etc.) *Our latest software update is nearly finished—we just need to iron out a few wrinkles before it's ready for release. Your friends and family are great means of support when you need to iron out the wrinkles of your life. Bob and Janet are seeing a counselor to try and iron out the wrinkles in their marriage.*

iron the wrinkles out (of/in something) **1.** Literally, to remove wrinkles from something, especially a piece of fabric, using a flatiron. *Your new dress shirt is all rumped! You'll need to iron the wrinkles out before you go to the ceremony this evening. I have to iron out the wrinkles in this tablecloth before our guests arrive.* **2.** By extension, to ease, solve, or remove minor difficulties, troubles, or problematic details (of or in something).

(Sometimes worded as "some wrinkles," "a few wrinkles," etc.) *Our latest software update is nearly finished—we just need to iron a few wrinkles out before it's ready for release. Your friends and family are great means of support when you need to iron the wrinkles out in your life. Bob and Janet are seeing a counselor to try and iron some wrinkles out of their marriage.*

(is) anything going on? Is anything interesting happening? A: *"Anything going on?"* B: *"Nah, it's a pretty boring night."* What are you doing today? *Is anything going on?*

is it Is that so? You don't say? Really? (Sometimes colloquially joined as one word, alternately spelled "isit" or "izit," and pronounced as the latter.) Primarily heard in South Africa. A: *"I've been so sick lately I can barely get out of bed."* B: *"Is it?"* John: *"I've just inherited a fortune from my Great-Uncle Charles!"* Mary: *"Izit?!"* Samantha: *"It looks like my mom is going to need surgery again."* Kayla: *"Isit? I'm sorry to hear that."*

is it just me Am I the only one who thinks or experiences this? The phrase is sometimes used rhetorically. *Is it just me, or is it freezing in here? Did that ending not make any sense, or is it just me? Is anyone else getting alive by mosquitoes? Is it just me?*

Is the glass half empty or half full? A question to determine whether a given situation could be perceived optimistically or pessimistically. *You can see the company's collapse as a failure, or you can see it as a chance to explore new opportunities for yourself. You just have to ask yourself: is the glass half empty or half full?*

is the pope Catholic A humorous response to a question that the speaker feels would obviously be answered in the affirmative. A: *"Are you going to the party tonight?"* B: *"Is the pope Catholic? Of course I'll be there!"*

isn't all it is cracked up to be See [be not all it's cracked up to be](#).

isn't any hard feelings See [not any hard feelings](#).

isn't anything to write home about See [not anything to write home about](#).

isn't feeling yourself See [not feeling \(oneself\)](#).

isn't much cop See [not much cop](#).

isn't playing with a full deck See [not playing with a full deck](#).

isn't rocket science See [be not rocket science](#).

isn't short of a penny See [be not short of a penny \(or two\)](#).

isn't something to write home about See [not something to write home about](#).

isn't the done thing See [be not the done thing](#).

isn't up to scratch See [not up to scratch](#).

isn't up to snuff See [not up to snuff](#).

isn't what it is cracked up to be See [be not what it's cracked up to be](#).

isn't worth a brass farthing See [be not worth a brass farthing](#).

isn't worth a plug nickel See [be not worth a plug nickel](#).

isn't worth writing home about See [not worth writing home about](#).

it ain't over till/until it's over The final outcome cannot be assumed or determined until a given situation, event, etc., is completely finished. Usually used in reference to organized competitions, such as sporting events, political elections, and the like. A: *"We're down by six points with only two minutes remaining. There's no way we can win now!"* B: *"Hey, it ain't over till it's over!"* *It's not looking likely that the Senator will be elected to another term, but it ain't over until it's over.*

it ain't over till/until the fat lady sings The final outcome cannot be assumed or determined until a given situation, event, etc., is completely finished. ("Ain't" is a colloquial contraction of "is not.") The phrase refers to the stereotypically overweight female sopranos of the opera, particularly the Valkyrie Brünnhilde, whose aria concludes Richard Wagner's opera cycle *Der Ring des Nibelungen*. It is often used in reference to organized competitions, such as sporting events, political elections, or the like. A: *"We're down by six points with only two minutes remaining. There's no way we can win now!"* B: *"Hey, it ain't over till the fat lady sings!"* *It's not looking likely that the Senator will be elected to another term, but it ain't over until the fat lady sings.*

it all boils down to See [boil \(something\) down to \(something\)](#).

(it) beats me slang A response when one does not know the answer to a question. A: "How long has this milk been in the fridge?" B: "Beats me. Check the expiration date." When's Ali's birthday? Beats me! It beats me—I have no idea how to get to the mall from here.

it can dispense with (something) See [you can dispense with \(something\)](#).

it can't be helped A phrase used when one is faced with something (usually something unpleasant) that cannot be avoided. *I'm not thrilled to spend my Saturday cleaning, but it can't be helped—the house is a mess! We tried to stall for more time, but I'm afraid it can't be helped—you'll have to go on stage now.*

(it) couldn't be helped A phrase used when one was faced with something (usually something unpleasant) that could not be avoided. *I wasn't thrilled to spend my Saturday cleaning, but it couldn't be helped—the house was a mess!*

it does exactly what it says on the tin See [does \(exactly\) what it says on the tin](#).

it does no harm (for someone) to do (something) Doing something may be good, pragmatic, or beneficial, and will not cause any problems or harm. *The contractor might not be willing to go any lower on the price, but it does no harm to ask. Sure, you might not be accepted for the PhD program, but it does no harm for you to try, does it?*

it figures It makes sense; it is as I expected or might have guessed. A: "Sally already broke up with that new boyfriend of hers." B: "Yeah, it figures. The dude looked like a total creep!" Fired from another job, huh? Well, it figures. You were showing up late most days of the week!

it is a matter of (doing something) What is important is (doing something). *It's a matter of sticking with the program in order to succeed.*

it is easy to find a stick to beat a dog It is easy to attack (physically or verbally) a vulnerable person or thing. Primarily heard in UK. *I know it is easy to find a stick to beat a dog, but you need to stop criticizing your son—he's not being malicious, he's just a child!*

It is never too late It is never impossible (to do something), regardless of how old one is. The phrase is typically used to encourage someone to try to accomplish something, especially late in life or long after it is usually accomplished by others. *My grandmother got her master's degree at age 85, proving that it is never too late to accomplish your goals. You can still achieve the life you want. It is never too late.*

It is the last straw that breaks the camel's back After someone or something has experienced a series of recurring offenses or problems, even a minor one can be the one that causes one to finally lose patience or for something to stop working. It alludes to the idea that a single additional piece of straw could cause an overlaid camel to finally collapse. Common versions of this phrase are "the last straw" and "the straw that broke the camel's back." A: *"Why are you furious now? Tom's been taking credit for your ideas for years."* B: *"It is the last straw that breaks the camel's back!" I've hiked miles and miles in these boots—I can't believe they finally fell apart while I was walking in my own driveway! But I guess it is the last straw that breaks the camel's back.*

it is what it is The situation, circumstance, or outcome has already happened or been decided or established, so it must be accepted even if it is undesirable. *Look, we lost the game, but it is what it is. All we can do is work even harder for the next one. I'm not terribly fond of my daughter's new boyfriend, but it is what it is.*

it pays to advertise Advertising is advantageous (by bringing more attention, money, business, etc.) to whatever is being promoted. A: *"Oh, I've seen videos of your performances online!"* B: *"Wow, it pays to advertise, huh?" We've gotten 10 orders since that ad campaign launched this morning—it pays to advertise, all right!*

it takes one bad apple to spoil the (whole) barrel It only takes one person, thing, element, etc., to ruin the entire group, situation, project, etc. Refers to the fact that a rotting apple can cause other apples in close proximity to begin to rot as well. A: *"It used to be considered the top research facility in the region, but after one of its researchers was discovered to have plagiarized a number of his papers, the whole department's reputation has been dragged through the mud."* B: *"Well, it takes just one bad apple to spoil the barrel." I really loved my job, but there was this one*

jerk there who made life miserable for everyone. It takes one bad apple to spoil the whole barrel, unfortunately.

it takes one bad apple to spoil the (whole) bunch It only takes one person, thing, element, etc., to ruin the entire group, situation, project, etc. Refers to the fact that a rotting apple can cause other apples in close proximity to begin to rot as well. A: *"It used to be considered the top research facility in the region, but after one of its researchers was discovered to have plagiarized a number of his papers, the whole department's reputation has been dragged through the mud."* B: *"Well, it takes just one bad apple to spoil the bunch." I really loved my job, but there was this one jerk there who made life miserable for everyone. It takes one bad apple to spoil the whole bunch, unfortunately.*

it takes one bad apple to spoil the (whole) bushel It only takes one person, thing, element, etc., to ruin the entire group, situation, project, etc. Refers to the fact that a rotting apple can cause other apples in close proximity to begin to rot as well. A: *"It used to be considered the top research facility in the region, but after one of its researchers was discovered to have plagiarized a number of his papers, the whole department's reputation has been dragged through the mud."* B: *"Well, it takes just one bad apple to spoil the bushel." I really loved my job, but there was this one jerk there who made life miserable for everyone. It takes one bad apple to spoil the whole bushel, unfortunately.*

it tied up in knots See [be tied \(up\) in knots](#).

it was not rocket science See [be not rocket science](#).

it wouldn't do (someone) any harm (to do something) It would or may be good, pragmatic, or beneficial for someone (to do something). *You know, it wouldn't do you any harm to comb your hair from time to time. I know that the managers are trying to cut costs, but it wouldn't do them any harm to treat us to a staff lunch every once in a while. Jonathan should try and spend more time with his mother. It wouldn't do him any harm, after all.*

an itchy trigger finger 1. An inclination or readiness to shoot a gun (especially at someone) without needing much or any provocation or justification. *I wouldn't stay too long around here—there are a lot of people with itchy trigger fingers in this part of town.* 2. By extension, an inclination,

readiness, or tendency to act or react carelessly, rashly, or without due consideration. *John's itchy trigger finger is going to get him into trouble with his boss someday. When you're working in a restaurant, it's important not to have an itchy trigger finger when customers come to you with complaints.*

it'll be a cold day in hell It is unlikely or impossible that it will ever occur. Used hyperbolically and often issued in defiance of some request or demand. *It'll be a cold day in hell when I sign over the lease of my land to you. It will be a cold day in hell before the two parties agree to anything.*

it's a long shot See [be a long shot](#).

(it's) about time An expression used to emphasize that something should have occurred a long time ago. *Well, it's about time you got here—I've been waiting for an hour! It's about time that high schools taught their students about basic banking and finance. A: "He finally moved out of his parents' house." B: "About time! He's 40 years old."*

it's all fun and games until someone loses an eye A warning (usually issued to children by adults) against dangerous play. *A: "But mom, we're just playing!" B: "Oh sure, it's all fun and games until someone loses an eye!"*

it's all good A phrase used to express general approval, unconcern, or disinterest. *Steve: "I'm so sorry, John, but I scratched your car when I was parking." John: "It's all good, Steve. Don't worry about it." A: "Is lasagna all right for dinner?" B: "Yeah, it's all good."*

it's all (the) one to me It makes no difference to me one way or another; it's not important to me what happens. *I don't really care what movie we see, it's all one to me. I'm not really a big sports fan, so it's all the one to me whether our team wins or loses.*

it's all the same to me It makes no difference to me one way or another; it's not important to me what happens. *I don't really care what movie we see, it's all the same to me. It's all the same to me if you come home after midnight, but at least call your mother so she doesn't worry.*

it's an ill wind that blows no good Even the most negative or harmful situations usually benefit someone. Thus a situation that benefits no one must be truly bad (and rare). *The rain caused flooding, but it may help the farmers. It's an ill wind that blows no good.*

it's an ill wind that blows nobody any good Even the most negative or harmful situations usually benefit someone. Thus a situation that benefits no one must be truly bad (and rare). *The rain caused flooding, but it may help the farmers. It's an ill wind that blows nobody any good.*

it's better to ask forgiveness than permission It is better to act and do something that one may have to apologize for than to do nothing out of caution or politeness. The phrase prioritizes action over courtesy. *I hope my supervisor isn't mad, but it's better to ask forgiveness than permission, right? Who cares if you offend someone—you need to get your music to the right people, and it's better to ask forgiveness than permission!*

it's her call See [be \(someone's\) call](#).

(it's) just as well (that) (something happened) It is or turned out to be beneficial (that something happened). *It turned out we had a pop quiz on Monday. Just as well I was studying this weekend! It's just as well we brought our raincoats, because it looks like it's about to rain. A: "My brother said he'd give us a lift to the airport in the morning." B: "Just as well, because I don't have any money for a taxi."*

it's just the same to her See [be just the same \(to someone\)](#).

(it's) little wonder It is not at all surprising (that something is the case). *I was always terrible at math in school, so it's little wonder that I have such trouble filing my taxes. Little wonder you had such trouble starting the car: the battery is almost completely dead!*

it's money for jam See [be money for jam](#).

it's money for old rope See [be money for old rope](#).

it's more trouble than it's worth See [be more trouble than it's worth](#).

it's near to impossible See [be near to impossible](#).

it's no crime to (do something) It is no great offense to do something; it is not wrong, unlawful, or immoral to do something. *I wouldn't worry about quitting your job. After all, it's no crime to want a career you love! I know you feel guilty about breaking up with Steve, but it's no crime to fall out of love with someone.*

it's no point crying over spilt milk See [\(there's\) no point crying](#)

[over spilt milk.](#)

(it's) not half bad Pretty good; not as unpleasant as one may have originally thought. A: *"I know it's your first time trying sushi. How do you like it?"* B: *"It's not half bad."*

it's not over til the fat lady sings See [it ain't over till/until the fat lady sings.](#)

it's not the meat, it's the motion It's not what you have, it's how you use it. The phrase is often used in a sexual way (as "meat" is a slang term for "penis"). *Don't be discouraged—it's not the meat, it's the motion!*

it's not what you know but who you know People benefit more from personal connections (to people who can help them) than from their own knowledge. A: *"I can't believe they hired the CEO's niece instead of me! I have two degrees, and she just graduated from college!"* B: *"Well, it's not what you know but who you know."*

(it's) nothing personal (This is) not based on emotions, subjective motivations, or personal biases; (this is) not meant to offend you; (this is) not a personal slight against you. Though it can be truthful, this phrase often tends to be sarcastic, insincere, or unconvincing in usage or reception. Larry: *"But how can you fire me after 20 years' service, just like that?"* Matt: *"Nothing personal, Larry, it's just the way the business is moving right now."* *It's nothing personal, Dad. I just think it would be easier for all of us if you weren't at the wedding. Nothing personal, but your voice is really getting on my nerves.*

it's nothing special See [be nothing special.](#)

it's on An exclamation of readiness, eagerness, or anticipation for something, especially a competition or confrontation. *He said what behind my back? Oh, it's on! The other team is really picking up momentum, it's on now.*

it's six and two threes See [six and two threes.](#)

its six in one a half a dozen in the other See [six in one, \(and\) half a dozen in the other.](#)

(it's) small wonder It is not at all surprising (that something is the case). *I was always terrible at math in school, so it's small wonder that I have such trouble filing my taxes. Small wonder you had such trouble starting the*

car: the battery is almost completely dead!

it's swings and roundabouts The losses, setbacks, or negative aspects of a certain situation are cancelled out or balanced by equally advantageous or positive elements (or vice versa). Primarily heard in UK. *This promotion has meant I can provide for my family much more easily, but it's so demanding that I don't see them all that much—it's swings and roundabouts, really. People here complain about the high level of taxes, but it's all just swings and roundabouts, because if I were to go into hospital tomorrow for a major operation, I wouldn't pay a thing.*

it's the pits See [the pits](#).

it's the thought that counts One's good intentions are more important than one's actions. Typically said when something has gone wrong or has not worked out as one had hoped. *Your grandmother couldn't make it to your recital because her car wouldn't start, but she really wanted to be there, and it's the thought that counts. A: "But I wanted a toy for my birthday, not a sweater." B: "It's the thought that counts, Benjamin. Your grandmother spent a lot of time making it for you."*

it's tipping down See [be tipping \(it\) down](#).

(it's/there's) no use crying over spilt milk It does no good to get upset over a bad decision or unfortunate event that has already come to pass and cannot be changed. *We were pretty disappointed to have lost the championship game, but there's no use crying over spilt milk. We just have to train harder for next season! I know you really wanted that job, but you weren't hired, so it's no use crying over spilt milk now. I was such a fool to take out that second mortgage. Oh well, no use crying over spilt milk!*

itsy-bitsy (modifier) Very small or petite; tiny. *May I have an itsy-bitsy bite of your salmon? I just want a taste of it. How can you be afraid of such an itsy-itsy spider?*

an ivory tower See [an/\(one's\) ivory tower](#).

izit See [is it](#).

J

jack all Nothing, or close to nothing. *I hate coming back to my hometown, there's jack all to do around here!*

jack it in To quit or abandon something, especially an endeavor or enterprise. Can also be worded as "jack in something." Primarily heard in UK. *After two years, Janet was ready to jack it in at the firm. We're going to have to jack it in if we can't secure more funding for our project.*

Jack Ketch An executioner, particularly for deaths by hanging. John Ketch was a real hangman in 17th-century England. *If I lose this account, my boss is going to become Jack Ketch—I'm doomed.*

jack of all trades A person who is skilled in many different areas. *My father could fix cars, build furniture, and program computers—he was a jack of all trades.*

jack of all trades, master of none A person who is able to do many things but does not have a high amount of skill in any one area. A: "My brother can play several instruments, but none very well." B: "You know what they say—jack of all trades, master of none."

jack off 1. noun vulgar slang A thoroughly incompetent, foolish, bumbling, or useless person. *I can't believe that jack off got elected to the Senate! Get off the road before you kill someone, jack off!* 2. verb vulgar slang To masturbate or bring someone to orgasm, especially a male. 3. verb vulgar slang To waste or pass time idly or by doing nothing. *Would you quit jackin' off and help me move this sofa out to the truck?*

jack o'lantern A pumpkin that has a face carved into it and is lit from within (usually by candles) so that the "face" glows. Typically used as a Halloween decoration. *We're carving a jack o'lantern tonight so we can put it outside our door on Halloween.*

jack (something) in To quit or abandon (something), especially an endeavor or enterprise. Can also be worded as "jack in something." Primarily heard in UK. *We're going to have to jack this project in if we can't secure more funding. After two years, Janet was ready to jack in her job at the firm.*

Jack Tar A slang term for a sailor. *I hardly ever see my brother now that he's a Jack Tar and constantly traveling.*

Jack the Lad A confident, carefree young man. Primarily heard in UK. *Jim's a bit of a Jack the Lad—he likes his job as a bicycle courier and doesn't care what anybody else thinks.*

jailbait Someone who is attractive but younger than the legal age of consent. *I'd stay away from jailbait like her unless you want to spend your future days in a cell!*

jailbreak To remove restrictions from an electronic device, typically a cell phone, so that one can use unauthorized software on it. *I need someone to jailbreak my phone so that I can configure it the way I want.*

jailbroken Capable of using unauthorized software due to having had restrictions removed, as of a cell phone or other electronic device. *I need to get a jailbroken phone so that I can configure it the way I want.*

jam sandwich **1.** Literally, two pieces of bread with jam in between them. Primarily heard in UK. *When I was a kid, my family was very poor, and we ate jam sandwiches every day.* **2.** slang A police car. Primarily heard in UK. *Slow down, there's a jam sandwich up ahead!*

jam (something) down (someone's) throat **1.** Literally, to compel or physically force someone to swallow something. *I hate how doctors try to jam pills down your throat for even the tiniest of colds. The government has come under fire for ordering prison staff to jam food down the hunger strikers' throats.* **2.** To force, compel, or attempt to make someone accept, endure, consider, or agree with/to something. *I hate going to my friend's house, because his husband's always jamming conservative rhetoric down my throat. Look, I'm just browsing around for a car—quit trying to jam one down my throat!*

Jane Roe The name given to a female whose real name is not known or cannot be revealed, as in legal proceedings. *Have they reached a decision in the Jane Roe case yet?*

jarring experience An experience that creates an acute sense of shock, confusion, or bewilderment. *That car accident was such a jarring experience, I don't know if I'll be able to sleep for days. You need better use of transitional sentences in your paper. Jumping from point to point like that*

will be a jarring experience for the reader.

a jaundiced eye A biased view. *I used to think that Chris was a good kid, but ever since I overheard him bragging about cheating on an exam, I've seen him with a jaundiced eye.*

jaw away To talk incessantly and/or at great length. *I became so bored while the professor jawed away at us that I nearly fell asleep in the middle of the lecture. Whenever I meet up with Tammy, our "conversation" is always just her jawing away while I listen patiently on.*

jawn slang A catchall term used to refer to any specific item or event. Though the thing referred to is not specified by the speaker, it is understood by the listener due to context. Almost exclusively heard in the Philadelphia area. *Yo, hand me that jawn. You going to that jawn later?*

je ne sais quoi A positive or pleasant quality that is difficult to define. This French phrase translates to "I don't know what" in English. *She had a certain je ne sais quoi that men found quite attractive.*

Jekyll and Hyde A person whose personality drastically changes between good and bad. A reference to the main character in the book *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* by Robert Louis Stevenson. *Ever since Kyle became a teenager, he's turned into a real Jekyll and Hyde, and it's impossible to anticipate his mood at any given time.*

jerk off **1.** noun vulgar slang A thoroughly incompetent, foolish, bumbling, or useless person. *I can't believe that jerk off got elected to the Senate! Get off the road before you kill someone, jerk off!* **2.** verb vulgar slang To masturbate or bring someone to orgasm, especially a male. **3.** verb vulgar slang To waste or pass time idly or by doing nothing. *Would you quit jerkin' off and help me move this sofa out to the truck?*

jerk (one's) chain To tease someone, often by trying to convince him or her of something untrue. *Quit jerking my chain, I know there isn't a Hollywood director calling me right now. I love jerking my sister's chain—it's almost too easy to annoy her.*

Jersey justice A punishment or act of justice that is or appears to be much more severe than the offence warrants. Primarily heard in UK. *Twenty years in jail for stealing a car? That sounds like Jersey justice to me.*

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph! An exclamation of shock, surprise, or

exasperation. *Jesus, Mary, and Joseph! Don't sneak up on me like that—you scared me half to death! I mean, Jesus, Mary, and Joseph! Does my boss expect me to be on the clock 24 hours a day?*

the jet set A group of wealthy individuals who travel globally, especially by private jet, to frequent fashionable resorts, social events, and the like. *Mark's dream of joining the jet set finally came to fruition after he won the lottery.*

jet-set (modifier) Of or pertaining to a group of wealthy individuals who travel globally, especially by private jet, to frequent fashionable resorts, social events, and the like. *Mark's dream of living the jet-set life finally came to fruition after he won the lottery.*

jet-setter A wealthy individual who travels globally, especially by private jet, to frequent fashionable resorts, social events, and the like. *Mark's dream of becoming a jet-setter finally came to fruition after he won the lottery.*

jet-setting 1. (modifier) Of or pertaining to a group of wealthy individuals who travel globally, especially by private jet, to frequent fashionable resorts and social events. *Mark's dream of living the jet-setting life finally came to fruition after he won the lottery.* **2.** noun The actions or lifestyle of wealthy individuals who travel globally, especially by private jet, to frequent fashionable resorts and social events; such travel in itself. *Mark's dream of jet-setting finally came to fruition after he won the lottery.*

(one's) jig is up One's plan or scheme has been discovered and/or thwarted; one's game, trick, or deception is at an end. A variant of the much more common phrase "the jig is up." *Your jig is up, Senator Marten! Your tax evasion has been found out, and the police are here to escort you to prison. We were going to play a practical joke on David, but when he noticed our car parked out front, I knew that our jig was up.*

the jig is up The plan or scheme has been discovered and/or thwarted; the game, trick, or deception is at an end. *The jig is up, Smith! The police found your fingerprints all over the safe. We tried to smuggle a kitten into the house, but when mom saw me carrying a saucer of milk, I knew that the jig was up.*

jig (it) To absent oneself or leave early (from school or work) when one would normally be required to be there; to play truant. Primarily heard in Australia. *I was so restless and bored at work that I decided to just jig it after*

lunch without telling anyone. Hey, Jim and I are planning on jiggling from school on Friday, do you want to come with us? That's the last time you jig class, mister! From now on, I'm dropping you to school every morning!

a Jill of all trades is a master of none A woman who is somewhat skilled in or adept at a wide variety of tasks or abilities will not have the time or dedication to become truly masterful in any one thing. The female equivalent of the proverb "a Jack of all trades is a master of none." *Mary just sort of floated between different interests after she left high school, but never really developed anything career-worthy. A Jill of all trades is a master of none, as they say.*

Jill of all trades(, master of none) A woman who is skilled in or adept at a wide variety of tasks or abilities (i.e., the female equivalent of "Jack of all trades"). If used with "master of none," it implies that while competent in a variety of things, she is not highly skilled in a particular one. *I've had all sorts of different jobs through the years, so I consider myself quite a Jill of all trades! Mary just sort of floated between different interests after she left high school—a Jill of all trades, but master of none.*

jiminy cricket A minced oath for "Jesus Christ," expressing surprise, shock, or astonishment. *Jiminy cricket, the bill for that dinner is nearly \$200! We won the lottery? Jiminy cricket, that's amazing news!*

job lot Miscellaneous items bought or sold together in one group. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *Joe bought a job lot of car parts at the local swap meet.*

Job's comforter Someone who makes a person feel worse about a situation when trying to offer sympathy. A reference to the Biblical story of Job, who showed great faith amid difficult circumstances. *Larry is a real Job's comforter. I know he was just trying to offer comforting words, but he made Maggie feel worse about her financial situation.*

Joe Average The average, ordinary, or typical person. Primarily heard in US. *The inner workings of congress might be familiar to a political science student like yourself, but to Joe Average, it is often a completely unknown process. We strive to ensure that our computers can handle the highest demands of an IT professional but still remain accessible to Joe Average.*

joe job 1. Any uninteresting, unstimulating, or unrewarding job, task, or activity. Primarily heard in US. *I thought that this internship would give me*

some insight into the world of investment banking, but mostly I've just been given joe jobs around the office. 2. Any menial or low-class job, especially one that is low-paying. Primarily heard in Canada. I took on all sorts of joe jobs to support myself while I was in university.

Joe Sixpack An average guy, typically of the working class. *My brother's just your typical guy, a real Joe Sixpack—you can find him watching a sporting event in a bar after work pretty much any night of the week.*

jog on **1.** Literally, to run along at a slow and deliberate pace. *We were running a little late for class, so we jogged on from the library toward the lecture hall. 2.* By extension, to make progress slowly, deliberately, or patiently. *Though the economic downturn hurt the company's profits, we've been able to keep jogging on until things begin to improve. 3.* Go away; get lost; beat it. Primarily heard in UK. *Jog on, you lout! Quit disturbing our customers!*

jog the/(someone's) mind To stimulate someone's memory or mental acuity. *It's important for children to begin reading early, as it will jog their minds as they develop. Creating little mnemonic devices can help to jog the mind when you are studying for an exam.*

John Thomas slang A man's penis. Primarily heard in UK. *The footballer lay on the ground in agony after being struck in the John Thomas by a defender's foot.*

johnny slang A condom. Primarily heard in UK, Ireland. *Remember, mate: only a fool doesn't wear a johnny on a one-night stand. In an effort to promote safe sexual practices, the student union began handing out rubber johnnies to everyone passing by.*

Johnny-come-lately A newcomer or late arrival to a group or activity. *The rest of the staff wasn't too fond of Greg, a Johnny-come-lately who received praise from the manager after just one week on the job. Hurry up, Johnny-come-lately, we've already started today's drills!*

Johnny One-Note Someone who repeatedly expresses or maintains a strong opinion on a single or a few particular subjects. Primarily heard in US, Canada. *Every time I get together with Janet, she gets into some rant about how much she hates the government. She's become such a Johnny One-Note lately!*

join the majority euphemism To die. A: "I heard there was a death in your family." B: "Oh yeah, some distant relative joined the majority."

joking aside See [\(all\) joking aside](#).

jolly (someone) along To encourage someone (to do something), especially in a positive, cheerful manner. *I was getting disheartened writing my first novel, but my husband jollied me along to finish it.*

jolly (someone) into (doing) (something) To persuade or encourage someone to do something, especially in a positive, cheerful manner. *I was getting disheartened writing my first novel, but my husband jollied me into finishing it. I'd been feeling pretty low after my breakup with Tina, so I'm glad my friends jollied me into a weekend away in Los Vegas.*

jolly (someone) up To make (someone) happier or more cheerful; to cheer (someone) up. *My mom tried jollying us up by taking us out for pizza after our team lost the championship. After his divorce, we all thought Ted could do with some jollying up.*

jot and tittle The smallest detail(s). "Jot," derived from the word for the Greek letter "iota," is a small amount, while a "tittle" is the dot over a lowercase i. *Make sure every jot and tittle in the contract is perfect. We can't lose money over some typo or technicality.*

a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step A daunting task can usually be started by doing a simple thing. *I'm feeling really overwhelmed about my research project, but I have to start somewhere, since a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.*

a joy to behold A thing, event, or experience that creates a profound sense of joy or elation in the spectator. *The spring flowers in this part of the country are truly a joy to behold. The play was a joy to behold, full of beauty, warmth, and wit.*

Judas kiss A traitorous action disguised as a show of affection. The phrase alludes to the Biblical account of the betrayal of Jesus by Judas, who kissed Jesus to identify him to the authorities arresting him. *Don't try to be my friend now, it's just a Judas kiss! I know you're trying to get more information out of me so you can report it to the headmaster!*

judgment call 1. A subjective decision made based on one's own experience or viewpoint. *Because of the impending snowstorm, it was a*

judgment call whether I should attempt driving to work. 2. In sports, a decision made by a game official based on what they have seen take place. The decision to issue the team a penalty was definitely a judgment call by the referee.

jug-eared Having ears that stick out markedly from the side of the head, thus resembling the handles of a jug. *I was pretty goofy-looking as a kid, jug-eared, bespectacled, and lanky as I was.*

jug ears Ears that stick out markedly from the side of the head, thus resembling the handles of a jug. *At first I thought his jug ears were pretty goofy-looking, but I've actually come to regard them as quite cute!*

a juggling act A difficult and/or precarious situation in which several things are being attempted or must be maintained at the same time. *I think I need to hire an assistant, because keeping track of all these accounts and transactions on my own has become quite a juggling act!*

jump at the chance (to do something) To accept or seize with alacrity an opportunity (to do something). *Mark complains about his teaching job a lot, but I knew if he were offered a tenured position in the school, he would jump at the chance. When our manager said she was leaving the company, I jumped at the chance to fill the job.*

jump at the opportunity (to do something) To accept or seize with alacrity an opportunity (to do something). *Mark complains about his teaching job a lot, but I knew if he were offered a tenured position in the school, he would jump at the opportunity. When our manager said she was leaving the company, I jumped at the opportunity to fill the job.*

jump in (one's) skin To start or recoil, as from shock, surprise, or fear. *I positively jumped in my skin when I heard the door bang open in the middle of the night.*

jump in the deep end To begin doing something very complex and/or unfamiliar, especially suddenly and without guidance, assistance, or preparation. *A: "But I've never worked in sales before!" B: "You'll be fine, just jump in the deep end and try your best!" I'm a little nervous about starting my graduate degree program, but I'm determined to jump into the deep end and give it a go. Those who go the furthest in life are the ones willing to jump in at the deep end when a great opportunity arises.*

jump rope To jump or skip repeatedly over a length of rope, cord, or the like, which is swung over and around the jumper's entire body by the jumper or two others. *One of our favorite things to do when we were little was to jump rope! Even as an adult, jumping rope is a great form of exercise!*

jump the shark 1. In television programming, to resort to using an obvious or unbelievable gimmick in a scene, episode, or storyline as a means of maintaining viewership, especially when the show's quality and/or popularity has begun to decline. The phrase alludes to the sitcom *Happy Days*, in which the character Fonzie (Henry Winkler) jumps over a shark on water-skis in the fifth season. *This show used to have some of the wittiest writing in television, but they really jumped the shark when they introduced a contrived alien invasion in the seventh season.* 2. By extension, to signal, especially through a conspicuous activity, event, or maneuver, a decline in the progress or evolution of something (e.g., a company, a brand, a political endeavor, etc.). *The global tech giant, whose smartphone brand transformed the everyday technological landscape, seems to have jumped the shark this week when they revealed a line of computer-synced sneakers touted as their new flagship product. The governor was accused of jumping the shark during his re-election campaign by joining in with the cheerleading squad at his former high school's football game.*

jumped-up slang Glorified. The phrase is used to describe someone who acts or is thought to be more important or powerful than they really are. Primarily heard in UK. *I can't believe she's trying to tell me what to do, when she's just a jumped-up intern! These days, it feels like the prime minister is nothing more than a jumped-up headmaster.*

jungle telegraph An informal means of communication or information, especially gossip. Used most commonly in the phrase "hear (something) on the jungle telegraph." (Analogous to "hear (something) through the grapevine.") Primarily heard in UK. *I heard on the jungle telegraph that Stacy and Mark are getting a divorce! A: "How do you know the company is going bust?" B: "I heard it on the jungle telegraph."*

junk in the trunk slang Additional fat in one's buttocks (typically on a woman). The term is used both positively and negatively. Primarily heard in US. *I like a curvy woman, one with a little junk in the trunk! I need to start working out again—I've got too much junk in the trunk these days.*

junkyard dog An especially nasty, vicious, or savage person or animal (especially a dog). Of a person, often used in the phrase "meaner than a junkyard dog." *Though he's always polite when he's in public, Tim's husband is meaner than a junkyard dog behind closed doors. That standard poodle may look cute and fluffy, but it's a junkyard dog, you can be sure about that.*

just a pretty face See [be just a pretty face](#).

just a stone's throw See [stone's throw](#).

just another pretty face See [be just another pretty face](#).

just another pretty face A phrase said of someone who is physically attractive but lacks any distinguishing achievements, intelligence, abilities, or other personal characteristics. The phrase is often used in the negative to mean the opposite ("not just another pretty face"). *Tiffany might be popular because of her looks now, but once we're out of college she's going to be just another pretty face.*

(just) as I expected As I anticipated or suspected. The phrase is often said with a note of annoyance or frustration. *My mother stole all the attention at my birthday party, just as I expected. As I expected, I didn't get the promotion. The boss just doesn't like me.*

just as well See [\(it's\) just as well \(that\) \(something happened\)](#).

(just) between you and me What is going to be or has been said should not be told to anyone else. This phrase is usually said along with information that needs to be kept secret. *I overheard the boss talking to her secretary last night and, just between you and me, she's giving the promotion to George after all. Between you and me, Stephanie is not as qualified for this job as she claims to be.*

just deserts That which one deserves, especially a punishment or unfavorable outcome. Usually used in the phrase "get/receive one's just deserts." (Note: The phrase is often misspelled as "just desserts," due to the pronunciation of "deserts" and "desserts" being the same in this context.) *The CEO cheated his clients out of nearly \$4 million, but he got his just deserts when he was stripped of everything he owned and sent to prison.*

(someone) (just) doesn't know when to quit Someone would be better off not doing something or acting a certain way because it is or may become destructive, counterproductive, futile, or undesirable. *Mark keeps*

antagonizing the boss with little snarky quips—he just doesn't know when to quit! My wife keeps spending our money on clothes she doesn't even wear. She doesn't know when to quit! That's the third time you've berated me for not taking out the garbage. You just don't know when to quit, do you?

just the same See [be just the same \(to someone\)](#).

just (you) wait (and see)! You will see that what I have told you or predicted will turn out to be true eventually. *I know you're going to get that job, just you wait! Just wait and see, I bet Susan has completely forgiven you by now. You're going to regret the day you ever crossed me, just you wait and see!*

(just/right) up (one's) street Ideally suited to one's interests. *Anna loves watching movies, so I'm sure she'll go to the film festival with you—that's right up her street.*

justice delayed is justice denied Justice served at a later time has as little impact as justice not being served at all. A: *"We need to get this matter before a judge quickly."* B: *"Of course. Justice delayed is justice denied."*

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K

ka me, ka thee Help me, and I'll help you. The phrase is likely Scottish in origin. *If you drive me to work today, I'll buy you pizza this weekend. Ka me, ka thee, right?*

kangaroo court An unofficial court or a court that disregards current laws and conducts unfair trials. *People who live under oppressive regimes are often treated harshly by corrupt kangaroo courts that don't abide by the law.*

keep a cool head To maintain a calm demeanor and think clearly in a difficult, stressful, or troubling situation. *I know you're anxious about this midterm exam, but just remember what we've gone over and try to keep a cool head. You have to keep a cool head during business negotiations or else you may end up getting the short end of the stick.*

keep a sharp lookout (for something or someone) To remain vigilant or carefully watchful (for something or someone). *They should be arriving any minute, so keep a sharp lookout. Keep a sharp lookout for a Christmas present we could give your mother. Keep a sharp lookout for the health inspector, we heard he'll be doing a surprise inspection someday soon.*

keep a weather eye open An instruction to monitor someone or something, often because the person or thing in question may turn out to be dangerous. *I think Tom's a thief, so keep a weather eye open around him. I'd keep a weather eye open with this storm that's brewing—we may have to evacuate.*

keep abreast of something To remain closely informed about something; to follow the developments of something or some situation. *As a news correspondent for the region, it's my job to keep abreast of any changes in the political landscape here. The boss likes to keep abreast of all our projects, even down to the most mundane detail.*

keep an eye open Watch for something carefully; be attentive to something. *I'm turning onto your street now, so keep an eye open. Please*

keep an eye open for any information pertaining to this case.

keep an eye peeled (for something or someone) To remain vigilant or carefully watchful (for something or someone). *They should be arriving any minute, so keep an eye peeled. Keep an eye peeled for a Christmas present we could give your mother. Keep an eye peeled for the health inspector, we heard he'll be doing a surprise inspection someday soon.*

keep astride of (something) To remain closely informed about something; to follow the developments of something or some situation. *As a news correspondent for the region, it's my job to keep astride of any changes in the political landscape here. The boss likes to keep astride of all our projects, even down to the most mundane detail.*

keep busy See [keep \(one\) busy](#).

keep cards close to chest See [keep \(one's\) cards close to \(one's\) chest](#).

keep cards close to vest See [keep \(one's\) cards close to \(one's\) vest](#).

keep clear of Stay away from or avoid (something). *Keep clear of your brother, he's very irritable today. If you boys are going to play outside, please keep clear of the street.*

keep close to chest See [keep \(something\) close to \(one's\) chest](#).

keep cool 1. To stay calm. In this usage, a possessive pronoun is often used between "keep" and "cool." *You know they're going to try to antagonize you during the debate, so just keep cool. I always try to keep my cool when dealing with the cable company.* 2. Literally, to not get overly hot, as in hot weather. A: "How have you been during this brutal heat wave?" B: "Oh, keeping cool, thanks to the air conditioning in the office."

keep dangling See [keep \(one\) dangling](#).

keep end of the bargain See [keep \(up\) \(one's\) end of the bargain](#).

keep eye peeled See [keep \(one's\) eye\(s\) peeled \(for something or someone\)](#).

keep from See [keep something from \(someone\)](#).

keep hair on See [keep \(one's\) hair on](#).

keep hands off See [keep \(one's\) hands off \(something or someone\)](#).

keep head below the parapet See [keep \(one's\) head below the parapet](#).

keep him in the dark See [keep \(someone\) in the dark \(about something\)](#).

keep him in the loop See [keep \(someone\) in the loop](#).

keep him in the picture See [keep \(someone\) in the picture](#).

keep him on a short leash See [keep \(someone\) on a short leash](#).

keep him on ice See [keep \(someone\) on ice](#).

keep him under her thumb See [keep \(someone\) under \(one's\) thumb](#).

keep his side of the bargain See [keep \(up\) \(one's\) side of the bargain](#).

keep in step with the times To be, strive to be, or appear to be contemporary, fashionable, and/or relevant in modern times. *There are as many who want the church to maintain its traditional values as there are those who think it must keep in step with the times. As information becomes more readily available in a digital format, publishers are going to have to change their methods if they want to keep in step with the times.*

keep in touch 1. To maintain contact with another person, especially at intervals so as to remain up to date with each other's lives. *My old high school friends and I tried keeping in touch once we graduated, but we all started drifting apart once college got underway. Now, make sure you keep in touch. I want to hear all about your time in Paris!* **2.** An informal parting phrase, especially with someone one isn't likely to see again anytime soon. *OK, Deborah, thank you for your audition. Keep in touch! It was so good to see you again, cousin Jeb—keep in touch!*

keep in with (someone) To attempt to maintain a friendly relationship with someone, especially if that person may be of some benefit or help. *I've tried to keep in with the managing editor from my previous job, as she has a lot of useful business contacts from across the state.*

keep it between the ditches 1. To drive safely; to stay on the road. (Usually said imperatively.) *Whoa there, son. I know you're only just learning, but try to keep it between the ditches!* **2.** To behave properly or

appropriately; to stay out of trouble or harm's way; keep to the straight and narrow. (Often said imperatively.) *Okay, Bob, I'll see you after you're back from your trip. Keep it between the ditches now, you hear?*

keep it on the down low See [keep \(something\) on the down low](#).

keep it on the hush See [keep \(something\) on the hush](#).

keep it on the hush-hush See [keep \(something\) on the hush-hush](#).

keep mum To remain silent; to not say anything (e.g., about a secret). *Make sure you kids keep mum in there or you're both grounded! You have to keep mum about Dave's retirement party—we want it to be a surprise.*

keep my cool See [keep cool](#).

keep (one) busy **1.** To stay active and engaged in many pursuits. *I haven't seen you in so long! Have you been keeping busy? A: "How have you been?" B: "Oh, you know, keeping busy. That's what happens when you have three kids!" I try to keep busy when I'm off during the summer, but many days I find myself just wallowing in the pool. **2.** To ensure that one is occupied. In this usage, a person's name or pronoun appears between "keep" and "busy." *Keep the kids busy while I wrap these presents. I've been trying to keep myself busy while I look for a job, but I won't lie, the days are long. I'm sure all this homework will keep you busy.**

keep (one) dangling To maintain some form of relationship with someone without revealing one's true feelings or intentions; to keep someone in an uncertain position. *If you don't want to marry him, then you have to tell him that—you can't keep him dangling any longer! A: "I'm never going to get a promotion, am I?" B: "With the way the boss keeps you dangling, I doubt it."*

keep one jump ahead To gain an advantageous position (over another person or an impending occurrence) by being proactive. *I'm studying hard to keep one jump ahead of Christine, who is my main competition for valedictorian. I'm going to leave early and take the side streets so I can keep one jump ahead of the traffic.*

keep (one) on (one's) toes To force someone to stay active, alert, and focused on something or someone. *Having two kids under age five sure keeps me on my toes!*

keep (one's) cards close to (one's) chest To keep one's plans,

intentions, or information secret from everyone else. Refers to holding one's playing cards close to one's chest in a game, so as not to allow other players to see one's hand. *We're all curious about what the boss has been discussing in those meetings with the lawyers, but she's been keeping her cards close to her chest. Sorry for not being more straightforward about my plans, but I'm keeping my cards close to my chest for the time being.*

keep (one's) cards close to (one's) vest To keep one's plans, intentions, or tactics secret from everyone else. Refers to holding one's playing cards close to one's chest in a card game, so as not to allow other players to see one's hand. *We're all curious about what the boss has been discussing in those meetings with the lawyers, but she's keeping her cards close to her vest. Sorry for not being more straightforward about my plans, but I'm keeping my cards close to my vest for the time being.*

keep (one's) eye(s) peeled (for something or someone) To remain vigilant or carefully watchful (for something or someone). *They should be arriving any minute, so keep your eyes peeled. Keep your eye peeled for a birthday gift we could give your mother. Tell everyone to keep their eyes peeled for the health inspector. We heard she'll be doing a surprise inspection someday soon.*

keep (one's) hair on To remain patient and calm, especially when beginning to become angry or upset with impatience. Usually said as an imperative. Primarily heard in UK. *Yeah, yeah, keep your hair on! I'll have the report finished by the end of the day! A: "That lady is pestering us about getting her car back today." B: "We need another day to get it fixed. Tell her to keep her hair on!"*

keep (one's) hands off (something or someone) 1. To refrain from touching or handling (something or someone). (Usually said imperatively.) *You kids keep your hands off those cookies, they're for after dinner! I have every right to be on this property, so keep your hands off me! That television is brand new, so keep your hands off!* 2. To refrain from becoming involved with or attempting to take or control (something or someone). (Usually said imperatively.) *That rotten bank had better keep its hands off my land! Listen, buddy, keep your hands off my sister, you hear?*

keep (one's) head below the parapet To hide or remain inconspicuous in an attempt to avoid trouble or danger. *I wouldn't say*

anything right now—just keep your head below the parapet for the time being.

keep (one's) lips sealed To not say anything (about something); to keep (something) a secret. *Please keep your lips sealed about our engagement, we aren't ready to tell everybody just yet.*

keep (one's) paws off (something or someone) 1. To refrain from touching or handling (something or someone). Usually said imperatively. *You kids keep your paws off those cookies. They're for after dinner! I told you I wasn't interested, so keep your paws off me, you creep! That car is brand new, so keep your paws off!* 2. To refrain from becoming involved with or attempting to take or control (something or someone). Usually said imperatively. *That rotten bank had better keep its paws off my land! Listen, buddy, keep your paws off my sister, you hear?*

keep (one's) slate clean To maintain an impeccable record; to refrain from committing any mistakes or wrongdoings. *If Jeremy can keep his slate clean from now until his next hearing, they might be willing to release him from prison on parole. I know my time in rehab will work against me in the election, but I've kept my slate clean since then.*

keep (one's) socks on To remain patient and calm, especially when beginning to become angry or upset with impatience. Usually said as an imperative. *Yeah, yeah, keep your socks on! I'll have the report finished by the end of the day!* A: *"That lady is pestering us about getting her car back today."* B: *"We need another day to get it fixed. Tell her to keep her socks on!"*

keep open house To have one's house in a state or condition in which visitors or guests are welcome at any time. *We keep open house, so please just drop by whenever you like. It really threw the neighborhood off-kilter the way the Millers kept open house, with people arriving and departing at all hours.*

keep out of sight To remain unseen, as by hiding or evasion. *The thief kept out of sight while the police searched the nearby neighborhoods. The enemy troops are approaching. Keep out of sight until they're within striking distance.*

keep out of trouble 1. To not misbehave. *You boys keep out of trouble! I don't want to hear about any foolishness. You've kept out of trouble all year,*

so I think you deserve a reward. **2. jocular** To perform one's normal activities. A: "What have you been up to?" B: "Oh, just keeping out of trouble." I haven't seen you in so long! Been keeping out of trouble?

keep schtum To remain silent; to not say anything. (Used especially when by saying something, especially at the wrong time, one would cause trouble or difficulty for him- or herself.) Primarily heard in UK. *It's better to just keep schtum when the boss starts flinging accusations than risk further incensing him.*

keep (someone) in the dark (about something) To keep someone uninformed (about something); to exclude someone from full knowledge or disclosure (of something). *Keeping taxpayers in the dark about how their money is being spent is not how government should operate. I don't fully trust John to keep our plan a secret, so I think it best that we keep him in the dark for now.*

keep (someone) in the loop To keep someone informed about and/or involved in something, such as a plan or project, especially that which involves or pertains to a specific group. *We've hired a new intern to help you with data entry, so be sure to keep her in the loop about the project.*

keep (someone) in the picture To keep someone informed or up to date (about something); to keep someone involved in or aware of what is going on. *Just make sure you keep the boss in the picture about the status of the project. I want to be kept in the picture when those stolen goods are sold. Don't cut me out of the profit!*

keep (someone) on a short leash To maintain strict or tight control over someone; to not allow someone very much independence or autonomy. *Ever since George nearly lost his life savings in a drunken poker match, his husband started keeping him on a short leash. The boss has kept her assistant on a short leash ever since she hired her.*

keep (someone) on ice **1.** To postpone or delay acting on or interacting with a person. *I know that journalist has been persistent in getting a comment from us for his story, but we'll just have to keep him on ice until the trial is over.* **2.** To detain or confine a person in isolation, especially before or during the course of interrogation or torture. *The group kept their prisoner on ice for nearly a week before beginning their interrogation. We're keeping the snitch on ice until the boss decides what to do with him.*

keep (someone) under (one's) thumb To maintain authoritarian control over someone; to continually force someone to submit to one's will. *They seem happy when they're out and about, but I hear that Johnny keeps his husband under his thumb at home. Although the job was well paying, I couldn't stand the way the boss kept me under his thumb.*

keep (something) close to (one's) chest To keep one's plans, intentions, or tactics secret from everyone else. Refers to holding one's playing cards close to one's chest in a card game, so as not to allow other players to see one's hand. *We're all curious about what the boss has been discussing in those meetings with the lawyers, but she's keeping it close to her chest. Sorry for not being more straightforward about my plans, but I'm keeping this one close to the chest for the time being.*

keep something from (someone) To prevent someone from learning or finding out something; to keep something a secret from someone. *I was going to find out you'd spent the money eventually, so I don't understand why you tried to keep it from me. I get the feeling you're not telling me everything. What are you keeping from me?*

keep (something) on the down low To keep something in a state of secrecy or minimal public knowledge; to not share something with anyone else. *Keep this on the down-low, but Janet is planning to break up with Kevin next week.*

keep (something) on the hush To keep something in a state of secrecy or minimal public knowledge; to allow something to be known only by a select few people. *I need to tell you something, but you have to keep it on the hush, OK? I just found out John and Tracey are getting married soon, but I have to keep the news on the hush!*

keep (something) on the hush-hush To keep something in a state of secrecy or minimal public knowledge; to allow something to be known only by a select few people. *I need to tell you something, but you have to keep it on the hush-hush, OK? I just found out John and Tracey are getting married soon, but I have to keep the news on the hush-hush!*

keep (something) straight (in one's mind/head) To be able to understand something clearly and comprehensively; to keep the details of something clear in one's mind. *This project is getting so out of control. I can barely keep it straight in my mind anymore! I'm no good at lying because I*

can never keep my story straight!

keep step Move as quickly as others are; keep pace. *Dancers in the back, please keep step! Your legs are so long, how can I possibly keep step with you?*

keep the lid on (something) To quash or suppress something; to control something so as to keep it from flourishing, increasing, or succeeding. *We need to keep the lid on rumors about the company going bankrupt. We decided to keep the lid on the project as we didn't have enough funds to see it through to the end.*

keep under cover 1. Literally, to stay beneath a shelter of some kind, typically to avoid inclement weather. *A: "How did you stay so dry in this downpour?" B: "I've been keeping under cover here, like we were supposed to!"* 2. To hide something (often one's true identity or motives) from others. *I need to keep under cover on this assignment so no one learns that I'm a spy.*

keep (up) (one's) end of the bargain To do as was promised in an agreement or bargain; to carry through with what one agreed to do. Also worded as "keep one's end of the bargain up." *OK, I've delivered the cash as you instructed. Now you have to keep your end of the bargain! We've done the work on our end. I just hope their team keeps up their end of the bargain! My dad said he'd buy me a car if I got a 4.0 this semester, so I've got to ace this test if I want to keep my end of the bargain up.*

keep (up) (one's) side of the bargain To do as was promised in an agreement or bargain; to carry through with what one agreed to do. Also worded as "keep one's side of the bargain up." *OK, I've delivered the cash as you instructed. Now you have to keep your side of the bargain! We've done the work on our side. I just hope their team keeps up their side of the bargain! My dad said he'd buy me a car if I got a 4.0 this semester, so I've got to ace this test if I want to keep my side of the bargain up.*

keep up with the times To strive to be or appear contemporary, fashionable, and/or relevant in modern times. *As information becomes more readily available in a digital format, publishers are going to have to change their methods if they want to keep up with the times. I might be your grandmother, but I keep up with the times.*

keep us dangling See [keep \(one\) dangling](#).

keep us on our toes See [keep \(one\) on \(one's\) toes](#).

keep weather eye open See [keep a weather eye open](#).

keep your breath to cool your porridge Focus on yourself and your life, rather than other people's lives and issues. *Lady Martha, I strongly suggest that you keep your breath to cool your porridge, rather than intruding upon these affairs.*

keep your cards close to your chest See [keep \(one's\) cards close to \(one's\) chest](#).

keep your cards close to your vest See [keep \(one's\) cards close to \(one's\) vest](#).

keep your cool See [keep cool](#).

keep your eye peeled See [keep \(one's\) eye\(s\) peeled \(for something or someone\)](#).

keep your friends close and your enemies closer Be very aware of your enemies' behavior in order to detect and avoid any malicious actions. A: "Why were you talking to Katie? I thought you hated her." B: "I'm trying to see if she has any dirt on me for the student council debate. Keep your friends close and your enemies closer, right?"

keep your hair on See [keep \(one's\) hair on](#).

keep your hands off See [keep \(one's\) hands off \(something or someone\)](#).

keep your head below the parapet See [keep \(one's\) head below the parapet](#).

keep your lips sealed See [keep \(one's\) lips sealed](#).

keep your paws off See [keep \(one's\) paws off \(something or someone\)](#).

keep your rosaries off my ovaries slang A phrase that voices support for abortion rights and opposes the Catholic Church's pro-life stance. *I don't care what the church says—keep your rosaries off my ovaries!*

keep your slate clean See [keep \(one's\) slate clean](#).

keep your socks on See [keep \(one's\) socks on](#).

kept man A man who does not work and receives money and provisions from his romantic partner. *For years, Stella has had a much younger kept man that she brings to all the big events in the city.*

kept woman A woman who does not work and receives money and provisions from her romantic partner. *She never had any desire to be a kept woman so she worked hard to pursue her career.*

a kerb crawler See [curb-crawler](#).

a kernel of truth A singular element of truth or wisdom within a greater story, narrative, speech, or claim, especially when most or all other elements are fictitious or of questionable veracity. *I think the governor's speech is a bunch of hogwash by and large, but there is a kernel of truth in what he said about the need for lower taxes.*

kewpie doll A doll with rosy cheeks and big eyes that was often distributed as a prize (at carnivals, for instance) in the 20th century. *Look, Mama, I won a kewpie doll playing that game over there!*

the keys to the kingdom A resource that will give the possessor access to the most complete or profound knowledge or power possible in a given area or pursuit. A reference to Matthew 16:19, when Jesus said to Peter: "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." *Whatever you do, don't lose this external hard drive with all of our accounts and passwords. Anyone who has it will have the keys to the kingdom! Whichever candidate reaches the most citizens at a fundamental, grassroots level will have the keys to the kingdom securely in hand.*

a kick at the can An opportunity to do, try, or achieve something. Primarily heard in Canada. *He might not have been elected to office this term, but he'll likely look for another kick at the can in November.*

a kick at the cat An opportunity to do, try, or achieve something. Primarily heard in Canada. *He might not have been elected to office this term, but he'll likely look for another kick at the cat in November.*

kick bollocks scramble A wild, chaotic, or panicked situation, especially among or involving many people simultaneously. Primarily heard in UK. *With funding from local councils spread so thin these days, it's always*

a kick bollocks scramble in December for charities to meet their yearly quota with donations. The whole pub descended into a kick bollocks scramble after one bloke threw a punch at another.

a kick in the balls **1.** vulgar A thoroughly devastating or disappointing setback or failure. *Losing the championship match was a real kick in the balls, but I knew I just had to train even harder and try again next year.* **2.** vulgar A harsh punishment (or remedy) for acting foolishly or malevolently. Usually used prescriptively (i.e., "(someone) needs a kick in the balls"). *Tim needs a kick in the balls for passing up such a fantastic job opportunity. Whoever has been spreading rumors about Cathy deserves a kick in the balls!*

kick in the butt A forceful gesture or message of some kind (usually delivered with good intentions) that acts as motivation to the (previously unmotivated) recipient. *These days, teenagers seem to need a swift kick in the butt to convince them to do well in school. That speeding ticket was the kick in the butt that Dan needed to get his driving under control.*

a kick in the face **1.** A thoroughly devastating or disappointing setback or failure. *Losing the championship match was a real kick in the face, but I knew I just had to train even harder and try again next year.* **2.** A harsh punishment (or remedy) for acting foolishly or malevolently. Usually used prescriptively (i.e., "(someone) needs a kick in the face"). *Tim needs a kick in the face for passing up such a fantastic job opportunity. Whoever has been spreading rumors about Cathy deserves a kick in the face!*

a kick in the head **1.** A thoroughly devastating or disappointing setback or failure. *Losing the championship match was a real kick in the head, but I knew I just had to train even harder and try again next year.* **2.** A harsh punishment (or remedy) for acting foolishly or malevolently. Usually used prescriptively (i.e., "(someone) needs a kick in the head"). *Tim needs a kick in the head for passing up such a fantastic job opportunity. Whoever has been spreading rumors about Cathy deserves a kick in the head.*

kick in the pants **1.** A forceful gesture or message of some kind (usually delivered with good intentions) that acts as motivation to the (previously unmotivated) recipient. *These days, teenagers seem to need a swift kick in the pants to convince them to do well in school. That speeding ticket was the kick in the pants that Dan needed to get his driving under*

control. **2.** A frustrating or unwelcome occurrence. *Having to move back in with my parents at age 40 is a real kick in the pants.*

kick in the shins **1.** A thoroughly devastating or disappointing setback or failure. *Losing the championship match was a real kick in the shins, but I knew I just had to train even harder and try again next year.* **2.** A harsh punishment (or remedy) for acting foolishly or malevolently. Usually used prescriptively (i.e., "(someone) needs a kick in the shins"). *Tim needs a kick in the shins for passing up such a fantastic job opportunity. Whoever has been spreading rumors about Cathy deserves a kick in the shins!*

kick in the teeth A humiliating disappointment or setback. *Losing my job after my car broke down was a real kick in the teeth.*

kick it **1.** To rid oneself of an addiction, especially to narcotics. *I never thought I'd be able to give up heroin, but with the support of my friends and family, I finally kicked it.* **2.** To relax or pass time idly; to hang out. *Hey, you want to come over and kick it later?*

kick (one) when (one) is down To criticize, exploit, insult, or otherwise treat badly someone who has already suffered a setback or is in a vulnerable position. *Can Jeff's employee review wait until next week? His girlfriend just left him, and I don't want to kick him while he's down.* A: "I'm sorry you got fired, but you shouldn't have been so sloppy with your work." B: "Wow, way to kick me when I'm down."

kick (someone or something) to the curb To discard, abandon, or dismiss someone or something that has become redundant, obsolete, useless, or unwanted. *I can't believe that after 20 years of hard work the company would just kick me to the curb like that! I think it's about time we kick this old computer to the curb. I heard Jenny kicked her boyfriend to the curb last night. They must have had an awful fight!*

kick (something) into touch **1.** In rugby or soccer, to kick the ball outside of the bounds of play (i.e., "into touch"). Primarily heard in UK. *Their team has been kicking the ball into touch much more frequently in these final minutes as they attempt to defend a narrow lead.* **2.** By extension, to halt or stall something, especially a plan or project, so as to postpone having to make a decision or action regarding it. Primarily heard in UK. *I say we kick the app release date into touch until we can all agree on a marketing plan for it.*

kick-start **1.** noun Literally, a metal bar on a motorcycle that one kicks down with one's foot in order to start the engine. Also called a "kick-starter." *Jake hit the kick-start and peeled out of town on his motorcycle.* **2.** noun An action or event that serves to start, reinvigorate, or reactivate some activity, system, or process. *Our productivity is beginning to slump. We need to come up with some kind of a kick-start for our employees.* **3.** verb Literally, to start a motorcycle by kicking down on a metal bar that activates the engine. *Please don't kick-start your bike until I'm firmly on the seat behind you!* **4.** verb By extension, to start, reinvigorate, or reactivate some activity, system, or process. *Politicians are hoping that the new stimulus package will help kick-start the economy.*

kick the can down the road Especially in politics, to postpone or defer a definitive action, decision, or solution, usually by effecting a short-term one instead. *It looks as though congress is going to kick the can down the road again on the debt ceiling issue, but they'll have to find a lasting solution eventually.*

kick the crap out of (someone) To strike or assault someone violently and severely. Chiefly informal and colloquial. *Hey, watch it, pal, or I'll kick the crap out of you! Two guys mugged me and then kicked the crap out of me last night.*

kick the tires To inspect or test something or someone to ensure that he, she, or it meets the required or expected standard of quality. Primarily heard in US, Canada. *You should always kick the tires of anything you plan to buy from someone online, or else you might end up buying a piece of junk! The boss always assigns difficult projects as a way of kicking the tires of new employees. We should hire a few interns to kick the tires on this app before we release it to the public.*

kick the wheels To inspect or test something or someone to ensure that he, she, or it meets the required or expected standard of quality. *You should always kick the wheels of anything you plan to buy from someone online, or else you might end up buying a piece of junk! The boss always assigns difficult projects as a way of kicking the wheels of new employees. We should hire a few interns to kick the wheels on this app before we release it to the public.*

kick tires To examine or inspect a second-hand car or cars for possible

purchase; to shop for used cars in general. *I always loved going to used car lots with my dad while he went around kicking tires. Our old van finally broke down, so I'm heading out this weekend to kick some tires.*

kick up the arse A forceful gesture or message of some kind (usually delivered with good intentions) that acts as motivation to the (previously unmotivated) recipient. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *The threat of divorce was the kick up the arse he needed to start working on improving his marriage.*

kick up the backside A forceful gesture or message of some kind (usually delivered with good intentions) that acts as motivation to the (previously unmotivated) recipient. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *The threat of divorce was the kick up the backside he needed to start working on improving his marriage.*

kick with the other foot **1.** To belong to a different religion or religious order, especially either Protestantism or Catholicism. Primarily heard in Ireland. *My devout Catholic parents wouldn't allow me to marry Sean because they said he kicked with the other foot.* **2.** To be homosexual. (Usually used in reference to athletes as a pun on the act of kicking a ball.) Primarily heard in UK, Ireland. *Though there are undoubtedly many professional footballers who "kick with the other foot," there still exists a persistent homophobia in the sport that precludes them from coming out openly.*

kicked to the curb See [be kicked to the curb](#).

kicking and screaming A phrase used to describe someone who has been forced (to go somewhere or do something) with extreme reluctance, especially despite lengthy or vehement protests. Often used in the phrase "dragged kicking and screaming." *I really thought Mike would be perfect for the job, but he had to be dragged kicking and screaming into an interview for it. When we were kids, we were dragged kicking and screaming to our grandparents' boring old house every summer for two weeks.*

kid gloves A metaphor for very gentle care, often to the point of coddling. Kid gloves are very soft leather gloves, typically made from the skin of a young goat (a "kid"). Used in the phrase "treat (someone) with kid gloves" and similar variations. *I can't stand the way my family always treats my younger brother with kid gloves, trying to protect him from every little thing!*

We'll need to handle the merger with kid gloves—both clients are extremely sensitive.

kiddie table A table typically used at family gatherings where only children sit (as opposed to the table where adults sit). *So how old do I have to be to graduate from the kiddie table?*

kidding aside Denoting a serious or sincere comment or reflection during an otherwise facetious or jocular conversation. *I know we all like to poke fun at Dad's forgetfulness, but kidding aside, I think his memory is really starting to deteriorate. All kidding aside, I really need to focus on finishing this report before tomorrow.*

kidding aside See [\(all\) kidding aside](#).

kids will be kids Kids behave childishly or immaturely by nature, so it is unrealistic to expect otherwise. A: *"I just can't seem to get Billy to stop picking on his little sister."* B: *"Well, kids will be kids, so what can you do?"*

kill me An expression showing one's disdain for whatever one is faced with by humorously stating that one would prefer death. *They want me to work this weekend—ugh, kill me now!*

kill (one)self **1.** To commit suicide. *Once John realized he had begun to have thoughts of killing himself, he decided to seek help.* **2.** To bring about one's death by performing a particular action. This phrase can be said when one's life is or could be in danger, but it is often used figuratively. *I can hardly breathe—I'm going to kill myself if I go back on the treadmill right now! If they try driving home in this snow, they'll kill themselves—tell them to get a hotel room for the night.* **3.** To overexert oneself. *Don't kill yourself trying to get the report done tonight—it's not due until next week anyway.*

kill the clock In sports, to protect a lead by using up as much possible time that remains in a game or match without giving the opposing team a chance to score, generally by maintaining a passive or defensive strategy. *With just a narrow two-point lead, the home team is trying to kill the clock to hold out for a win. I don't know, Jim, there's a lot of game time left for them to start killing the clock.*

kill the messenger See [don't kill the messenger](#).

kill two birds with one stone To complete, achieve, or take care of two tasks at the same time or with a singular series of actions; to solve two

problems with one action or solution. *I might as well kill two birds with one stone and drop off my tax forms while I'm at the mall for the computer part I need. Bike-to-work schemes are a great way of killing two birds with one stone: getting more exercise while cutting down on the cost of your daily commute.*

kind of Somewhat; sort of; a little. *I'm happy that it's summertime, but I'm still kind of disappointed that school is over. A: "Are you feeling better?" B: "Kind of. My throat isn't sore anymore but I'm still congested."*

a kind of (something) A replacement or alternative to (the real thing). *I had to use the block of wood as a kind of hammer to get the loose nail back into place.*

kind regards See [\(with\) kind regards](#).

a kind word for everybody A friendly, amiable, and positive regard for one and all. *I believe that if I can have a kind word for everybody, I will end up making other people's lives that much better.*

kindest regards A common, semi-formal valediction (used to say farewell at the end of a letter or other written message; also known as a complimentary close) expressing well wishes to the recipient. *I hope I'll have the chance of meeting with you again soon. Kindest regards, Brian*

a kindred soul A person who shares several or many fundamental beliefs, ideas, convictions, sentiments, attitudes, and/or interests with oneself. *It didn't take long to figure out that John is a kindred soul, and we've been the closest of friends ever since we met.*

a kindred spirit A person who shares several or many fundamental beliefs, ideas, convictions, sentiments, attitudes, and/or interests with oneself. *It didn't take long to figure out that John is a kindred spirit, and we've been the closest of friends ever since we met.*

king of (the) beasts The lion, especially in cultural or artistic depictions. *Engraved in striking marble, the king of beasts stands sentinel over this ancient arena. The king of the beasts is the symbol for the zodiac sign Leo.*

king of the hill The most powerful, successful, or authoritative person in a group or organization. *After years of slowly moving up the ranks, Joe finally became king of the hill in his office. This team will be hard to beat, reigning*

as king of the hill for three years straight.

king of the jungle The lion, especially in cultural or artistic depictions. (Usually a misnomer, as lions typically inhabit deserts or dry forests, as opposed to jungles.) *Engraved in striking marble, the king of the jungle stands sentinel over this ancient arena. The king of the jungle is the symbol for the zodiac sign Leo.*

kingdom come **1.** The end of time. *Although you don't have to pay for medical care in this country, you'll sometimes be waiting until kingdom come to receive elective treatment. My wife and her sister will talk on the phone until kingdom come if nothing interrupts them!* **2.** Heaven; the afterlife. Often used humorously, the phrase is taken from the Lord's Prayer. *You all need to be very careful not to blow us to kingdom come while doing this experiment in the lab.*

the King's English The standard form of English, as spoken by educated people in England. *We're friends now, so quit being so formal and speaking the King's English. As a professor, you really should speak the King's English.*

king's ransom A very large sum of money. *I've always wanted to vacation in Hawaii, but the plane tickets cost a king's ransom.*

kiss and cry An area in an ice skating rink where figure skaters rest while awaiting their results after a competitive performance. So named because competitors typically celebrate or commiserate (depending on their performance) with coaches, friends, or family in this location. *After a terrific performance, Katy is heading to the kiss and cry to wait with her coach while the judges tally their marks.*

kiss and cry area An area in an ice skating rink where figure skaters rest while awaiting their results after a competitive performance. So named because competitors typically celebrate or commiserate (depending on their performance) with coaches, friends, or family in this location. *After a terrific performance, Katy is heading to the kiss and cry area to wait with her coach while the judges tally their marks.*

kiss and cry corner An area in an ice skating rink where figure skaters rest while awaiting their results after a competitive performance. So named because competitors typically celebrate or commiserate (depending on their performance) with coaches, friends, or family in this location. *After a terrific*

performance, Katy is heading to the kiss and cry corner to wait with her coach while the judges tally their marks.

kiss my arse! **1.** rude slang An exclamation of contempt, disregard, or general disrespect. Primarily heard in UK. *Kiss my arse, Jerry! You couldn't do a better job fixing this truck if your life depended on it! Some guy tried hitting on me at the bar, so I told him to kiss my arse, and I walked off!* **2.** rude slang An expression of refusal to do something someone has requested. Primarily heard in UK. *You want me to start working on Saturdays, too? Well you can kiss my arse, I don't need this job!*

kiss my ass! **1.** A rude exclamation of contempt, disregard, or general disrespect. *Kiss my ass, Jerry! You couldn't do a better job fixing this truck if your life depended on it! Some guy tried hitting on me at the bar, so I told him to kiss my ass, and I walked off!* **2.** A rude refusal to do something someone has requested. *You want me to start working on Saturdays, too? Well kiss my ass, I don't need this job!*

the kiss of life Artificial respiration, that is, the blowing into the mouth of a person who has stopped breathing so as to force air in and out of their lungs. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *I was a lifeguard at the local pool for five years, but I've only had to give the kiss of life to someone once.*

kiss (one's) feet figurative To grovel or otherwise try to gain favor. *The professor isn't going to give you an A, so you might as well stop kissing his feet.*

kiss the gunner's daughter obsolete naval Of a seaman, to be bound to a cannon or other such armament and flogged or lashed as corporal punishment. *The first mate ended up kissing the gunner's daughter for attempting to bring about a mutiny on the ship.*

kiss the rod To accept punishment passively. *As a child, I always found it best to just kiss the rod—arguing with my parents always made the situation worse.*

kissing cousin **1.** Any cousin who is not a first cousin. *Brad and Tom look a lot alike, but they are not that closely related—they're kissing cousins.* **2.** A friend or relative who is close enough to be greeted with a kiss. *Lisa and Kelly have been such close friends for so long that they're kissing cousins.*

kitchen cabinet A president's unofficial group of advisors, often ones

who are thought to be very influential. *Why does the president trust members of his kitchen cabinet more than those of us who have spent our entire careers in Washington?*

the knacker's yard A state of ruin or failure due to having become useless or obsolete. Refers to a slaughterhouse for old or injured horses. *Once a booming industry before the age of the Internet, home video rental has largely ended up in the knacker's yard these days.*

a knee-slapper A hilarious joke, especially one that evokes loud and prolonged laughter. *My uncle told me a real knee-slapper the other day! Do you want to hear it?*

knick-knack Any miscellaneous trinket or toy, especially one that is delicate or dainty. *I loved visiting my grandmother when I was a child and examining all the various knick-knacks she'd collected around the house.*

knife-edge **1.** noun A stressful situation or mindset. *I am on a knife-edge right now, waiting to hear if my contract has been extended—if not, I'll need to find a new job. Our grandmother is very ill, so we are all on a knife-edge these days.* **2.** adjective Very crisply and neatly folded. Typically said of the pleats of a garment or textile. *When you fold that tablecloth, I need to see knife-edge pleats in it! That dry-cleaner does a great job getting a knife-edge crease in my pants.* **3.** adjective Sharp, narrow, and hard to traverse. Typically said of topographic features, like mountains. *That knife-edge mountain pass has 1,000-foot drops on either side.*

a knife in the back A grievous or supreme act of treachery or betrayal. (Usually preceding "of/for (someone).") *This revelation regarding the governor's longstanding misappropriation of public funds is sure to be a knife in the back of his constituency, as well as every taxpayer in the state.*

knight in shining armor A selfless, chivalrous man who helps a woman in distress. *When the police officer pulled over to help the old woman change her flat tire, she hugged him and said he was her knight in shining armor.*

knit (one's) eyebrows To furrow one's brow, often due to worry or confusion. *When I asked Bill about what happened, and he knit his eyebrows, I knew I was about to hear some bad news.*

knobstick wedding A hasty (and sometimes forced) marriage due to

the bride's pregnancy. Primarily heard in UK. *If Lady Anne is indeed pregnant, there will need to be a knobstick wedding at once.*

knock Anthony obsolete To knock one's knees together while walking or running (i.e., be "knock-kneed"). *The small ungainly child was never interested in—nor very good at—sports, as an unfortunate development in his legs meant he knocked Anthony as he ran.*

knock galley-west slang To put into a state of chaos or unconsciousness. Primarily heard in US. *I got knocked galley-west by that last punch—where am I? Any time my mother visits, my life gets knocked galley-west!*

knock (one's) head against a (brick) wall To attempt continuously and fruitlessly to accomplish some task or achieve some goal that is or seems ultimately hopeless. *I feel like I've been knocking my head against a brick wall trying to understand this math equation. Some people are never going to agree with you on this, so it's no use knocking your head against a wall trying to convince everyone.*

knock (one's) head against a/the wall To attempt continuously and fruitlessly to accomplish some task or achieve some goal that is or seems ultimately hopeless. *I feel like I've been knocking my head against the wall trying to understand this math equation. Some people are never going to agree with you on this, so it's no use knocking your head against a wall trying to convince everyone.*

knock-shop A brothel. Primarily heard in Australia. *Everyone knows that old tavern used to be a knock-shop.*

knock (someone) down a notch (or two) To reduce or damage someone's ego or pride; to humble or humiliate someone. *I'm really glad that pompous oaf lost his court case—maybe that will knock him down a notch or two. It's about time that someone knocked Sarah down a notch. Her snotty arrogance is intolerable!*

knock (someone) down a peg (or two) To reduce or damage someone's ego or pride; to humble or humiliate someone. *I'm really glad that pompous oaf lost his court case—maybe that will knock him down a peg or two. It's about time that someone knocked Sarah down a peg. Her snotty arrogance is intolerable!*

knock (someone) down with a feather To shock, confuse, or astonish someone to a point of complete bewilderment; throw someone for a loop. More often phrased as "you could have knocked me down with a feather," expressing great bewilderment or surprise. *It really knocked me down with a feather to hear that my ex-wife had already remarried. I was so taken aback when I found out I'd won the lottery that you could have knocked me down with a feather!*

knock (someone) out of the box baseball To force an opposing pitcher to be taken out of the game for giving up too many hits. Primarily heard in US. *The pitcher has had a stellar season so far, but this unbeaten team has knocked him out of the box not even halfway through the game.*

knock (someone) over with a feather To shock, confuse, or astonish someone to a point of complete bewilderment; throw someone for a loop. More often phrased as "you could have knocked me over with a feather," expressing great bewilderment or surprise. *It really knocked me over with a feather to hear that my ex-wife had already remarried. I was so taken aback when I found out I'd won the lottery that you could have knocked me over with a feather!*

knock the spots out of To outdo another person. The phrase might have come from the once-common challenge of shooting the spots on a playing card hanging from a tree. *Paul really knocked the spots out of me in that debate. I had to concede every point.*

knock the tar out of (someone) 1. To strike continuously and violently. *Aw man, when my dad finds out that I broke the window, he's going to knock the tar out of me!* 2. To defeat soundly. A: "Did you guys win today?" B: "We sure did! We knocked the tar out of them: 10-0!"

knocked down a notch See [be knocked down a notch \(or two\)](#).

knocked down a peg See [be knocked down a peg \(or two\)](#).

knocked out cold See [be knocked out cold](#).

knocked out of the box See [be knocked out of the box](#).

knockin on heavens door See [be knocking on heaven's door](#).

knocking on heaven's door Dying; approaching or very close to death (i.e., about to be admitted into the afterlife). *My grandfather fought a*

good fight against his cancer, but I'm afraid he's knocking on heaven's door now.

knocking shop A brothel. Primarily heard in UK. *Everyone knows that old tavern used to be a knocking shop.*

know a hawk from a handsaw To be able to tell two things apart. The phrase comes from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. *Of course I know which twin is which, I know a hawk from a handsaw, after all!*

know-all A person who acts like they are smarter than everyone else. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *There is nothing more annoying than working with a know-all who constantly tries to outdo everyone else.*

know chalk from cheese To be able to tell two things apart (especially by recognizing their differences). *Of course I know which twin is which, I know chalk from cheese, after all! Leah has a beauty mark under her left eye, and Deena doesn't.*

know every trick in the book To be aware of or knowledgeable in every possible way to do or achieve something, especially ways that are clever, cunning, or ethically questionable. *My dad was a shrewd businessman who knew every trick in the book to seal a deal. If you want girls to be interested in you, my older brother knows every trick in the book.*

know for a fact To have definitive knowledge of something. *I know for a fact that he cheats in cards! I saw the ace up his sleeve. My mom says she knows for a fact that I'm getting the internship at her company, but I won't believe it until the recruiter calls me.*

know from a bar of soap See [not know \(someone\) from a bar of soap](#).

know full well To know or be aware of something without any possible doubt. *You know full well why I'm upset with you, so there's no use playing dumb! We know full well that many families are struggling to make ends meet, but these tax increases are unavoidable.*

know-it-all A person who seems or affects to know everything about any given topic, and who makes an irritating point of demonstrating their knowledge to others. *Jim's new boyfriend is such a know-it-all. I can't stand having a conversation with him about anything!*

know-it-all A person who acts like they are smarter than everyone else.

There is nothing more annoying than working with a know-it-all who constantly tries to outdo everyone else.

know-nothing A completely ignorant, uninformed, or unknowledgeable person. *I wish my father had never hired a know-nothing like you to manage our accounts!*

know (one's) beans To be knowledgeable about and/or very familiar with something. *I had no idea you were such a good piano player—you really know your beans!*

know (one's) own mind To be firmly resolute and confident in one's ideas, intentions, plans, or opinions. *I've never worried too much about the effects of peer pressure on Kelly, as she really knows her own mind on what's right or wrong.*

know (someone) To have a familiarity with someone; to know who someone is. Such familiarity can range from close friendship to having only met someone once. *Oh yeah, I know Mr. Meyers, he used to be my neighbor. He knew Vanessa long before she became a famous singer.*

know (someone) in the biblical sense To have (or have had) sexual intercourse with someone. In certain versions of the Bible, "to know someone" means to have sexual relations with him or her, as in Genesis 4:1: "And Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain." *Bob: "You know Samantha quite well, right?" Dave: "Well, I don't know her in the biblical sense, if that's what you're asking." John is looking very well these days. I'd like to get to know him in the biblical sense, if you know what I mean.*

know (something) inside and out To be well-versed in and/or very familiar with something. *I'm ready for this exam—I know genetics inside and out! I think Mary will do great at the audition, now that she knows the dance inside and out. These cabbies know the city streets inside and out.*

know the time of day See [not know the time of day](#).

know what's o'clock To be attentive and aware of all that is going on. *Those students thought they could get away with cheating in my class, huh? Too bad I know what's o'clock!*

know what's what To know the true facts or most fundamental information (about someone or something). *Kid, I've been doing this job for*

longer than you've been alive, so trust me when I say that I know what's what around here.

know which way the wind blows To be able to anticipate how a certain course or situation is likely to develop. *These politicians know which way the wind blows regarding public opinion on the issue, and you can bet they'll vote accordingly.*

knuckle sandwich A punch in the mouth. *If you keep mocking me, you're going to get a knuckle sandwich!*

Kodak moment A particularly poignant, memorable, or emotionally touching moment or event, i.e., one that would be well-suited to be captured in a photograph. Taken from an advertising slogan for Eastman Kodak photographic film and cameras. Sometimes used ironically or satirically. *I love the airport, it's always full of Kodak moments as people eagerly greet family and friends coming off the planes.*

kween slang A variant spelling of "queen" that indicates the speaker's excitement or approval. *You look gorgeous! Yasss kween!*

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L

the L-bomb An expression of romantic love for another, especially when said unexpectedly and/or for the first time. Usually used in the phrase "drop the L-bomb." *We'd only been dating for a couple of months when he dropped the L-bomb on me. I was so shocked that all I could think to say back was, "Thank you!"*

a la See [à la](#).

a la carte See [à la carte](#).

a la mode See [à la mode](#).

a la mort See [all-a-mort](#).

lab rat One who agrees to let others use him or her as a test subject. A: *"Did he really sign up to be a lab rat for some skincare company?"* B: *"Yeah, because they promised him a bunch of free products to try!"* *I can't believe I agreed to be my sister's lab rat—now I have to let her practice cutting hair on me.*

labor of love Work that is done for pleasure rather than money. *Katherine spends all of her free time knitting baby clothes for her friends. It must be a labor of love.*

labor under the delusion of/that To live, operate, or function with the unyielding belief in something, especially that which is fanciful, unrealistic, or untrue. Primarily heard in US. *Jeremy's always labored under the delusion of being a great writer, even though he's never written more than a few crummy poems. No one likes paying taxes, but those who would call for them to be done away with altogether are laboring under the delusion that our society can function without them!*

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society can function without them!

the laborer is worthy of his hire Workers should or deserve to be paid. The phrase comes from the Bible. *You did a fine job in the stables, Edgar. I have some money for you, as the laborer is worthy of his hire.*

laced mutton An outdated term for a prostitute. A: *"I think that Lord Stewart is spending time with a laced mutton."* B: *"No, surely not!"*

ladies and gentlemen A phrase typically used to address a crowd or audience consisting of men and women. *Ladies and gentlemen, please turn your attention to the main stage for the start of our show! Ladies and gentlemen, can I have your attention please?*

lady garden slang A woman's genitals, pubic hair, and/or the surrounding area. *I was brought up in a very conservative household, so it was a shock to me to go to beach where women would display their lady gardens in public!*

lady killer A charming man who has a reputation for seducing many women. *I wouldn't date Dan if I were you. Word on the street is that he's a real lady killer.*

Lady Luck The personification of fortune, whether good or bad. (Sometimes spelled in lowercase.) *The team fought hard down to the last seconds of the game, but Lady Luck just didn't favor them in the end. I hope lady luck is on my side going into this job interview!*

lady of easy virtue euphemism A prostitute. A: *"I think that Lord Stewart is spending time with a lady of easy virtue."* B: *"No, surely not!"*

lady of pleasure euphemism A prostitute. A: *"I think that Lord Stewart is spending time with a lady of pleasure."* B: *"No, surely not!"*

lady of the evening euphemism A prostitute. *I love living in this neighborhood, but there are a few ladies of the evening who start hanging around looking for business after dark.*

the lady of the house A woman who looks after and runs the house; the matriarch of a family or household. *I'm afraid you'll have to ask the lady of the house, as she's the one who makes those sorts of decisions around here.*

lady of the night A euphemism for a prostitute. *I love living in this neighborhood, but there are a few ladies of the night who hang around*

looking for business after dark.

lager lout A loud, obnoxious drunk man. Primarily heard in UK. *When I went to England, I accidentally ended up in a pub filled with lager louts.*

lagom A Swedish word (pronounced "lar-GOHM") that refers to the perfect balance or amount of something. *There is a lagom amount of text in this article—just enough to entice the reader without being overwhelming.*

laid a wager See [lay a wager](#).

laid at rest See [lay \(something\) at rest](#).

laid heads together See [lay \(our/your/their\) heads together](#).

laid her life on the line See [lay \(one's\) life on the line](#).

laid herself out See [lay \(oneself\) out](#).

laid it on thick See [lay it on thick](#).

laid it on with a trowel See [lay it on with a trowel](#).

laid siege to See [lay siege to](#).

laid store See [lay store in \(something or someone\)](#).

laid store See [lay store by \(something or someone\)](#).

laid the pipe See [lay the pipe](#).

laid to rest See [be laid to rest](#).

laid wait for See [lay wait for](#).

lame duck **1.** Someone or something that needs help. *The company started as a lame duck that was saved by an innovative entrepreneur who decided to take some risks and go in a new direction.* **2.** An elected official serving their last term in office, usually so-called after a successor has been elected. *The opposing party was angry at the president's intention to name a Supreme Court replacement while he was a lame duck.*

lame joke A joke that is deemed (often by the listener) to be corny or otherwise not amusing. *A: "Come on, isn't that funny?" B: "It's kind of a lame joke, mom." My date clearly thinks he's hilarious, but all I heard was a bunch of lame jokes.*

Lamourette's kiss A temporary, and often insincere, reconciliation. The phrase refers to Abbe Lamourette, who was (briefly) able to unite the

various factions of the French National Assembly in 1792. *Of course, they couldn't stay in agreement for long—it was all just a Lamourette's kiss.*

The Land of Opportunity **1.** The United States of America, from the notion that the country provides the opportunity for success to anyone from any background. (Sometimes spelled in lowercase.) *In the early 1940s, my grandparents, fleeing persecution in Europe, took everything they owned and sailed on a boat to the Land of Opportunity. I am convinced that this is still the land of opportunity, that any man or woman with a dream and the desire to work hard can achieve anything.* **2.** The official state nickname of Arkansas from 1947 to 1995 (replaced by "The Natural State"). *My family's been living in The Land of Opportunity for nearly three generations, but we originally hail from Pennsylvania.*

land of plenty A fictional or imagined utopian place where there is an abundance of everything needed to survive and flourish. *A huge influx of people headed to California at the beginning of the 20th century, thinking it was the land of plenty.*

land-poor Owning a large amount of land that is unprofitable and being without the means to maintain it or capitalize on its fertility. *My fool of a husband used our savings to buy a big plot of land out west, and we've been land-poor for the last 10 years as a result.*

landing strip **1.** Literally, a long flat stretch of land used by winged aircraft to land after flight. *The flight had to circle the airport for nearly 30 minutes as debris was cleared from the landing strip.* **2.** slang Pubic hair, especially a woman's, that has been shaved or waxed into a single vertical line directly above the vulva.

landmark decision A legal decision that sets a precedent for how similar cases are to be resolved in the future. *Review that landmark decision—it should help us to build our case.*

lap dog **1.** Literally, a dog that is small enough and temperamentally inclined to sit comfortably upon one's lap. *We always had lap dogs when I was growing up, so I never feel comfortable around my boyfriend's gigantic St. Bernard.* **2.** A person who is readily inclined to submit to, seek the favor of, or agree with someone else, especially a person of higher authority. *It sickens me to see you be a lap dog of your boss like that. Have a little self-respect!*

lap of the gods A state beyond possible human control, intervention, or responsibility; a state or condition that is or will be decided by nature or fate. Usually used in the phrase "in the lap of the gods." *I'm afraid we've done all we can to treat your father's heart attack. His recovery is in the lap of the gods, now.*

lard-ar-se A disparaging term for an obese person. Primarily heard in UK.

large as life See [as large as life](#).

a lash of scorpions **1.** literal A whipping implement made of scorpion tails—an ancient method of punishment. *I was watching this old movie, and one character started beating another with a lash of scorpions! I couldn't believe the one guy was getting hit with scorpion tails—eek!* **2.** figurative An extremely harsh punishment. *If my parents find out that I borrowed their car last night without their permission, I am going to get a lash of scorpions!*

last analysis See [in the last analysis](#).

the/(one's) last breath **1.** The final moment before one dies; the last period of one's life. *Even though my grandfather's lungs were riddled with cancer and emphysema, he remained a smoker until his very last breath.* **2.** The last moment before a person or group ultimately fails or must give up. *We might be down by 10 points, but we have to keep on fighting to the last breath! Even as their stocks plummeted, the company maintained a public image of success right to their last breath.*

last burst of fire A final effort or attempt, especially as before failure or defeat. *The home team has unleashed one last burst of fire in the final seconds of the game to try and force an overtime showdown.*

last chance (for/at/to do something) The last or final opportunity to get, have, do, or achieve something. *Hurry and book your flights today—this is your last chance for the cheapest tickets in town! I'm giving you one last chance to surrender. This fight is my last chance at a championship boxing title.*

last-ditch attempt A final effort or attempt to solve a problem or avoid failure or defeat, especially after a series of failures or setbacks. *The home team is mounting one last-ditch attempt in the final seconds of the game to try to force an overtime showdown. In a last-ditch attempt to avoid a government shutdown, congress has pushed forward a new spending bill.*

last-ditch effort A final effort or attempt to solve a problem or avoid failure or defeat, especially after a series of failures or setbacks. *The home team is mounting one last-ditch effort in the final seconds of the game to try to force an overtime showdown. In a last-ditch effort to avoid a government shutdown, congress has pushed forward a new spending bill meant to plug the debt ceiling for another year.*

last hurrah A final act, achievement, or effort. *Finishing the month-long project was Cheri's last hurrah before she left the company to pursue another opportunity.*

last licks **1.** The action or actions taken during the final opportunity to do something. *I have to leave in five minutes, so let me get in my last licks on the pinball machine.* **2.** The final notes of a song. *I can still hear the last licks of the encore at last night's concert ringing in my ears.*

last-minute (used before a noun) Done at the very last possible moment or opportunity. *In an attempt to avoid a government shutdown, congress has pushed forward a last-minute spending bill. When I found out my flight to Paris had been canceled, I made a last-minute decision to fly to Hawaii instead.*

the last of the lot The last or final person(s) or thing(s) in a given group or list. *This package is the last of the lot. Once we get this shipped, we can call it a day. It looks like you and I are the last of the lot to receive our annual bonuses, Sam. I wonder if we ever will!*

the last person Someone who is not the ideal or preferred choice for a particular task or situation. *Because my mother tends to overreact, she is the last person I would call in an emergency. Todd's the last person I'd ask to solve this budget issue—he's worse at math than I am!*

Last Supper **1.** The last meal that Jesus shared with his disciples before his crucifixion, which some Christians believe instituted the sacrament of the Eucharist. Usually capitalized in this usage. *We celebrate the Last Supper by going to Mass on Holy Thursday.* **2.** The last meal before something significant. A: *"Thanks for coming to my last supper."* B: *"Oh, stop! I'm sure your surgery tomorrow will go fine." I can't believe this is my last supper as a single guy!*

last thing **1.** The final action one takes at a certain time. *Checking the*

front door is the last thing I do before I leave the house—if I don't make sure the door is locked, I worry about it all day! The last thing my daughter and I do before bedtime is sing her favorite lullaby. **2.** Something that one really does not want to do and would like to avoid (although it may not be possible). *The last thing I want to do is move, but I might not have a choice considering how much the rent has increased.*

the last thing (one) needs Something which one absolutely does not want or has no use for. *The last thing we need is a lengthy court battle, so let's try to end our marriage as civilly as possible. A fancy new computer I have no idea how to use is the last thing I need right now!*

the last thing (one) wants Something which one absolutely does not want or has no use for. *The last thing I want right now is a lengthy court battle, so let's try and get through this divorce as painlessly as possible. A fancy new computer that I have no idea how to use is the last thing I want for Christmas!*

last trump The final trumpet blast that will be sounded on Judgment Day to signal the dead to rise. *The disgraceful way some people act these days makes me wonder if the last trump is coming sooner than later.*

the last word in (something) The most modern or advanced version of something. *Yes, our building is undergoing renovations at the moment, but we have all the latest technology. I can assure you that this machine here is the last word in brain scans.*

latchkey child A child who is home alone after school or in general because their parents or guardians are at work. *In the 1980s, a lot of attention was given to the so-called latchkey child, as more families needed both parents to work.*

latchkey child A child who is home alone after school or in general because their parents or guardians are at work. *I know it makes me sound horrible, but I just don't want Tommy hanging out with those latchkey children from down the road. Being a latchkey child was tough at times, but it taught me the value of self-reliance at an earlier age than most.*

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latchkey kid A child who is home alone after school or in general because their parents or guardians are at work. *Johnny became a latchkey kid after his parents divorced and his father moved to another city.*

late model Especially regarding an automobile, of a relatively recent design or model. *After I got my promotion, I decided to trade in my clunky old Volkswagen for a snazzy, late model sedan.*

laugh a minute Very funny. The phrase can also be used sarcastically to describe something that is not funny. *Joe's standup comedy routine is a laugh a minute—the people in the audience barely have time to catch their breath. Bob has been so morbid lately. Spending time with him is a laugh a minute.*

laugh all the way to the bank To profit or benefit from something that is regarded by others as frivolous or stupid. *That movie is dumb, but it's a big hit, and the studio executives will laugh all the way to the bank. They can mock us all they want because we'll be laughing all the way to the bank when our banana re-peeler is sold in stores nationwide.*

laugh in (one's) sleeve To rejoice or be amused secretly and/or contemptuously, as at another's mistakes or misfortunes. *Though feigning sympathy, my colleagues are all laughing in their sleeves at me for being stood up at the altar by my fiancée. I know it's mean-spirited, but I can't help but laugh in my sleeve when I see someone slip on the icy streets.*

laugh on the other side of (one's) face To experience a drastic change in one's emotions, often in a short span of time. A: *"I thought your mother was happy that we're getting married."* B: *"Me too, but now she's laughing on the other side of her face, and I get an angry phone call from her every day."*

laugh on the other side of (one's) mouth To experience a drastic change in one's emotions, often in a short span of time. A: *"I thought your mother was happy that we're getting married."* B: *"Me too, but now, she's laughing on the other side of her mouth, and I get an angry phone call from her every day."*

laugh up (one's) sleeve To try to hide that one is laughing at someone else. *Ron may seem like a nice guy, but he laughs up his sleeve whenever he's around someone he dislikes. The popular kids laugh up their sleeves every*

time I walk by—it's so infuriating.

laugh up (one's) sleeve To rejoice or be amused secretly and/or contemptuously, as at another's mistakes or misfortunes. *Though they are feigning sympathy, I'm sure my colleagues are all laughing up their sleeves at me for being chewed out by the boss. I know it is mean spirited, but I cannot help but laugh up my sleeve when I see someone slip on the icy streets.*

laughing in the aisles Laughing uproariously or hysterically. (Used especially in the phrase "have someone laughing in the aisles.") *Your jokes are perfect for your speech tonight. You'll have them laughing in the aisles! I'm telling you, Mark's boyfriend is hilarious! You're going to be laughing in the aisles when you meet him.*

laughing stock A person who is the subject of mockery after a blunder. *If I mess up this speech, I'll be the laughing stock of the school!*

launder money To process large amounts of money obtained through illegitimate or illegal means, often in small increments through banks or other legitimate businesses, so as to conceal its source or origins. *One of the clubs downtown was shut down last week on charges of laundering money for a local criminal enterprise.*

laundry list A very long list of items. *I have a laundry list of projects I need to get done before Friday. The senator began the hearing by reading a laundry list of accusations for nearly 30 minutes!*

the law is an ass Said of a law that one thinks is unnecessary or ridiculous. The phrase comes from Charles Dickens' novel *Oliver Twist*: "The law is a ass—an idiot." *I can't believe it's now illegal to park on my street, for no apparent reason. The law is an ass!*

law unto A phrase used to describe someone who acts independently of what is normal or expected. *Julie has always marched to the beat of her own drum. She's a law unto herself.*

lawful orders A plea or legal defense strategy in which the defendant claims that their actions were solely the result of carrying out the orders of superiors and that, as such, they should not be found guilty of such actions. Often known as the "Nuremberg defense," which is a reference to the use of such a defense by political and military leaders of defeated Nazi Germany in the Nuremberg Trials of 1945–46. *Against the charge of unlawful murder*

during wartime, the staff sergeant's defense attorney put forward a lawful orders defense, claiming that the killings were carried out under direct orders by superior officers.

lay a wager **1.** To make a bet. A: "There's no doubt in my mind that my team will beat yours in the championship!" B: "Oh yeah? Care to lay a wager on that?" **2.** To be completely sure of something. *I'd lay a wager that Jeremy tries to skip out on paying me back for dinner.*

lay ahead of See [lie ahead of \(someone or something\)](#).

lay before See [lie before \(someone or something\)](#).

lay down and die To quit; to give up hope or ambition. *We might have had an unexpected loss in the playoffs, but that doesn't mean this team is ready to lay down and die!*

lay down the marker To set an authoritative example or standard for others to follow. *By intervening in this conflict, our country shall lay down the marker that terrorism cannot and will not go unpunished in any corner of the Earth. Her breakthrough research laid down the marker for geneticists for decades to come.*

lay it on thick To exaggerate, overembellish, or overstate some emotional experience, response, or appeal, such as blame, praise, flattery, excuses, etc. *Jim carries on as though flattering the boss will get him a promotion, so he's always laying it on thick for her. Bob, I think Mary understands the trouble she's in, no need to lay it on so thick.*

lay it on with a trowel To exaggerate, aggrandize, or overstate some emotional experience, response, or appeal, such as blame, praise, flattery, excuses, etc. *Jim carries on as though flattering the boss will get him a promotion, so he's always laying it on with a trowel for her. OK, Bob, I think Mary understands the trouble she's in, no need to lay it on with a trowel.*

lay low **1.** To be, make oneself, or remain hidden or inconspicuous; to avoid being found, detected, or scrutinized by others. (A common error for the grammatically correct "lie low.") *I'm sorry I haven't been around to see you lately, but with the police investigating the company I thought it would be better to lay low for a while. Jim and Colby are laying low with the goods. Once the heat from the cops eases up, they'll send the stuff over to us.* **2.** By extension, to keep to oneself; to avoid interactions with others. *I think I'm just*

going to lay low at home this weekend—I don't really feel like going out at all.

lay man's terms See [in layman's terms](#).

lay odds **1.** To offer a bet with favorable odds to other bettors. *Bookmakers are laying odds that the company's new smartphone outsells its competitors 2:1.* **2.** To assert complete certainty about something. *I'll lay odds that Jeremy tries to skip out on paying me back for dinner.*

the lay of the land **1.** Literally, the physical topography of a particular location or area. *See if there's a path to higher ground so that we may view the lay of the land.* **2.** By extension, the particular state, arrangement, or condition of something; the way a situation exists or has developed. *Given the turbulent nature of this market, I think it would be prudent to understand the lay of the land before we agree to invest. I'm thinking about studying business, but I want to visit a few colleges first and check out the lay of the land.*

lay (one's) life on the line To put oneself in harm's way (to achieve something), especially at the risk of losing one's life. (Sometimes used hyperbolically.) *It's important to honor the men and women in the military, who lay their lives on the line every day defending our country. Look, I'm laying my life on the line to push this deal forward, so you had better make sure your company follows through on its promises!*

lay (oneself) out To put in a great deal of effort; to inconvenience oneself or go through a lot of trouble. *I don't know why I always lay myself out to impress your parents—they never appreciate what I do anyway. Your brother and sister really laid themselves out to make your party special, so it would be nice if you showed a little appreciation.*

lay (our/your/their) heads together To work together to come up with an idea or solution. *If the two of you lay your heads together, I'm confident you'll figure out a workable solution. Don't worry, we're laying our heads together to come up with a catchier slogan right now.*

lay siege to To surround and attack a place (often a city or building) with armed troops. *A: "The army has laid siege to our town!" B: "I knew we should have evacuated sooner!"*

lay (something) at (one's) feet To make or hold someone

responsible for something. *With every other department losing money each year, the managers have laid the company's success at our team's feet. Because I'm their elected official, voters are quick to lay any economic woes at my feet.*

lay (something) at rest To resolve, satisfy, or conclude something; to pacify or calm something. *We've been arguing over this will for nearly a year now. Can't we just lay this all at rest? I hope this explanation will help finally lay these questions at rest. News of the bailout has laid the turbulent markets at rest, at least for the time being.*

lay (something) at the feet of (someone) To make or hold someone, especially a group of people, responsible for something. *With every other department losing money each year, the managers have laid the company's success at the feet of our team. Even though there is a wide range of factors to consider, voters are quick to lay any economic woes at the feet of elected officials.*

lay store by (something or someone) To have faith, confidence, or belief in someone or something; to care about, appreciate, or respect someone or something. *I, however, have laid store by the promise of the afterlife, so I choose to lead my life piously and devoutly. I'm afraid my brother should be kept off the list of guests, as he's not one to lay great store by obeying social rules or etiquette. It's important to have close friends in life that you may lay store by when times are tough.*

lay store in (something or someone) To have faith, confidence, or belief in someone or something; to care about, appreciate, or respect someone or something. *I, however, have laid store in the promise of the afterlife, so I choose to lead my life piously and devoutly. I'm afraid my brother should be kept off the list of guests, as he's not one to lay great store in obeying social rules or etiquette. It's important to have close friends in life that you may lay store in when times are tough.*

lay the groundwork (for something) To create or prepare the basics or essential foundation (for something); to pave the way (for something). *Our success with this healthcare bill wouldn't be possible, had the previous administration not laid the groundwork already. As CEO of the company, I laid the groundwork for one of the most successful international firms in the country.*

lay the pipe vulgar slang To have sexual intercourse (with someone, usually a woman). (Typically said of or by a man.) *Teenage boys often have an obsessive preoccupation with laying the pipe as soon as possible, which is reinforced by peer pressure from their male friends or schoolmates.*

lay wait for To hide in preparation for making an ambush or attack. *I'm laying wait for my little brother, so I can jump out and scare him when he gets home! Officer, I think the robber just laid wait for us outside the club.*

laze about To relax or spend time idly; to do nothing or very little. *It's a gorgeous day outside, so you kids get off your butts and quit lazing about! I can't wait to go on my vacation and laze about the beach for two weeks!*

laze around To relax or spend time idly; to do nothing or very little. *It's a gorgeous day outside, so you kids get off your butts and quit lazing around! I can't wait to go on my vacation and laze around the beach for two weeks!*

lazy-bones A particularly lazy or indolent person. *Come on, lazy-bones, you've spent half the day in bed. Time to get up and be productive!*

lazy man's load A large amount that should be carried over multiple trips, but which a person tries to carry all at once in order to avoid making a second trip. *Stop trying to take a lazy man's load—take two trips to bring the groceries in or you'll end up breaking something.*

LB An abbreviation for "like back" that is typically added as a comment on popular social media posts to encourage other people to "like" their posted content as well. *When someone writes "LB" on one of my posts, it makes me never want to visit their page.*

lead a cat and dog life Of spouses or romantic partners, to have a life together typified by arguments, fights, and disagreements. *They were so happy when they first started dating, but after 10 years together, they've started leading a cat and dog life.*

lead a charmed existence To lead a life characterized or seemingly protected by marked good fortune or luck, without (or rarely) encountering trouble, danger, or misfortune. *Celebrities seem to lead a rather charmed existence, with everything handed to them on a silver platter. Other than minor colds, I've never been ill in my life. I guess I've just led a charmed existence.*

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lead balloon An utter failure and/or something that causes displeasure. Often heard in the phrase "go over like a lead balloon." A: "How do you think everyone will react to the lack of bonuses this year?" B: "Oh, that news will go over like a lead balloon!" I thought I'd finally had a breakthrough with my latest invention, but it turned out to be a lead balloon, like all the others.

lead nowhere To ultimately yield or achieve no useful, beneficial, or successful result or outcome. *This meeting is leading nowhere. We've been here for over two hours now and haven't even been able to come up with a name for our product! It appears that talks between Democrats and Republicans on a compromised spending bill have led nowhere.*

lead (one) around by the nose To exert a high degree of control over someone else. *I can't stand the way your mother leads you around by the nose like that and tells you what to do!*

lead (one) to the altar To marry someone. *I can't believe it's only a month until I lead her to the altar!*

lead the line To be the first person in a line of people. *All right, kids, who wants to lead the line when we walk to lunch today?*

lead time 1. The period of time from when a product is designed to when it is produced or manufactured. *Your idea is indeed very intriguing, but with a lead time as long as that, we'll have a hard time securing investors.* **2.** The period of time from when an order for goods has been placed to when it is delivered. *The online retail giant is hoping to drastically reduce lead time with the use of unmanned carrier drones to deliver orders.*

the leader of the free world 1. The United States of America, especially in relation to international politics. (Sometimes capitalized.) *Ever since the Cold War, America has prided itself on being known as the Leader of the Free World. Some people feel that our country has a responsibility, as the leader of the free world, to help shape the way countries across the globe do business.* **2.** By extension, the President of the United States of America. (Sometimes capitalized.) *Since he was a young boy, Gerald had dreamed of someday becoming the leader of the free world.*

leading edge **1.** adjective (hyphenated and used before a noun) Of or being the most advanced position, practice, or technology in a given area, activity, or endeavor. *Scientists at the local university are pioneering the nation's most leading-edge cancer research. The company has released some of the most leading-edge smartphones in the world.* **2.** noun The most advanced position, practice, or technology in a given area, activity, or endeavor. *The work their organization is doing at the moment is the leading edge of public health. Anthony's fascination with gadgetry always has him at the leading edge of the latest technology.*

leading light A person who is well-respected and viewed as important to a group. *As a leading light of the human rights organization, he helped improve working conditions for millions of people around the world.*

a lean patch A period of failure, decline, or poor performance or results. *Almost every new business experiences a lean patch at some point or another.*

leap at the chance (to do something) To accept or seize with alacrity an opportunity (to do something). *Mark complains about his teaching job a lot, but I knew if he were offered a tenured position in the school, he would leap at the chance. When our manager said she was leaving the company, I leaped at the chance to fill the job.*

leap in the dark A chance that one takes despite being uncertain of the consequences or outcome. *I don't usually go on blind dates, but I took a leap in the dark and agreed to meet Sarah's friend for dinner.*

leap to (someone's) mind To suddenly or immediately materialize in someone's mind. A: "What would you like to have for dinner?" B: "I'm not sure, nothing's really leaping to mind." *When it comes to crime thrillers, he's not a writer who leaps to most people's minds, but his books are edgy, brilliant page-turners.*

leaps and bounds **1.** adverb By very large degrees; rapidly or in quick progress forward. *Our small company has been expanding leaps and bounds over the past year, thanks in no small part to our aggressive new marketing campaign. Our puppy has grown leaps and bounds since we switched it to a new brand of dog food.* **2.** noun Very large degrees of or rapid progress forward. (Used especially in the phrases "by/in leaps and bounds" and "make leaps and bounds.") *Samantha's delivery business has been growing by leaps*

and bounds recently. The class made leaps and bounds in its reading comprehension after I adopted a new teaching method.

learn (something) down pat To learn, master, or understand something perfectly, to the point of requiring little or no focus to do, recall, or accomplish it. *I made sure to learn my speech down pat before the ceremony so I wouldn't spend the whole time looking down at piece of paper. My sister is such a musical prodigy that she can learn a song down pat after listening to it only once or twice.*

the least (one) can do Something that one ought to do; the very minimum one should do. *I know you're angry with him, but he seems like he really wants to make amends. The least you can do is hear him out. A: "Thank you so much for the cookies!" B: "It's the least we can do to repay you for looking after our pets while we were away."*

the least (someone) could do Something that someone ought to do; the very minimum someone should do. *I know you're angry with your father, but he seems like he really wants to make amends. The least you could do is hear him out. A: "Thank you so much for the lovely card and wonderful bottle of wine!" B: "It was the least we could do after you took care of our pets while we were away."*

leather-lunged (used before a noun) Having an extremely or inordinately loud or strong voice, as of someone with very robust lungs. *Despite her petite frame, the leather-lunged lead singer was able to shake the audience with her soulful outpourings.*

leave a great deal to be desired To be very inadequate or unsatisfactory; to lack a large amount of what is desired or required. *The film has a very interesting premise, but the final product leaves a great deal to be desired. I wasn't expecting a huge amount from a budget hostel, but this place leaves a great deal to be desired nonetheless.*

leave a lot to be desired To be very inadequate or unsatisfactory; to lack a large amount of what is desired or required. *The film has a very interesting premise and a story that has quite a bit of potential, but the final product leaves a lot to be desired. I wasn't expecting a huge amount from a budget hostel, but this place leaves a lot to be desired nonetheless.*

leave a sour taste in (one's) mouth To have a persistent negative effect on someone after an offending incident has ended. *I know Kelly's your*

friend, but she was so rude at dinner—it just left a sour taste in my mouth. Of course Andrew not inviting me to his party leaves a sour taste in my mouth.

leave home To cease living with one's parents; to strike out on one's own. *I regret leaving home at such a young age, but it did teach me some good lessons about self-reliance.*

leave it be An imperative to refrain from engaging in further discussion or from interacting or approaching something. Synonymous with the phrase "leave it alone." A: "Tell me why you don't want to be my roommate anymore." B: "Oh, please leave it be, I don't want to talk about this right now!" *Don't touch that, Mikey—leave it be!*

leave little to the imagination 1. Of clothing, to hide or cover very little (of the body) or be very revealing. *I was quite embarrassed when John showed up for our date wearing ill-fitting jeans that left little to the imagination.* 2. To present (something) in a very stark or obvious manner. *The film is relentlessly blunt with its anti-religious message, leaving little to the imagination from beginning to end.*

leave lots to be desired To be very inadequate or unsatisfactory; to lack a large amount of what is desired or required. *The film has a very interesting premise, but the final product leaves lots to be desired. I wasn't expecting a huge amount from a budget hostel, but this place leaves lots to be desired nonetheless.*

leave much to be desired To be very inadequate or unsatisfactory; to lack a large amount of what is desired or required. *The film has a very interesting premise, but the final product leaves much to be desired. I wasn't expecting a huge amount from a budget hostel, but this place leaves much to be desired nonetheless.*

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leave (someone) holding the baby To foist responsibility or guilt for something on someone else; to allow someone else to take the blame for something. Primarily heard in UK. *My partner had been cooking the books*

for years, and he left me holding the baby when the business collapsed.

leave (someone) in the dark (about something) To keep someone uninformed (about something); to exclude someone from full knowledge or disclosure (of something). *The CIA left the president in the dark about the assassination attempt so that if things went sour and came to public light, she could claim plausible deniability. I don't fully trust John to keep our plan a secret, so I think it best that we leave him in the dark for now.*

leave (something) on a high note To finish, complete, or leave (something) at a successful, impressive, or climactic point. *I know we've had quite a few losses this season, but let's win this last game and leave on a high note! After winning the Oscar, she decided to leave acting on a high note.*

leave (something) out of account To ignore something; to pay little or no heed to something. *If you leave the constituents' opinions out of account on this issue, you can kiss their votes goodbye in the election next fall. Don't leave your father's advice out of account—he knows what he's talking about!*

leaves of three, let it be A phrase to help recognize poison ivy in order to avoid touching it. *When you go on your nature walk, please keep in mind: "leaves of three, let it be!"*

led a cat and dog life See [lead a cat and dog life](#).

led around by the nose See [lead \(one\) around by the nose](#).

led her to the altar See [lead \(one\) to the altar](#).

led nowhere See [lead nowhere](#).

led the line See [lead the line](#).

leech **1.** noun A person who preys or overly depends upon another, or who clings to another in a parasitic manner. *Her younger brother is a bit of a leech, always hanging around us and asking for money.* **2.** verb To cling to or overly depend upon another person in a parasitic manner, like a leech. *She's always leeching off the work other people do in the office.*

left field The metaphorical origin of something uncommon, unpopular, or otherwise strange. Often used in the phrase "out of left field." *Well, that suggestion is certainly out of left field! How did you come up with that one?*

Sure, my aunt is really wacky and out in left field, but I love her!

left holding the baby See [be left holding the baby](#).

left in a lurch See [be left in the lurch](#).

left in the cold See [be left \(out\) in the cold](#).

left in the dark See [be left in the dark \(about something\)](#).

left to her own devices See [be left to \(one's\) own devices](#).

left to her own resources See [be left to \(one's\) own resources](#).

left wing **1.** adjective Of, concerned with, or belonging to a liberal political position or agenda. (Most often hyphenated and used prenominal.) *This is clearly just a left-wing propaganda campaign to distract voters from the real issue at hand. My father is a pretty staunch conservative, so I don't know how he'll take to my left-wing boyfriend. Though I consider myself to be left wing overall, I try to maintain a balanced political opinion.* **2.** noun The political groups or organizations, or a section or branch thereof, that support or advocate a liberal position or agenda. *The left wing has espoused the need for drastic social reform and economic equality in the coming year, but it has not, to date, offered any realistic or lasting measures to implement such change.*

leg it slang To go somewhere on foot, often quickly. *Leg it, guys, the cops are here! We really need to leg it if we're going to make this bus! My car ran out of gas two miles from my house so I just had to leg it home.*

leg man **1.** A reporter or journalist who is assigned to research or gather information, as at the scene of an event or from various sources. (Variant spelling of "legman.") *Leg men from the local news stations were already at the scene of the shooting before the police had even arrived. I learned some valuable skills about networking in my time as a leg man for the newspaper.* **2.** A person, typically an assistant, employed or assigned to carry out various tasks, such as running errands or delivering messages, especially outside of the office. (Variant spelling of "legman.") *I worked as a leg man for a number of years in the giant corporation before finally being promoted to a position with a bit more responsibility.* **3.** slang A man who is specifically attracted to or interested in the shape of a person's (typically a woman's) legs. *Some men are preoccupied with the size of a woman's bust, but I've always been more of a leg man myself.*

leg up 1. Literally, a boost from another person that enables one to reach something that one could not reach on one's own. *Give me a leg up so I can reach the dishes on the top shelf.* **2.** An advantage in a situation or over another person. *Getting certifications will definitely give you a leg up in the IT industry. I knew I had a leg up on my opponent when I saw that he was struggling to counter my opening moves.*

legal beagle An especially clever, aggressive, or skillful attorney. *I might be considered something of a legal beagle now, but I had to work for years to get enough experience to build my reputation.*

legal duty Something that one must do, as required by law. *It is the legal duty of homeowners in this community to maintain their property and not let it fall into disrepair.*

legal eagle An especially clever, aggressive, or skillful attorney. *I might be considered something of a legal eagle now, but I had to work for years to get enough experience to build my reputation.*

legally binding Requiring or establishing a legal obligation. *I thought it was just a simple petition, not a legally binding contract. Your response is legally binding, so be very careful what you say.*

a legend in (one's) own lifetime A person who has an extraordinary level of fame or reputation while they are still alive. *The singer has made such a huge impact on the world of blues that she's come to be a legend in her own lifetime.*

a legend in (one's) own lunchtime A person who affects or believes that they are of greater importance or notoriety than is actually the case. A humorous, ironic twist on the phrase "a legend in one's own lifetime." *The assistant manager acts as if she's the only one keeping the company together. She's a regular legend in her own lunchtime.*

a legend in (one's) own mind A person who affects or believes that they are of greater importance or notoriety than is actually the case. A humorous, ironic twist on the phrase "a legend in one's own lifetime." *The assistant manager acts as if she's the only one keeping the company together. She's a regular legend in her own mind.*

a legend in (one's) own time A person who has an extraordinary level of fame or reputation while they are still alive. *The singer has made*

such a huge impact on the world of blues that she's come to be a legend in her own time.

lemon law A law requiring an automobile manufacturer or dealer to replace, repair, or refund the cost of an automobile that proves to be defective after purchase. *The automotive company will be shelling out millions of dollars in refunds for faulty ignition switches because congress passed much tighter lemon laws this summer.*

a leopard can't change its spots One will stay true to one's nature, even if one pretends or claims otherwise. *After our breakup, he came crawling back, trying to convince me that he'd changed, but I know that a leopard can't change its spots.*

a leopard doesn't change its spots One will stay true to one's nature, even if one pretends or claims otherwise. *After our breakup, he came crawling back, trying to convince me that he'd changed, but I know that a leopard doesn't change its spots.*

l'esprit de l'escalier A French phrase meaning "the wit of the staircase"; a perfect witty remark, retort, or rejoinder that occurs to one after the fact or too late to be used. (Also written as "l'esprit d'escalier.") *I was on the bus home long after being tongue-lashed by my boss when I thought of the perfect things to say that would take him down a few pegs. Ah, l'esprit de l'escalier!*

less and less A phrase indicating that something is dwindling or becoming less frequent. *She used to make mistakes all the time, but now that she's familiar with the job, it's been happening less and less. I have less and less interest in Adam the more time I spend with him.*

less haste more speed See [more haste, less speed](#).

let down (one's) guard To become less guarded or vigilant; to stop being cautious about potential trouble or danger. *We'll wait long enough for them to let down their guard before we launch our invasion. There will always be people in this business looking to exploit you, so you can never let down your guard.*

let down (one's) hair To cease acting formally or conservatively; to let go of one's inhibitions or reservations. *Come on, Jim, this is a party! Let down your hair and go a little wild!*

let go and let God To give up one's self-determination and yield to the teachings, designs, or instructions of God or the church. *One day, I decided to just let go and let God, and I've been a happier person for it ever since.*

let her go, Gallagher Let's go right now! The identity of the "Gallagher" referred to in the phrase is debated. *Let her go, Gallagher, or else we're going to be late!*

let it drop **1.** To cease discussing or dwelling upon a given subject. *Look, we can't afford a new car right now, so just let it drop already!* **2.** To accidentally or inadvertently reveal a given secret or important piece of information. *I can't believe your sister let it drop that we're engaged in front of your parents!*

let it rest To cease discussing or dwelling upon a given subject. *Look, we can't afford a new car right now, so just let it rest already!*

let it slip To accidentally or inadvertently reveal a given secret or important piece of information. *We had done so well keeping our engagement a secret. I can't believe I let it slip in the middle of dinner last night!*

let me tell you Used to emphasize a statement. *There's going to be trouble in the city if our team loses this championship, let me tell you. Let me tell you, I've never seen a rat this big in my whole life!*

let nature take its course To let events develop and conclude naturally, i.e., as they would without outside intervention, help, or interference. The phrase can refer to nature literally, or figuratively to manmade situations or events. *If we were to let nature take its course and stop maintaining this lot, it would look like the rest of the forest in months. I know he's underperforming, but he doesn't report to you, so I would just let nature take its course and let his department head discover his incompetence for herself.*

let (one) down gently To deliver bad news to someone in the kindest or least upsetting way possible. *When you tell Ed that somebody already asked you to the dance, please let him down gently. I tried to let Susan down gently, but she burst into tears nonetheless.*

let one rip slang To fart loudly or profusely. *I can't believe you let one rip in the car. Now we have to smell it all the way home!*

let (one's) guard down To become less guarded or vigilant; to stop

being cautious about potential trouble or danger. Also worded as "let down (one's) guard." *We'll wait long enough for them to let their guard down before we launch our invasion. There will always be people in this business looking to exploit you, so you can never let your guard down.*

let (one's) hair down To cease acting formally or conservatively; to ignore or relinquish one's inhibitions or reservations. Also worded as "let down (one's) hair." *Come on, Jim, this is a party! Let your hair down and go a little wild!*

let (someone) loose (on something) To allow someone to do something as they please, without supervision or control. *It's so nice to go to the park and let the kids loose for a while. I hope the board of directors aren't let loose on our project. We can't afford to have them changing things last minute!*

let (someone) off the hook To pardon, release, or allow someone to escape from blame, responsibility, obligation, or difficulty. *At first, Sam was suspected of stealing money from the safe, but he was let off the hook after security camera footage showed it was someone else. I was meant to spend the weekend cleaning out the garage, but my wife let me off the hook so I could go on the big fishing trip with my buddies.*

let (something) drop 1. To cease discussing or dwelling upon something. *Look, we can't afford a new car right now, so just let the matter drop already!* **2.** To accidentally or inadvertently reveal some secret or important piece of information. *I can't believe your sister let news of our engagement drop in front of your parents last night! The agent, under the influence of a powerful truth serum, let drop the names of other operatives working covertly in the area.*

let (something) loose 1. To do something in a sudden, fierce, and/or uncontrolled manner; to unleash something, especially that which is violent or destructive. *The trapped wolf let loose a bone-chilling howl. The home team began to let loose an unwavering offensive barrage against their cross-town rivals. The owner of the ranch let his hounds loose upon the trespassers.* **2.** To allow something to spread, grow, or develop in a wild or uncontrolled manner, especially that which is destructive or ruinous. *With news of the military junta's governmental overthrow, a wild, riotous pandemonium was let loose across the already unstable country.*

let (something) rest To cease discussing or dwelling upon something. *Look, we can't afford a new car right now, so just let the matter rest already!*

let (something) slip To accidentally or inadvertently reveal some secret or important piece of information. *I can't believe your sister let news of our engagement slip in front of your parents! The agent, under the influence of a powerful truth serum, let slip the names of other operatives working covertly in the area.*

let the good times roll To have as much fun or live life as richly as possible. (Often said as an imperative.) *We've had another successful year at the company, so everyone enjoy the party and let the good times roll! It does absolutely no use to stress and worry about how everything will turn out in life. I find it's far better to just let the good times roll.*

let (the) perfect be the enemy of (the) good To allow the demand, desire, or insistence for perfection decrease the chances of obtaining a good or favorable result in the end. (Usually used in the negative as an imperative.) *I know you want your research paper to be great, but don't let perfect be the enemy of good, or you won't even finish it in time! As a manager, you have to realize both the potential and the limits of your employees, so be sure not to let the perfect be the enemy of the good.*

let there be light This phrase is spoken by God in the Bible during the creation story. It is now often said comically when one turns on a light. *Ah, there's the switch—let there be light!*

letdown Something that is disappointing, usually because it did not meet one's high expectations about it. *Not getting tickets to the game after my aunt promised them to us is a real letdown. Sue was really excited about her new position, but now that she's in it, it seems to be a letdown.*

let's get one thing straight set phrase Let's clear up any possible confusion, misunderstanding, or uncertainty (about something); let me make this perfectly clear. *Before we get into this debate, let's get one thing straight—we are to focus solely on the topic at hand, so no deviating into unrelated subjects. Let's get one thing straight: I am the boss, and you are the employee, which means that when I ask you to do one thing, you're expected to do it.*

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let's not and say (that) we did A sarcastic expression indicating that one would really rather not do what has been proposed. *Joe: "Why don't we go to the farmers' market today?" Sarah: "Ugh, in this weather? Let's not and say we did." Mary: "The boss wants us to test the updated software all over again to test for bugs." Dan: "Oh, for Pete's sake! Let's not and say that we did."*

let's roll Let's get out of here; let's get moving. *I think I've had enough of this party. Let's roll, Sarah. That's everything we need from the store. Let's roll!*

letters after (one's) name A series of abbreviations indicating the various levels of higher education or military honors one has received, thereby denoting a presumed level of intelligence, wisdom, or respectability. *I hate hanging out with your PhD colleagues—it seems like they'll only take you seriously if you have letters after your name. Those letters after your name do not prove your worth to me; in my eyes, you're still just a fool.*

level-headed Calm and practical, especially in times of stress. *Whenever I have a problem with the copier, I call Elaine because she's so level-headed and can always think of a quick solution. You really need to be level-headed if you're going to work in an emergency room.*

level playing field A situation that is balanced and fair. *A handicap in golf serves to create a level playing field between players of varying degrees of skill. The new legislation is intended to create a level playing field for students of all backgrounds.*

lex dubia non obligat A Latin phrase that frees one from a contract or other legal obligation that is not morally sound. In English, the phrase means "a dubious law is not binding." *As your lawyer, I think we should absolutely take them to court—the terms of this contract are unethical. Lex dubia non obligat!*

libel chill The silencing effect that the threat of a libel lawsuit can have on

those who would be sued if they continue such speech. *The whistleblower's silence after being threatened with a lawsuit by her former company is a classic case of libel chill.*

a licence to print money An activity, business model, or company that yields very high profits but requires little or no effort to do so. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *All these hefty parking fees and fines are just a licence to print money for the city. These trashy gossip magazines are of such low quality, yet they always fly off the shelves. They're all licences to print money.*

lick-arse vulgar A person who flatters, fawns over, or eagerly agrees with others, especially people of higher authority, as a means of currying favor. (Also spelled "lickarse.") Primarily heard in UK, Ireland. *It's no wonder a lick-arse like you is the teacher's favourite!*

lick-ass vulgar A person who flatters, fawns over, or eagerly agrees with others, especially people of higher authority, as a means of currying favor. (Also spelled "lickass.") Primarily heard in US. *Well, it's no wonder a lick-ass like you is the teacher's favorite!*

a lick of the tar brush See [have a lick of the tar brush](#).

lick (someone) out vulgar slang To perform cunnilingus on someone.

lick (someone's) arse vulgar To flatter, fawn over, or eagerly agree with (someone, especially a person of higher authority) as a means of currying favor. Primarily heard in UK, Ireland. *It's no wonder you're the teacher's favourite from the way you lick her arse!*

lick (someone's) ass vulgar To flatter, fawn over, or eagerly agree with (someone, especially a person of higher authority) as a means of currying favor. Primarily heard in US. *It's no wonder you're the teacher's favorite from the way you lick her ass! Look, it's just the nature of this business that sometimes you have to lick ass if you want to get ahead.*

lick (someone's) boots To flatter, fawn over, or eagerly agree with someone, especially a person of higher authority as a means of currying favor. *It's no wonder you're the teacher's favorite from the way you lick her boots! Look, it's just the nature of this business that sometimes you have to lick your superiors' boots if you want to get ahead.*

lick the pants off (someone) To soundly, decisively, and/or

thoroughly defeat or thrash someone or something, as in a competition or a physical confrontation. *It was so satisfying to see the home team lick the pants off our cross-town rivals! When we were growing up, we knew never to disobey our mama, or she would lick the pants off us!*

a lick with the rough side of the tongue Severe criticism and/or a stern reprimand. *I thought my project was fine, but did you hear Ms. Miller's critique? Boy, that was a lick with the rough side of the tongue!*

lie ahead of (someone or something) **1.** To be physically located in front or ahead of someone or something. *As we trudged through the desert, it looked as though a magnificent oasis lay ahead of us, but it was just a mirage, some accursed trick of the sun. The mountains lie ahead of a vast prairieland.* **2.** To be or exist in the future of someone or something. *One should never presume to know what may lie ahead of them.*

lie at (one's) door To be one's responsibility. Typically said of something negative. *I'm the coach, and I called a bad play, so any blame for this loss lies at my door.*

lie back and think of England **1.** Typically of a woman (specifically a wife), to endure unwanted or unpleasant sexual intercourse—as out of a sense of duty or obligation—by distracting oneself with more pleasant thoughts. Refers to alleged advice for wives in the 19th and early 20th centuries that placed unwanted sexual activity as the price of the security of marriage. Primarily heard in UK. *It's horrible to think that women who were not attracted to their husbands, but who depended on the security of their marriage, were once told to simply lie back and think of England to satisfy their husband's desires.* **2.** By extension, to endure any unpleasant or unwanted task or experience by of thinking one's duty, the benefits of the experience, or by distracting oneself with more pleasant thoughts. Primarily heard in UK. *Whenever I have to have a tooth filled at the dentist, I just lie back and think of England.*

lie before (someone or something) **1.** To physically exist in front or ahead of someone or something. *As we trudged through the desert, it looked as though a magnificent oasis lay before us, but it was just a mirage, some accursed trick of the sun. Some worrisome footprints lie before our front door—I hope we've not been burgled!* **2.** To be or exist in the future of someone or something. *One should never presume to know what may lie*

before them, as life is far often more fickle than that.

lie down and die To quit; to give up hope or ambition. (Often erroneously spoken or written as "lay down and die," unless done as the past tense of this phrase.) *We might have had an unexpected loss in the playoffs, but that doesn't mean this team is ready to just lie down and die!*

a lie has no legs Because a lie has nothing to support it ("no legs" to stand on), it is unsustainable and can be easily recognized and dismissed as a lie. A: *"I'm really worried that this rumor about me is going to reach the whole school."* B: *"No way—a lie has no legs, so the truth will definitely prevail."*

lie low 1. To be, make oneself, or remain hidden or inconspicuous; to avoid being found, detected, or scrutinized by others. (Also worded as "lay low.") *I'm sorry I haven't been around to see you lately, but with the police investigating the company I thought it would be better to lie low for a while.*
2. By extension, to keep to oneself; to avoid interactions with others. *I think I'm just going to lie low at home this weekend, I don't really feel like going out at all.*

the lie of the land 1. Literally, the physical topography of a particular location or area. Primarily heard in UK. *See if there's a path to higher ground so we can see the lie of the land.* **2.** By extension, the particular state, arrangement, or condition of something; the way a situation exists or has developed. Primarily heard in UK. *Given the turbulent nature of this market, I think it would be prudent to understand the lie of the land before we agree to invest. I'm thinking about studying business, but I want to visit a few colleges first and check out the lie of the land.*

life-and-death 1. Involving or pertaining to the risk or possibility that someone may die. (Used prenominally.) *As a police officer in this neighborhood, you end up facing life-and-death situations on a regular basis.*
2. Extremely serious or of dire consequences; of imperative importance. (Used prenominally.) *We've got some life-and-death decisions to make at the next board meeting that will determine the fate of the company.*

life and soul of the party Someone who brings a lot of energy and enthusiasm to a social event. *Bill is definitely the life and soul of the party—he's currently trying to get everyone up to dance!*

life is like a box of chocolates Life is unpredictable. A version of

the phrase was popularized in the film *Forrest Gump*, in which it was followed by the second line: "You never know what you're gonna get." *I didn't expect to get laid off, but hey, life is like a box of chocolates.*

a life of its own The state of something that exists and thrives outside and beyond the control of the point of origin. *An urban legend can have a life of its own, changing every time it is retold. The accusations in the political race began to take on a life of their own, growing meaner and more elaborate every day.*

the life of Riley A life of great ease, comfort, or luxury, used especially in the phrase "lead/live the life of Riley." The phrase is likely of early 20th-century Irish-American origin, but to whom Riley refers is uncertain. *Pampered from a young age after his father came into sudden wealth, Jonathan led the life of Riley compared to the hardships his older siblings faced.*

life-or-death 1. Involving or pertaining to the risk or possibility that someone may die. (Used prenominal.) *As a police officer in this neighborhood, you end up facing life-or-death situations on a regular basis.* 2. Extremely serious or of dire consequences; of imperative importance. *We've got some life-or-death decisions to make at the next board meeting that will determine the fate of the company.*

life saver Someone or something that provides crucial help in a difficult situation. The term is almost always applied to situations that are not literally life-threatening. *You're a real life-saver for coming over and fixing my flat tire. The knife I brought on the camping trip turned out to be a life saver when we realized we had forgotten a can opener.*

lift a finger To help with something. Often used in the negative to indicate a lack of willingness to exert even the bare minimum of effort. *I know you're watching TV, but can you perhaps lift a finger and help me bring in these grocery bags? I clean every weekend, and you never lift a finger to help!*

lift a hand To help with something. Often used in the negative to indicate a lack of willingness to exert even the bare minimum of effort. *I know you're watching TV, but can you perhaps lift a hand and help me bring in these grocery bags? I clean every weekend, and you never lift a hand to help!*

lift (one's) elbow To drink alcohol, either in general or in excess. *After*

a hard day's work, there's nothing I like to do more than lift my elbow a few times at my local bar. You are so useless around the house. The only thing you know how to do around here is lift your elbow.

lift the curtain (on something) **1.** To begin or commence (something). *It's time to lift the curtain on this new project, everyone, so let's not waste any time! After a few delays, the construction crew was finally ready to lift the curtain.* **2.** To make (something) publicly known; to reveal or disclose the details or truth (about something). *In an attempt to head off a public relations disaster regarding his drug use as a college student, the governor decided to lift the curtain at a press conference. I think we had better lift the curtain on our privacy policy if we want consumers to feel secure buying our software.*

light bucket **1.** astronomy A telescope whose lens (the "bucket") has a large aperture so as to gather and focus a large amount of photons, thereby producing brightened images of normally imperceptible objects. *I'm always left amazed after using the light bucket at the university and glimpsing images of the cosmos way out in the dark of space.* **2.** By extension, such a lens (as on a camera or telescope) that has a large enough aperture to enhance images in low-level light. *What's truly special about the light bucket on this camera is that it maintains a relatively high shutter speed while still capturing clear shots in low-light environments.*

light in the loafers pejorative Homosexual, especially of men. Sarah: *"I'm thinking about asking Jonathan out on a date."* Jane: *"I don't know, I think he's a little light in the loafers, if you catch my meaning."*

lighten (one's/someone's) wallet **1.** To spend a large amount of money. (When speaking of one's own actions.) *My sister loves to shop. She's always out looking for new ways to lighten her wallet.* **2.** To take money from someone; to cause someone to spend a significant amount of money. (When speaking of someone or something acting on another person.) *Sure, it's a nice hotel, but it will lighten your wallet faster than you can say "overpriced." I'm always wary of souvenir merchants in foreign cities, whose sole objective is to lighten travelers' wallets.*

lightning fast (hyphenated if used before a noun) Incredibly fast; too quick to keep up with. *Did you see that martial arts expert? His kicks were lightning fast! My brother has a lightning-fast wit.*

lightning in a bottle An incredibly difficult, unlikely, and/or elusive achievement or period of success. (Usually used with "catch" or "capture.") Primarily heard in US. *The playwright caught lightning in a bottle with his first play, taking the world by storm and thrusting him into the spotlight of fame. The rookie team, such underdogs in this championship, are trying to capture lightning in a bottle by upsetting the number one seed.*

lightning quick (hyphenated if used before a noun) Incredibly fast; too quick to keep up with. *Did you see that martial arts expert? His kicks were lightning quick! My brother has a lightning-quick wit.*

lightning rod Something or someone that becomes the focus of others' criticism or blame. Primarily heard in US. *The CEO became a lightning rod for criticism when his company laid off a third of its employees.*

the like A phrase said at the end of a list as a way to include other non-specific things that are similar to what is being enumerated. *I love living on a farm and growing my own tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, and the like. Since she wants to be an actress, she's taking acting classes, voice lessons, and the like.*

like 60 See [like sixty](#).

like a beached whale 1. Completely stuck and unable to move or escape from the situation. Said especially of large objects or vehicles. *Our van's wheels sunk in the mud, and we've been stuck here like a beached whale for over an hour!* 2. potentially offensive Of a person, exceptionally large or obese. *I love going to the beach, but I'm going to look like a beached whale in this swimsuit.*

like a bear with a sore head Exceptionally irritable, annoyed, or grumpy. *John is always like a bear with a sore head first thing in the morning—it's best not to even talk to him until he's had his coffee. Janet was like a bear with a sore head when she found out she had missed her connecting flight.*

like a bear with a sore head See [be like a bear with a sore head](#).

like a bird in a gilded cage See [be \(like\) a bird in a gilded cage](#).

like a bull in a china shop See [be like a bull in a china shop](#).

like a cat in a strange garret Very wary or timid. *Of course he's*

acting like a cat in a strange garret—he's never been to the big city before!

like a cat on a hot tin roof See [be like a cat on a hot tin roof](#).

like a chicken with its head cut off With great haste and in a careless and/or senseless manner. *Instead of running around like a chicken with its head cut off, make a list of items you need to finish and then work on them in order.*

like a chicken with the pip In low spirits; in a weak or sickened state or manner. *Poor little Johnny's been feeling like a chicken with the pip lately. I think he must have picked up a bug at school.*

like a child in a sweetshop See [be like a child in a sweetshop](#).

like a deer caught in the headlights See [be like a deer caught in the headlights](#).

like a deer in (the) headlights In a state or manner of paralyzing surprise, fear, or bewilderment. Likened to the tendency of deer to freeze in place in front of an oncoming vehicle. *When she asked me to marry her, I could only stand there like a deer in headlights. He froze like a deer in the headlights when I caught him taking money out of the register.*

like a dog with a bone See [be like a dog with a bone](#).

like a dog with two tails See [be like a dog with two tails](#).

like a dog with two tails Very happy and excited. *Mary's been like a dog with two tails ever since she got her promotion.*

like a dog's breakfast Very messy and/or disorganized. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *I really need to clean out my closet—it's starting to look like a dog's breakfast in there.*

like a dog's dinner 1. Very messy and/or disorganized. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *I really need to clean out my closet—it's starting to look like a dog's breakfast in there.* 2. Of a person's attire, very showy in a way that attracts negative attention. *Look at that fool, all done up like a dog's dinner. Who told him that patterned suit was a good idea?*

like a dose of salts See [go \(right\) through \(one\) like a dose of salts](#).

like a fish needs a bicycle See [need \(something\) like a fish needs a bicycle](#).

like a fish out of water See [be like a fish out of water](#).

like a flash Very quickly. *Once I saw that swarm of bees, I took off like a flash in the opposite direction.*

like a fox guarding the hen house See [fox guarding the henhouse](#).

like a hole in the head See [need \(something\) like \(one\) needs a hole in the head](#).

like a house afire Very quickly or rapidly and with great force or intensity. *Out of nowhere, this crazed bull started charging at us like a house afire! John hit the acceleration and started careening down the road like a house afire. I can't wait for you to meet Mark. I just know the two of you will get on like a house afire!*

like a house on fire Very quickly or rapidly and with great force or intensity. *Out of nowhere, this crazed bull started charging at us like a house on fire! John hit the gas and started careening down the road like a house on fire. I can't wait for you to meet Mark. I just know the two of you will get on like a house on fire!*

like a kid in a candy store See [be like a kid in a candy store](#).

like a million bucks Very well; exquisitely. "Bucks" here is an American slang term for dollars. (Usually used with the verbs "look," "feel," or, of an object, some variation of "function.") Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *After a delicious meal, a hot shower, and a good night's sleep, I feel like a million bucks today! You look like a million bucks! Have you been working out lately? After we replaced the motor, we had Dad's old mustang running like a million bucks.*

like a rat abandoning a sinking ship See [like rats abandoning a sinking ship](#).

like a rat deserting a sinking ship See [like rats deserting a sinking ship](#).

like a rat from a sinking ship See [like rats from a sinking ship](#).

like a red flag to a bull See [be like a red flag to a bull](#).

like a red rag to a bull See [be like a red rag to a bull](#).

like a spare prick at a wedding See [be like a spare prick at a](#)

[wedding](#).

like a streak Very quickly. *Once I saw that swarm of bees, I took off like a streak in the opposite direction.*

like a thief in the night In a swift and secretive, stealthy, or surreptitious manner. *The cancer spread through my lungs and into my bones like a thief in the night, giving me no chance of beating it.*

like an owl in an ivy bush With a vacant stare, often due to drunkenness. Ivy bushes were thought to be enjoyed by both owls and Bacchus, the Roman god of wine. *Whenever Rob drinks, he eventually looks like an owl in an ivy bush, gazing off into the distance at nothing.*

like as peas in a pod See [\(as\) \(a\)like as \(two\) peas in a pod](#).

like attracts like People tend to seek out or be attracted to those that are similar or like-minded. *I guess I shouldn't be surprised that John wants to find other Americans to hang out with. Like attracts like, after all. I know that like attracts like, but you should try associating with people with some more diverse perspectives on life.*

like back A comment, typically abbreviated "LB," that is added to popular social media posts to encourage other people to "like" their posted content as well.

like cheese at four pence In an idle, awkward, and/or out-of-place state; being ignored, abandoned, or left to wait awkwardly. Primarily heard in UK. *Well, don't just sit there like cheese at four pence—speak up and say what's on your mind! The receptionist was called away before I was done telling her what I needed, leaving me standing there like cheese at four pence.*

like chickens with their heads cut off See [like a chicken with its head cut off](#).

like death warmed over In a state or appearance of extreme ill health. (Often preceded by "look" or "feel.") *I'm feeling like death warmed over this morning. There's no way I can make it to work.*

like death warmed up In a state or appearance of extreme ill health. (Often preceded by "look" or "feel.") A: "You had a lot to drink last night. How are you feeling this morning?" B: "Like death warmed up." You look like death warmed up, I think you should see a doctor!

like falling off (of) a log Extremely easy; very intuitive; requiring little or no skill or effort. *After so many years as an accountant, doing taxes is like falling off a log for me.* A: "I'm a little nervous about learning how to drive." B: "Don't worry. After some lessons and a bit of practice, it's like falling off a log!"

like for like 1. Referring to a comparison between one aspect of a business (such as sales) from two different time periods but with no other major differences. *Here are the like for like sales reports that you requested for this month and last month.* 2. Of the same value as a damaged or lost item. *I was hoping that my replacement laptop would be newer than the one that was stolen, but no, it's just a like for like laptop.*

like Fort Knox See [be like Fort Knox](#).

like fury Very quickly and/or intensely. *Lucy took off like fury as soon as the race started—all of her training really paid off. We need to drive like fury in order to get there on time!*

like herding cats See [be like herding cats](#).

like it or not Regardless of whether you agree or are happy with that which is being discussed. A shortening of the full phrase "whether you like it or not." *Like it or not, social media is becoming a permanent part of our day-to-day interactions. I know you don't agree with how she runs the classroom, but like it or not, she's your teacher, and you have to respect her rules.*

like looking for a needle in a haystack See [be like looking for a needle in a haystack](#).

like money for jam See [money for jam](#).

like money for old rope See [money for old rope](#).

like oil and water See [be like oil and water](#).

like (one's) life depends on it With maximum, possibly desperate, effort or energy (i.e., as if one is at risk of losing one's life if one fails). *The boxer started the third round throwing punches like his life depended on it. This project could very well determine the future of the company, so start working like your lives depend on it!*

like painting the Forth Bridge See [be like painting the Forth Bridge](#).

like piffy on a rock bun Conspicuous but ignored or left out, especially from a group or activity. (A "rock bun" or "rock cake" is a type of hard cake with currants; what "piffy" refers to is unknown.) Primarily heard in UK. *I was excited to go with my wife to her awards ceremony, but I didn't know anyone there and was left standing around like piffy on a rock bun. After Tommy hit one of the other boys in his class, he was left sitting like piffy on a rock bun during playtime.*

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like rats abandoning a sinking ship With great haste and having only personal well-being in mind. (Typically said of people who begin abandoning something or someone that is failing or about to fail.) *I knew the business was doomed when employees started quitting en masse, like rats abandoning a sinking ship. Like rats abandoning a sinking ship, the disgraced athlete's corporate sponsors began pulling their sponsorships one after another.*

like rats deserting a sinking ship With great haste and having only personal well-being in mind. (Typically said of people who begin abandoning something or someone that is failing or about to fail.) *I knew the business was doomed when employees started quitting en masse, like rats deserting a sinking ship. Like rats deserting a sinking ship, the disgraced athlete's corporate sponsors began pulling their sponsorships one after another.*

like rats from a sinking ship With great haste and having only personal well-being in mind. (Typically said of people who begin abandoning something or someone that is failing or about to fail.) *I knew the business was doomed when employees started quitting en masse, like rats from a sinking ship. Like rats from a sinking ship, the disgraced athlete's corporate sponsors began pulling their sponsorships one after another.*

like rearranging deckchairs on the Titanic See [be like](#)

[rearranging \(the\) deckchairs on the Titanic.](#)

like rolling off (of) a log Extremely easy; very intuitive; requiring little or no skill or effort. *After so many years as an accountant, doing taxes is like rolling off a log for me.* A: "I'm a little nervous about learning how to drive." B: "Don't worry. After some lessons and a bit of practice, it's like rolling off of a log!"

like ships in the night See [be like ships in the night.](#)

like ships that pass in the night See [be like ships that pass in the night.](#)

like sixty Very quickly. *We need to drive like sixty in order to get there on time!*

like taking candy from a baby See [be like taking candy from a baby.](#)

like talking to a brick wall See [be like talking to a brick wall.](#)

like talking to a wall Of a conversation, completely futile due to a lack of response from another person, often because the person isn't listening. *Talking to Eddie when he's watching TV is like talking to a wall!* A: "You're so distracted right now, it's like talking to a wall." B: "What?"

like the cat that got the cream Obviously smug and/or overly pleased with oneself. *After her promotion, Janet spent the rest of the day looking like the cat that got the cream.*

like the sound of (one's) own voice To enjoy hearing oneself talk because one is pompous and/or self-centered. *Boy, he really likes the sound of his own voice—I didn't think he would ever stop talking! I know you like the sound of your own voice, but can I please say something now?*

like there ain't no tomorrow colloquial Very rapidly and eagerly; without restraint or thought (i.e., as if there won't be another opportunity, so one must do something as much or as quickly as possible). *He must have been starving, because Jonathan started wolfing down his food like there ain't no tomorrow! Every time Kevin goes out shopping, he starts spending money like there ain't no tomorrow.*

like there were no tomorrow Very rapidly and eagerly; without restraint or thought (i.e., as if there won't be another opportunity, so one must

do something as much or as quickly as possible). *He must have been starving, because Jonathan started wolfing down his food like there were no tomorrow! Every time Kevin goes out shopping, he starts spending money like there were no tomorrow.*

like thieves in the night See [like a thief in the night](#).

like two peas in a pod See [be like two peas in a pod](#).

like watching grass grow See [be like watching grass grow](#).

like watching paint dry See [be like watching paint dry](#).

likeback See [like back](#).

a likely story See [\(that's a\) likely story](#).

likely story An exclamation of distrust or disbelief in someone's explanation or story. *Albert: "Sorry I'm late. My car broke down half way here!" Sarah: "Yeah, likely story! I bet you just wanted to finish watching the football game on TV."*

a line in the sand A figurative boundary that someone or some group refuses to cross or beyond which no further advance or compromise is accepted. (Used especially in the phrase "draw a line in the sand.") *The allocation of this new tax to pay for building schools has become a line in the sand for the governor's administration. I don't mind my roommate being a bit messy, but leaving dirty dishes for me to clean up is where I draw a line in the sand!*

lingua franca Any language used to bridge the gap between people who do not speak the same language. *English is the lingua franca in many foreign tourist destinations.*

link whore Internet slang (possibly offensive) A person who makes constant and conspicuous efforts to drive Internet traffic to their own webpage by posting links to it across other areas of the Internet. *There are so many link whores filling this forum with garbage posts that it's become nearly unreadable.*

link whoring Internet slang (possibly offensive) The practice of making constant and conspicuous efforts to drive Internet traffic to one's own webpage by posting links to it across other areas of the Internet. *The link whoring that goes on in this forum has made it nearly unreadable in recent*

times.

the lion's den A particularly dangerous, hostile, or oppressive place or situation, especially due to an angry or sinister person or group of people within it. *I felt like I was walking into the lion's den when I went in front of the board for my annual review.*

lip service The insincere verbal expression of something, especially friendship, loyalty, respect, support, etc. Used especially in the phrase "give/pay lip service to something." *All of the grand promises the president made in her campaign speeches turned out to be nothing but lip service. The local council members pay lip service each year to a renewed plan to tackle homelessness, but no one ever expects them to follow through.*

lipstick on a pig Some superficial or cosmetic change to something so that it seems more attractive, appealing, or successful than it really is. *The only things the new manager has come up with to save the restaurant have been to put lipstick on a pig, but slapping on a fresh coat of paint and making a few repairs will do nothing to address the underlying problems. This new operating system is just lipstick on a pig, if you ask me. It's still just as buggy and unintuitive as the last one they released.*

liquid courage slang The decrease in timidity or inhibition that comes from imbibing alcoholic beverages. *I'm planning on proposing to Mary tonight, but I think I need a little liquid courage first!*

liquid lunch A lunchtime outing that consists of drinking alcoholic beverages instead of eating. *Bob reprimanded his employees for having a liquid lunch and returning to work intoxicated.*

list as long as (one's) arm A very long list of items to accomplish. *I'm too busy to make it to dinner tonight—I have a list as long as my arm to finish.*

lit slang Exciting and/or awesome. *That party was totally lit, man! You should have been there!*

litmus test 1. A chemical test used to determine acidity or alkalinity in a solution. *The students performed a litmus test in class to learn whether the chemical solution was an acid or a base.* **2.** A test used to determine someone's true intentions or beliefs. *I used his reaction to my favorite movie as a litmus test to determine if he was worth dating.*

a little 1. noun A small amount. A: *"Do you want dessert?"* B: *"I'll just have a little since I'm still pretty full from dinner."* **2.** adjective Slightly. *I'm a little tired after going to the gym, but I can still meet you for dinner, don't worry!*

a little bird An unknown person. Often used in the phrase "a little bird told me," in which the speaker does not want to reveal the source of the information. *When I asked Carly how she knew about my new relationship, she just said that a little bird told her, but I'm going to need some specifics eventually!*

a little bird told me A phrase used when one does not want to reveal the source of the information that one is about to share or has shared. *Did you hear that Mark is planning to propose to Sarah soon? Yes, a little bird told me.*

a little bit of bread and no cheese An onomatopoeic phrase used in Britain to describe the song of the Yellowhammer bird. Primarily heard in UK. *In the early morning I could hear the Yellowhammer sing as plain as day, "a little bit of bread and no cheese."*

little bit rough and ready See [\(a little/bit\) rough and ready](#).

a little bit rough around the edges See [\(a little/bit\) rough around the edges](#).

little black book A list or database of valuable contact information, especially of people in whom one is amorously or romantically interested. *I don't feel the need to be in a long-term relationship because I've got plenty of phone numbers in my little black book.*

little bundle of joy See [bundle of joy](#).

a little cog in a big machine See [a small cog in a large machine](#).

a little cog in a big wheel See [a small cog in a large wheel](#).

little emperor An only child in a modern Chinese family who is seen as spoiled, overly protected, or the center of excessive amounts of attention. The phenomenon (and resulting term) is seen to have arisen in large part due to China's one-child policy. *It's quite plain in their house that the parents yield to the whim of their little emperor.*

(one's) little finger told (one) that A phrase used when the

speaker has learned something by unconventional means. Pain in one's fingers was once regarded as an indicator of things to come. *Oh dear, I just knew that they were going to break up this weekend—my little finger told me that.*

a little frog in a big pond Someone within a large operation or organization who is less important or less qualified than those around them. *This thankless IT support job is really getting old. Ever since I started here, I've just been a little frog in a big pond.*

a little from column A, a little from column B Having been formed from two distinct factors, elements, or reasons. *She asked me if I drew more from real life or from my imagination when writing; in truth, it's a little from column A and a little from column B.*

a little green 1. Having little or no experience in a given field, specialty, or skill. It refers to the color of young vegetation, which has not fully matured. *I know the new apprentice is a little green, but I think she'll do just fine in the new position.* 2. Having a slightly sickly appearance, as from nausea. *Are you alright? You're looking a little green.*

little horror A poorly behaved child. *I regret offering to babysit—her child is such a little horror!*

the little lady One's wife. *John might be coming camping with us this weekend, but he has to run it by the little lady first.*

a little leery Cautious, wary, or uncertain of a given person, place, or thing. *To be honest, I'm a little leery of signing up for this deal; it sounds too good to be true.*

little love lost See [be little love lost between \(two people\)](#).

little man in the boat A woman's clitoris, so euphemized for its placement between the labia minora resembling a person within a small boat.

the little matter of (something) Said in reference to a rather large or important issue that has not yet been completed or addressed. A: *"Thank you for your services, Jennings. My valet will show you out."* B: *"Thank you, sir. However, there is still the little matter of my pay for the last three months."*

little person A person who is small in size, typically due to dwarfism. *Our new neighbor is a little person, but I just think of him as Jim.*

little pitchers have long ears Children hear everything, especially when you least expect them to. The "ear" of a water pitcher is the handle. *Please watch what you say around the kids—little pitchers have long ears, you know.* A: "Where did little Susie learn that inappropriate word?" B: "Who knows. Little pitchers have long ears."

a little pot is soon hot A small person (in stature and/or of mind) is quickly made angry. A play on the idea that a little pot boils quickly because it cannot hold much water. *Watch out when you deal with that little guy, Denny—he snaps at everyone and definitely lives up to the idea that a little pot is too soon hot!*

(little) tin god A pompous person. *My attraction for him waned after he spent the entire evening acting like a little tin god. Everyone on the school board acts like a tin god. It's so irritating!*

(little) white lie A lie thought to be insignificant and justified, especially one told to avoid hurting someone's feelings or giving offense. *I try to be honest most of the time, but I do tell white lies when I'm worried about upsetting people.* A: "Do you actually like her new haircut?" B: "Of course not, but I couldn't tell her that, so I told a little white lie instead."

the little woman One's wife. *John might be coming camping with us this weekend, but he has to run it by the little woman first.*

little wonder See [\(it's\) little wonder](#).

live a charmed existence To lead a life characterized or seemingly protected by marked good fortune or luck, without (or rarely) encountering trouble, danger, or misfortune. *Celebrities seem to live a rather charmed existence, with everything handed to them on a silver platter. Other than minor colds, I've never been ill in my life. I guess I've just lived a charmed existence.*

live a charmed life To lead a life characterized or seemingly protected by marked good fortune or luck, without (or rarely) encountering trouble, danger, or misfortune. *Celebrities seem to live a rather charmed life, with everything handed to them on a silver platter. Other than minor colds, I've never been ill in my life. I guess I've just lived a charmed life.*

live and kicking Alive, healthy, and alert. (A truncated version of "alive and kicking.") *Sam: "How are you feeling, John? I heard you were quite sick*

recently." John: "I'm still live and kicking!"

live by the sword, die by the sword 1. Those who live a violent lifestyle will usually die a violent death. *The young men of this city getting caught up in gang violence have the shortest lifespans of anyone in the state. You live by the sword, you die by the sword.* 2. If you rely upon a certain means of doing something, especially that which is illegal or harmful to others, you are likely to have a negative outcome as a result thereof. *For years the senator took bribes and skimmed profits from kickbacks all over his state, until finally the FBI put together a sting against him that ended up putting him away for life. Live by the sword, die by the sword.*

a live dog is better than a dead lion It is better to be a living coward than a dead hero. *I called for help rather than running into the burning building because a live dog is better than a dead lion.*

live high off the hog To prosper or otherwise live very well. It refers to the rich being able to afford the choicest cut of meat, which, from a pig, is higher up on the animal. *They've been living high off the hog ever since David won the lottery. It must be a shock for them having to count their pennies like this—they're used to living high off the hog, after all.*

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live in a glass house To be susceptible to or the target of judgment and criticism. Similar to the proverb "People who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones." A: "Why am I living in a glass house these days? Everyone is being so critical of my taste in women!" B: "Well, your last girlfriend was really rude to us all the time." Now that I've become a vegan, I feel like I live in a glass house—I constantly have to hear everyone's opinion on veganism.

live in an/(one's) ivory tower To reside or exist in a place or among a social circle that is characterized by effete academic intelligence and thus is out of touch with or aloof from the realities of life. *I don't put much weight in the advice of a bunch of economists living in their ivory towers who've never worked a real job in their lives. It seemed easy to solve all the world's problems when I was living in an ivory tower. Now that I'm out of college, I*

realize things are so much more complex than I'd imagined.

live in cloud-cuckoo land To believe that unrealistic, idealized, and/or fanciful ideas will happen, when in fact they are beyond the realms of possibility. *Tom thinks he'll be able to live off his bad poetry—he's living in cloud-cuckoo land if you ask me!*

live in cotton wool To lead a sheltered life, one devoid of stress and danger. The image here is of being wrapped in cotton and thus protected. Primarily heard in UK. *I never realized how much I had been living in cotton wool until I traveled and saw what true poverty looks like.*

live like fighting cocks To lead an extravagant life. Fighting cocks were typically well-fed, so as to increase their chances of success in a cock fight. A: *"Did Tom and Stephanie really buy a mansion?"* B: *"Yes, and they've been living like fighting cocks ever since Tom inherited all that money."*

live off smell of an oily rag To live very frugally, economically, or sparingly; to survive with very meager resources. Primarily heard in Australia, New Zealand. *I spent a year travelling abroad, and I lived off smell of an oily rag to get by. We're going to have to live off smell of an oily rag now that we have a fourth baby on the way.*

live off the grid 1. To live without one's home connected to municipal utility systems, such as the water supply or the main electrical grid. *I just need to get enough solar panels installed to disconnect from the city's electricity supply and I'll be able to live completely off the grid. 2. To exist outside of governmental observation; to be untraceable through any means of commerce or communication that could be linked to one's identity. *Fearing for his life, the whistle-blower from the intelligence agency was forced to live off the grid for a number of years, eschewing anything that might leave a digital footprint for someone to find.**

live on a shoestring To live within a very tight or limited financial budget. *We were living on a shoestring for a while after our baby was born, but, luckily, I got a promotion, and our situation has improved a bit.*

live on the smell of an oily rag To live very frugally, economically, or sparingly; to survive with very meager resources. Primarily heard in Australia, New Zealand. *I spent a year travelling abroad, and I lived on the smell of an oily rag to get by. We're going to have to live on the smell*

of an oily rag now that we have a fourth baby on the way.

a live one **1.** A person who lives a wild, carefree, or spendthrift life. *I hear Tommy's dating a real live one these days.* **2.** A person targeted to be the victim of a scam or to be made a dupe by others. *Don't go wandering wide-eyed in this part of town—crooks around here can spot a live one a mile away.*

live over the brush To cohabit with a significant other outside of marriage. *Mary doesn't want to live over the brush, so she won't move in with her boyfriend until they are married.*

live paycheck to paycheck To spend all of the money one earns by or before the next time one is paid, thus saving none or very little in the process. Primarily heard in US. *We're already living paycheck to paycheck, so I don't know how we'll manage this sudden increase in our rent.*

live payslip to payslip To spend all of the money one earns by or before the next time one is paid, thus saving none or very little in the process. Primarily heard in UK, Australia, Ireland. *We're already living payslip to payslip, so I don't know how we'll manage this sudden increase in our rent.*

live the life of Riley To lead a life of great ease, comfort, or luxury. The phrase is likely of early 20th-century Irish-American origin, but to whom Riley refers is uncertain. *Pampered from a young age after his father came into sudden wealth, Jonathan lived the life of Riley compared to the hardships his older siblings faced.*

live under the cat's foot To be dominated and/or nagged by another person, typically one's wife. *You've been living under the cat's foot since the day you got married! You need to assert yourself with your wife!*

live up to (one's) end of the bargain To do as was promised in an agreement or bargain; to carry through with what one agreed to do. *I've delivered the cash as you instructed. Now you have to live up to your end of the bargain! We've done the work on our end, I just hope their team lives up to their end of the bargain!*

live up to (someone's) expectations To be as good as or have the qualities that someone predicted, expected, or hoped for. *We'd heard so many good things about the new restaurant, but the food didn't live up to our expectations at all. I'm so excited for the latest movie in the series—I hope it*

lives up to my expectations!

live wire **1.** A wire through which electricity is running. *The power cable was severed when the car hit the pole, and the end of the live wire fell onto the windshield.* **2.** A very lively or energetic person. *Greg's such a live wire that it's tough to keep up with his stories!*

the living daylights **1.** The senses. Used as an expression of intensity, especially in the phrases "beat/kick the living daylights out of someone" or "scare/frighten the living daylights out of someone." *Jim had one too many drinks, picked a fight with a group of thugs, and had the living daylights beaten out of him! Don't sneak up on me like that—you scared the living daylights out of me!* **2.** obsolete The eyes. This was the original usage in the 18th century, but it eventually fell out of use and gave way to the more figurative definition above. *Should that rascal show his mischievous face on my estate again, I shall blacken his living daylights without remorse or restraint!*

living death A life full of pain or suffering. *It's a shame that some men treat marriage and family life like a living death. If I ever lost my independence due to injury or illness, it would be a living death. I don't like relying on other people.*

living hell An extremely unpleasant situation. *She described her marriage to her alcoholic husband as a living hell. So many bad things happened to me that year that it was a living hell.*

living impaired A jocular, pseudo-politically correct term for being dead. *The boss has ordered a hit on the stool pigeon, so make sure he's living impaired by the end of the day.*

a living legend A person who has an extraordinary reputation or level of fame while they are still alive. *The singer has made such a huge impact on the world of blues that she's come to be a living legend.*

a living soul A person (who is alive). (Often used in the negative to mean "nobody.") *Each living soul one meets is a chance to gain a new perspective on life. Our engagement is a complete secret, so don't tell another living soul, OK?*

living the dream Leading an extremely ideal life, especially in relation to one's career. (Sometimes said ironically to mean the opposite.) *Daniel:*

"John got a great new job testing video games, and he gets to travel to gaming conventions all over the world!" Janet: "Wow, it sounds like he's living the dream!" The only job I could get with my bachelor's degree was some mind-numbing data entry work. I'm really living the dream these days.

a load of baloney Falsehoods, nonsense, or foolishness. Baloney in this sense might have originated from the word "blarney," which means flattering or nonsensical talk; more usually it refers to bologna sausage, which is blended from different meats, therefore implying content of inferior or dubious quality. Primarily heard in US. *What a load of baloney. I know he doesn't have that kind of money.*

a load of bunk Nonsense or insincerity. Bunk is an abbreviation of the Americanism "bunkum," meaning insincere, empty talk, or disingenuous political talk meant merely to please a target audience. Primarily heard in US. *The plumber said it would cost \$800 to fix the toilet? What a load of bunk!*

load of crap A bunch of nonsense. *The candidate's views on the economy are a load of crap. His excuse is a load of crap. He never had any intention of following through on his promise.*

load of (something) A lot of something. *I have a load of coins that I need to take to the bank and deposit. I have loads of work to get done before I can go on vacation.*

load off (one's) feet A break to rest, usually by sitting down. *Do you mind if I sit down for a moment? I need to take a load off my feet.*

load off (one's) mind The relief felt after sharing what one is thinking or feeling with others, or upon no longer having a particular problem. *Having a night out to talk over my problem with my close friend helped me get a load off my mind. I finally completed my tax return for this year. That's a load off my mind!*

loaded dice 1. Literally, dice that have each been weighted to one side so as to increase the odds of their landing on the opposite number. *When they found out we'd been using loaded dice, they threw us out of the club and told us to never come back.* 2. By extension, a means of gaining an advantage through the exploitation or manipulation of rules or regulations. *At the height of the economic boom, investment bankers were using sub-prime mortgages with falsified credit ratings as loaded dice to make as much money as possible.*

loaded language Words that are used in an attempt to sway someone, often by appealing to their emotions. *Once you're able to recognize loaded language, you'll be far less likely to be fooled by commercials and politicians.*

loaded word A word that carries additional emotional weight or significance—whether positive or negative—beyond its literal meaning. *If you want to get into politics, you should always avoid using loaded words that might offend someone unintentionally.*

loaf about To waste time idly; to spend time doing little or nothing. *Chris, quit loafing about and help me take out the trash! After the stressful week that I had, I'm looking forward to just loafing about the house for the weekend.*

loaf around To waste time idly; to spend time doing little or nothing. *Quit loafing around and help me take out the trash! After the stressful week that I had, I'm looking forward to just loafing around the house for the weekend.*

loaves and fishes Tangible benefits or rewards, especially when they serve as one's motivation for action. The phrase refers to the Bible story in which Jesus blesses a small amount of fish and loaves of bread, resulting in the disciples having enough food to distribute to thousands of people. *Paul hasn't helped us with this project at all, but you know he'll be there for the loaves and fishes if we win the contest!*

lock lips (with someone) To kiss (someone) passionately and at length. *I'll never forget locking lips with my wife for the very first time. OK, you two, quit locking lips—our train is about leave.*

lock (someone) up and throw away the key To incarcerate someone in prison forever or indefinitely. *That crazy drunk driver nearly hit me! I hope they lock him up and throw away the key!*

lock the stable door after the horse has bolted To try to prevent or rectify a problem after the damage has already been done. *My father quit smoking after he was diagnosed with lung cancer, but I'm afraid he's locking the stable door after the horse has bolted.*

lock, stock, and barrel Entirely or completely. *Much to his wife's surprise, he cleaned out the basement, lock, stock, and barrel. When my son came home from his football game, he was so hungry that he ate everything*

in the refrigerator, lock, stock, and barrel.

locked in a time warp See [be locked in a time warp](#).

locker-room humor Especially crude, vulgar, or bawdy humor. *I'm no prude by any means, but I hate the locker-room humor my boyfriend partakes in when his buddies are around.*

locker-room talk Especially crude, vulgar, or bawdy humor or chatter. *I'm no prude by any means, but I hate the locker-room talk my boyfriend partakes in when his buddies are around.*

locker room talk Crude, vulgar, or bawdy talk, often involving boasts about one's sexual conquests. *I'm no prude by any means, but I hate the locker room talk my boyfriend partakes in when his buddies are around.*

LOLcat A meme featuring cats in humorous poses accompanied by text that mimics Internet speak. ("LOL" is an abbreviation for "laughing out loud.") *The picture of the cat saying "I CAN HAS CHEEZBURGER?" might be the first the LOLcat.*

lone gunman A shooter that acts alone. This phrase is perhaps most often associated with Lee Harvey Oswald, the man who assassinated John F. Kennedy. *I know you think the murders were perpetrated by a lone gunman, but I just can't believe that no one else helped him to carry out all this violence.*

lone it To go somewhere or do something alone; to be by oneself. A: *"Do you want to come out with me and my friends to see a movie?"* B: *"No thanks, I'm just going to lone it tonight."* *No one else wanted to leave the party, so I had to lone it back home.*

(lone) voice in the wilderness One who expresses an unpopular opinion or idea. *She felt like a voice in the wilderness as she tried to warn others about the impending economic collapse. He was a lone voice in the wilderness as he tried to expose the vast corruption within the organization.*

lone wolf **1.** Someone who does not seek or like the company of others. *Shannon should have known Brad would break her heart—he's a lone wolf who doesn't like getting close to anybody.* A: *"Does he have any friends at school?"* B: *"No, I think he's a lone wolf."* **2.** A terrorist who acts alone or independently of a larger group when carrying out an attack. *The attack was carried out by another lone wolf who had no affiliation with terror groups*

but was inspired by radical postings online.

a lonely little petunia in an onion patch One who is out of place among those one finds unpleasant, uncouth, or overly aggressive. Taken from a 1946 song of the same name by Johnny Kimano, Billy Faber, and Maurie Hartmann. *I'm feeling really uncomfortable in this rowdy sports bar, like a lonely little petunia in an onion patch.*

long absent, soon forgotten The longer a person is not present, the easier they are to forget about. A: *"Is Carrie really dating someone else now?"* B: *"You've been gone for months! Long absent, soon forgotten."*

long arm Broad, far-reaching power or influence. (Usually paired with a noun, as in "the long arm of the law.") *The long arm of justice finally put the murderer in jail, where he belongs. I'm afraid the long arm of corporate interests may make environmental preservation a near impossibility.*

long bread Money, especially a large amount of it. *Boy, I bet that you had to lay down some long bread for that new car, huh? I wonder how much long bread this repair job will cost.*

long drink A mixed beverage in a tall or large glass containing little or no alcohol. *I have an early start tomorrow, so I'm just on the long drinks tonight.*

long drink of water 1. A tall, typically slender person. *Who's that long drink of water who just walked into the bar? You're a long drink of water, aren't you? What are you, six-foot-five?* **2.** A rather boring, plain, or uninteresting person. *Sarah's new boyfriend sure is a long drink of water, huh? He barely said a word all night.*

long face A facial expression denoting sadness. *Jill had such a long face yesterday after she learned that she failed her exam. Hey, kiddo, why the long face? Is something bothering you?*

long finger A state of postponement or procrastination. (Used especially in the phrase "put something on the long finger.") Primarily heard in Ireland. *It looks like increased funding for education has been left on the long finger by the Dáil yet again. I've been meaning to send in my college applications, but I keep putting it on the long finger.*

long game The part of one's golf game in which one hits the ball for distance. *I've been trying to improve my long game for the golf outing next weekend, and now I can drive the ball twice as far as I used to!*

long green Money, especially a large amount of it. Primarily heard in US. *Boy, I bet you had to lay down some long green for that new sports car, huh? How much long green is this repair job gonna cost me?*

long haul 1. A difficult task that requires a lot of time and energy to complete. *It's going to be a long haul before I have this car up and running. It needs a lot of work.* 2. A long distance or journey. *Jill knows that obtaining a PhD is going to be tough, but she said she's in it for the long haul. It's a long haul to Fresno, but if we take turns driving it shouldn't be so bad.*

long memory A clear memory of events that happened long ago. *My grandma has a long memory of her childhood in Russia. It's astonishing hearing how things were when she was young! I always have a long memory for people who disrespect me. Once you're in my bad books, you're there forever!*

long pig obsolete Human flesh when eaten as food by cannibals. *As our canoe drifted down the river into the thickest parts of the jungle, the thought crossed my mind that we may well end up as long pig for some savage's meal.*

long pork obsolete Human flesh when eaten as food by cannibals. *As our canoe drifted down the river into the thickest parts of the jungle, the thought crossed my mind that we may well end up as long pork for some savage's meal.*

a long row to hoe A particularly difficult or problematic task, situation, or set of circumstances to contend with or confront. *Immigration reform was one of the new president's primary campaign promises, but it will likely prove a long row to hoe, given the deep divisions in congress. I know finishing this thesis will be a long row to hoe, but I'm actually looking forward to the challenge.*

long-run (used before a noun) Involving, maturing after, or lasting for a long period of time. *Our team has come up with a number of long-run solutions to our financial problems, but we'll have to make some sacrifices for them to be effective. If you're thinking of starting a savings account, it's good to have some long-run goals for how much you want to put aside each month.*

long run 1. adjective (typically hyphenated and used before a noun) Of, covering, or to do with a long, indefinite, or future period of time. *It's great*

that you have some long-run goals and ambitions for the business in mind already, but we really need some immediate solutions in place now if we want to survive beyond Christmas. **2.** noun A relatively long or extended length of time; an indefinite period that encompasses many potential changes or effects. *This latest merger deal will take care of the long run for both companies. This minimum wage increase may have some negative effects on businesses at first, but they will be dwarfed by the benefits yielded in the long run.*

long shot **1.** A bet that has a low probability of winning. *That horse is a long shot, but the bet will pay well if he wins the race.* **2.** Something that has a very small chance of succeeding. *I know it's a long shot because of his busy schedule, but maybe I can convince him to help me with this project. Her candidacy was a long shot from the beginning, and her landslide defeat was no surprise.*

long since Long ago; of the (relatively) distant past. *Though Sarah had long since moved on from their relationship, Jonathan still hoped they would one day get back together. I came back to my hometown after college, eager to reconnect with old friends, but they had long since moved away.*

long time A lengthy amount of time. *We've been waiting here for a long time. When will we be seated? Oh, I've known Holly for a long time—since grade school, in fact!*

long time, no hear A phrase said when one hasn't communicated with someone else for a long time. It is similar to the phrase "long time, no see." *Hey Jenna, long time, no hear! What are you doing these days?*

the longest pole knocks the persimmon Success comes easily to those who have the best resources or means to obtain it. Primarily heard in US. *Of course the daughter of a millionaire would get into that prestigious school. The longest pole knocks the persimmon, after all.*

look a little peaked See [you look a little peaked](#).

look (a little/bit) off **1.** To look sickly, unwell, or out of sorts, either physically or mentally. *You're looking a little off, Jim. Are you feeling all right? That dog on the corner looks a bit off. I think we should walk another way home.* **2.** To appear somewhat strange, incorrect, inaccurate, or substandard. A: *"The rest of your portrait is coming along really well, but the hands look a bit off."* B: *"I know, hands are just so hard to draw!"* The

gameplay is great, but the graphics on the characters' faces are off. **3.** Of food, to appear spoiled or rotten. *These chicken breasts look a little bit off—I think we should throw them in the garbage.*

look after number one To put one's own needs, concerns, or responsibilities before those of anyone else. *The only way you're going to get ahead in this business is if you look after number one. It doesn't make you a selfish person if you look after number one from time to time. Just don't do it exclusively.*

look as if butter wouldn't melt in (one's) mouth To appear innocent or reserved in certain company, when in fact one may have the opposite demeanor. *Sure, he looks as if butter wouldn't melt in his mouth when he's around people he doesn't know, but stay a while and you'll see what he's really like.*

look askance at (someone or something) To view or regard something in a disapproving or distrustful manner. *I can't understand why everyone in this club is looking askance at me. Am I not wearing the right thing? Some people look askance at these institutions, but I believe they are beneficial to the public.*

look askance upon (someone or something) To view or regard something in a disapproving or distrustful manner. *Such is the state of politics these days that even the most patriotic citizens tend to look askance upon the manner in which congress conducts business. I know that the Ivy League students may look askance upon a country bumpkin such as myself, but I will show them that I have the mettle to be their equal.*

look (at something) through rose-colored glasses To assume a generally optimistic and cheerful attitude (toward something); to focus on the positive aspects (of something). Primarily heard in US. *I know nostalgia can be misleading, but I really look at my childhood through rose-colored glasses. I think Mary is only capable of looking through rose-colored glasses, like she's in complete denial of the negative things in life!*

look (at something) through rose-tinted glasses To assume a generally optimistic and cheerful attitude (toward something); to focus on the positive aspects (of something). Primarily heard in US. *I know nostalgia can be misleading, but I really look at my childhood through rose-tinted glasses. I think Mary is only capable of looking through rose-tinted glasses, like she's*

in complete denial of the negative things in life!

look babies in the eyes To gaze affectionately into another person's eyes. *Are they still at the table, looking babies in the eyes, or have they managed to tear themselves away from each other?*

look beneath the surface To focus on the deeper aspects of something, as opposed to the traits that are most easily identified. *When you write your book reports, please look beneath the surface of the text and analyze the author's stylistic choices.*

look down (one's) nose at (someone or something) To regard oneself as superior to others and thus act in a haughty or snobbish manner. *The well-dressed businessman looked down his nose at the homeless man sitting on the corner. Once Jane was promoted to management, she looked down her nose at the people who used to be her colleagues.*

look for a dog to kick To seek out someone to blame or castigate, especially someone who is not at fault. (Usually said in the continuous tense.) *My dad had a famously short fuse when we were growing up, so we soon learned to get out of his way when he was looking for a dog to kick. The troubled economy is the result of many factors, but the president is usually the first one blamed by voters looking for a dog to kick.*

look for trouble To do something or act in a manner that will very likely result in trouble, difficulty, or danger. (Usually used in the continuous tense.) *Those kids were just looking for trouble when they went trespassing on my property, and now, trouble is what they're going to get! I know you're annoyed at your boss for making you come in on the weekend, but don't go looking for trouble!*

look forward to (something) To excitedly anticipate something. *I'm looking forward to visiting my family this Christmas—I haven't been home for the holidays in years! Thank you for calling me to schedule an interview. I look forward to it.*

look in on (someone or something) To check on a person or thing by visiting or looking from a short distance. *Since I'm going to be working late tonight, can you look in on my cat and see if she has enough food in her bowl? The boss likes to look in on the interns every so often to make sure they always have something to do.*

look like a million See [you look like a million](#).

look like a million bucks To look exceptionally attractive or in very robust health. *Wow, George looks like a million bucks in that new suit! You see? Fluids and rest were all you needed to beat that cold. You're already looking like a million bucks compared to yesterday!*

look like a million dollars To look exceptionally attractive or in very robust health. *Wow, George looks like a million dollars in that new suit! You see? Fluids and rest were all you needed to beat that cold. You're already looking like a million dollars compared to yesterday!*

look like the cat that ate the canary 1. To appear smug and/or overly pleased with oneself to others, especially over something one has done, received, or accomplished. *After her promotion, Janet spent the rest of the day looking like the cat that ate the canary.* 2. To have the appearance of guilt but attempt to hide behind an air of smugness or feigned nonchalance. *When questioned on the use of campaign funds for his own personal pleasure, the senator looked like the cat that ate the canary.*

look on the bright side To highlight the good in an otherwise bad situation. *Looking on the bright side, I'll have plenty of time to start my own business now that I'm unemployed. I know you're disappointed, but you need to look on the bright side. At least you made it to the championship game—that's more than a lot of people can say.*

look on the sunny side (of life/things) To view one's life, situation, or circumstances with a generally optimistic and cheerful attitude; to focus on what is positive in life. *My mother always told me to look on the sunny side of life, and I have to admit, it helps when I'm having a rough day. I've had a problem with anxiety and stress, but lately I've been trying to just look on the sunny side of things. Life's too short to worry about every little detail; I say, just look on the sunny side and have a bit of fun!*

look out for number one To put one's own needs, concerns, or responsibilities before those of anyone else. *The only way you're going to get ahead in this business is if you look out for number one. It doesn't make you a selfish person if you look out for number one from time to time.*

look (someone) off In sports, especially American football, to mislead an opponent with one's eyes as to one's intentions in a given play. *Looking off*

the free safety, the quarterback made an incredible pass to his wide receiver down the center of the field.

look through a millstone To have exceptional powers of perception. A millstone is opaque and thus is impossible to see through. *I knew he was a dishonest person the minute I met him. I can look through a millstone, you know.*

look through blue glasses To have a distorted view of something based on one's preconceived notions or prejudices. *This group of interns is really great, so stop looking through blue glasses and judging them based on the poor interns we've had in the past.*

look to (one's) laurels To actively maintain one's favorable position when faced with competition. ("Laurels" are achievements or honors.) *If John wants to maintain his lead in the triathlon, he's going to have to look to his laurels. Sure, the recruiter likes you, but there are many good candidates for this job, so you better look to your laurels.*

look what the cat('s) dragged in A mild and usually playful insult used to announce someone's arrival and suggest that the person has a messy or otherwise disheveled physical appearance. *When Jennifer came in soaking wet from the rain, Candice laughed and said, "Look what the cat dragged in!" Hey, everybody, look what the cat's dragged in. How's retirement treating you, Joe?*

loose cannon Someone who has the propensity to act unpredictably or to lose their temper very quickly. *You really have to be mindful of what you say to Jake. He's a loose cannon, and the smallest things will send him into a fit of rage. The star quarterback's reputation as a loose cannon hurt his chances of being signed by a new team.*

loose change A small, usually insignificant amount of money, typically consisting of coins. *I always try to donate any loose change I've got into the charity boxes in convenience stores. It isn't much, but hopefully, it helps a little bit. My wife and I put our loose change in a big jar at the end of the day.*

loose ends The aspects of something that are unresolved or unfinished. *I just need to tie up a few loose ends before I put the house up for sale. My thesis is almost done—the only loose ends are formatting and proofreading. I have a few loose ends I want to address before I move out West.*

loose lip(s) The practice, habit, or manner of speaking too frequently and/or without discretion, especially as might unintentionally lead to revealing private or sensitive information to others. *You've got a very loose lip, son. You'd do well to learn to keep it shut! The details of this project are extremely confidential, so make sure you don't have loose lips about it.*

loose talk Uninhibited, indiscreet talk or conversation, especially as might unintentionally lead to revealing private or sensitive information to others. *The details of this project are extremely confidential, so there can't be any loose talk about it whatsoever.*

loosen the apron strings To lessen the extent to which someone controls, influences, or monitors someone else, especially parents in relation to their children. *Mothers these days are so fussy about their kids, having to know where they are at every second of the day. They would really do well to loosen the apron strings a little, if you ask me! Sending kids to summer camps has been in decline in recent years, as parents have become less and less inclined to loosen the apron strings.*

loosen the purse strings To become more liberal with one's expenditures; to increase the availability of money for spending purposes. *After having to count my pennies for so long, it's nice to be able to loosen the purse strings a bit! We'd have a much better and more stable product if the boss would loosen the purse strings a little.*

the Lord helps those who help themselves You should not rely solely on prayer to attain the things you want; hard work and effort will be rewarded. *You can't just sit around, waiting for the phone to ring, you have to keep auditioning—the Lord helps those who help themselves.*

lord of the flies Beelzebub (who, depending on the usage, can be either Satan or a less-specific demon). Beelzebub's Hebrew name literally means "lord of the flies." *You can't tempt me, lord of the flies!*

Lord willing and if the creek don't rise See [\(the good\) Lord willing and the creek don't rise](#).

the Lord works in mysterious ways A phrase said when things have not happened as one had hoped or expected. It implies that everything happens for a reason. *I know you were really excited about that job, but maybe it's for the best that you didn't get it—the Lord works in mysterious*

ways, after all. I thought that getting divorced would be the worst experience of my life, but then I fell in love with my divorce lawyer. The Lord works in mysterious ways!

Lord's Supper **1.** Another term for the Last Supper, the last meal that Jesus shared with his disciples before his crucifixion, which Christians believe instituted the sacrament of Eucharist. *We celebrate the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday.* **2.** The sacrament of Eucharist. *Now that you've made your First Holy Communion, you can receive the Lord's Supper during Mass.*

lose no time (in) doing (something) To do something immediately or as expediently as possible. *Wow, Sarah lost no time finding a new boyfriend after she and Rob split up. We have to have the application in by tomorrow morning, so we must lose no time in getting all the signatures we need.*

lose (one's) bearings To lose sight of or become unable to determine one's orientation, position, or abilities relative to one's surroundings or situation. *Trying to find her way home through the woods in the dead of night, Sarah lost her bearings when the clouds obscured the stars overhead. I feel like I've been losing my bearings in life ever since I lost my job.*

lose (one's) bottle To lose one's nerve, courage, or resolve to undertake something. Primarily heard in UK. *I wanted to ask Steve on a date, but I lost my bottle at the last minute.*

lose (one's) buttons To be or become mentally deficient, incompetent, or deranged; to become of unsound mind. *My poor grandmother started losing her buttons after she had a stroke on her 84th birthday. I've been so sleep deprived lately that it feels like I'm losing my buttons!*

lose (one's) cherry **1.** vulgar slang To have sexual intercourse for the first time. *There is nothing wrong with waiting until you're absolutely ready before you lose your cherry. Too many people try to pressure you into it from too young an age.* **2.** vulgar slang To do something for the first time, often that which is particularly daunting, difficult, dangerous, illicit, etc. *Somebody pass Marcus the joint, he still needs to lose his cherry tonight! For her birthday, I bought my friend Samantha a voucher so she could lose her cherry sky diving.*

lose (one's) faith (in something or someone) To stop believing (in someone or something); to become disillusioned, embittered, or

doubtful (about something or someone). (When said simply as "lose faith," it is often in reference to losing religious faith in God.) *The staff have started losing faith in John's ability to manage the restaurant properly. I lost my faith in my friends ever since they turned their backs on me when my husband left. It's not uncommon to lose faith at some point in one's life, but God will reveal himself to you if you're willing to receive Him.*

lose (one's) footing **1.** To stumble and/or fall, typically during a physical activity such as walking. *I sprained my ankle when I lost my footing on a hike. Be careful not to lose your footing while you're on the ladder!* **2.** By extension, to lose one's stability by entering a precarious or unsettling situation. *I loved my job, so I really lost my footing when I was laid off. I'm just worried that he'll lose his footing if he drops out of school now—there's no guarantee he'll ever go back.*

lose (one's) head To lose one's composure and act emotionally or irrationally. *You need to calm down before you talk to Larry. You don't want to lose your head before finding out his side of the story. I'm sorry, I lost my head out there. There's no excuse for what I said.*

lose (one's) heart to (someone) To fall in love or become smitten with someone. *She lost her heart to the tall, handsome man the minute they met.*

lose (one's) marbles To be or become mentally deficient, incompetent, or deranged; to become of unsound mind. *My poor grandmother started losing her marbles after she had a stroke. I've been so sleep deprived lately that it feels like I've lost my marbles!*

lose (one's) rag slang To become extremely upset or angry, usually unexpectedly. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *I'd had such a rough day at work that I lost my rag when my brother started teasing me once I got home.*

lose (one's) shit **1.** rude slang To lash out emotionally (often angrily). *My mom lost her shit when she found out that my sister had taken money from her purse without permission. I never expected Tom to start crying and kicking chairs when he wasn't elected to student council, but he totally lost his shit!* **2.** rude slang To lose control of one's mental faculties. *Why did I get up from my desk? Oh man, I'm definitely losing my shit.*

lose (one's) spirit To lose one's vigor, energy, hope, or resolve; to become resigned or complacent. *The underdog team had a shot at winning*

the game early on, but they seem to have lost their spirit at this point. You've come so far with your law degree. Don't lose spirit now!

lose (one's) tongue To suddenly become unable to speak, typically due to shock or confusion. *Kathy was so surprised when she won the award that she lost her tongue and wasn't able to make an acceptance speech. If I had to speak in front of a crowd that big, I think I would lose my tongue.*

lose (one's)/the way To become lost; to become unable to find the correct course forward. *Sarah lost her way home walking through the woods in the dead of night when the clouds obscured the stars overhead. I think we've lost the way. Maybe we should stop somewhere and ask for directions. I feel like I've been losing my way in life ever since I lost my job.*

lose the number of (one's) mess obsolete military and naval To die or be killed. *Many good men lost the number of their mess after the sabotage attack on our ship.*

lose to To be defeated by (someone). The victor can be mentioned after "to," or the lost thing can be stated between "lose" and "to." *The football team lost to their rivals in the championship game. I can't believe I lost the student council presidency to that doofus!*

a losing battle A failing or hopeless effort; a situation or activity that is ultimately futile or cannot be won. Most often used in the phrase "fight a losing battle." *I'd give up trying to get your brother to agree to this deal if I were you, it looks like a losing battle at this point. You're fighting a losing battle if you think you can convince Sarah to go to college.*

a losing game A failing or hopeless effort; a situation or activity that is ultimately futile or cannot be won. (Most often used in the phrase "play a losing game.") *I'd give up trying to get your brother to agree to this deal if I were you. It looks like a losing game at this point. You're playing a losing game if you think you can convince Sarah to go to college.*

loss of face The state or circumstance of having lost the respect of other people, as due to having done something improper or unacceptable. *After my terrible loss of face in front of the in-laws, I knew I couldn't return to their home for the foreseeable future.*

lost cause Something that has no or a very low chance of succeeding or turning out well. *The general gave orders to surrender as soon as he saw the*

battle was a lost cause. Trying to keep a clean house with three young children is a lost cause.

lost in the wash Lost amid a confusing mix of things. A: *"Where's my homework?"* B: *"Here, it was lost in the wash on the kitchen table."*

lost in translation Of a word or words, having lost or lacking the full subtlety of meaning or significance when translated from the original language to another, especially when done literally. (Usually formulated as "be/get lost in translation.") *My friend tried explaining a few French idioms to me, but I'm afraid they were lost in translation. Online translation tools are pretty amazing, but a lot gets lost in translation this way.*

lost soul **1.** A sinner, especially one who has been condemned to hell (as opposed to being granted eternal life in heaven). *I worry that my granddaughter is a lost soul, since she's stopped going to church.* **2.** One who is sad, lonely, and/or aimless. *Ever since his wife died, my brother just drifts through the town like a lost soul.*

a lot A large amount, extent, or degree of something. Also written in the plural form, "lots." *I have a lot of respect for my father, who worked hard every day to give us the things we wanted. It was lots of fun hanging out last night.*

lot lizard slang A prostitute who primarily or solely solicits sexual services in parking lots used by truck drivers. Primarily heard in US. *Like clockwork, the lot lizards start scoping out potential customers as soon as the sun sets.*

a lot of baloney Falsehoods, nonsense, or foolishness. Baloney in this sense might have originated from the word "blarney," which means flattering or nonsensical talk; more usually it refers to bologna sausage, which is blended from different meats, therefore implying content of inferior or dubious quality. Primarily heard in US. *Don't give me that excuse, it's just a lot of baloney. Dave acts like he's smooth with the ladies, but it's a lot of a baloney.*

a lot of bunk Nonsense or insincerity. Bunk is an abbreviation of the Americanism "bunkum," meaning insincere, empty talk, or disingenuous political talk meant merely to please a target audience. Primarily heard in US. *In my opinion, most of what a politician promises during a campaign is just a lot of bunk.*

a lot of malarkey Exaggerated, foolish, or untruthful talk; nonsense or falsehoods. *Don't believe your grandad's stories, son. It's all a lot of malarkey.*

a lot of moola A large amount of money. While its origin is unknown, moola (or moolah) as a slang term for money has been in use in the U.S. since the early 1900s. Primarily heard in US. *They sure have a whole lot of moola after winning the lottery last week.*

a lot of pluck Courage, nerves, determination, or resolve, especially in the face of adversity or hardship. *You've got a lot of pluck, kid, standing up to a big brute like that.*

a lot on (one's) plate A lot to do. *I just have a lot on my plate right now while I'm finishing up my degree and doing this huge project for work.*

loud mouth **1.** A person who talks incessantly, indiscreetly, and/or in a noisy, boastful manner. *That loud mouth Bill had better learn to stop discussing other peoples' business, or he's going to find himself with a lot of unwanted enemies. I can't stand Terry's new husband—he's such a loud mouth!* **2.** A tendency or habit of speaking in such a manner. *That loud mouth of yours is going to get you in trouble one of these days. If I'd known you had such a loud mouth, I'd have never shared my secret with you!*

lounge lizard A man who frequents bars and clubs in an attempt to meet women. Primarily heard in US. *That dive bar is filled with nothing but troublemakers and lounge lizards.*

love child A child born out of wedlock. *The candidate's campaign was in jeopardy after the media uncovered a love child he had with his secret mistress.*

love goggles The inability to see any flaws in one's beloved. *Dana's love goggles keep her from seeing how controlling her girlfriend is*

love-in **1.** A gathering focused on personal pleasure involving music, drugs, and sexual acts. *Margaret reminisced about when she used to attend love-ins in the '60s.* **2.** A situation involving lavish mutual praise and admiration. *The office party became a love-in as the managers all congratulated each other on their various accomplishments.*

love muscle slang A man's penis. *It's my belief that, in general, men care far more about the size of their love muscles than do the women they sleep*

with.

love nest **1.** A home where a loving and affectionate couple lives. *The newlyweds couldn't wait to start building their love nest when they returned from their honeymoon.* **2.** A place where two people meet secretly to have a romantic affair. *Nobody but Judy knew that Sheila and Bob had a love nest near the office for their midday rendezvous.*

love-tooth in the head A constant need or yearning for love. A: *"Stacey always seems to have a boyfriend."* B: *"I know, she really has a love-tooth in the head!"*

loved up **1.** (hyphenated if used before a noun) Of a particularly euphoric and loving disposition toward oneself and others, especially as might be induced by taking mood-altering drugs. *It's always great fun hanging out with the loved-up hippies at music festivals. Everyone at the party was all loved up and spaced out, so I knew they all must have taken some kind of illicit substance.* **2.** (hyphenated if used before a noun) Very romantically infatuated; loving and feeling loved. *I think it's sweet seeing Carol so loved up with her new boyfriend. I hate coming to this part of town. It's always just filled with loved-up couples making kissy faces at each other.*

low-down **1.** adjective (used prenominal) Dishonest or unfair; vile or despicable; contemptible. *The guy I've been seeing turned out to be a low-down, cheating rat! You're nothing but a low-down coward, you know that? My low-down boss fired me, even though it was his mistake that lost us the client!* **2.** noun The truth, facts, or most pertinent information about something. *OK, here's the low-down: I've got a great business opportunity lined up, but I need to borrow a few thousand dollars to get it off the ground. This is Jane—she'll give you the low-down on day-to-day tasks around the office.*

low ebb A state of decline. *The economy is at a low ebb with no hope of recovery in the near future.*

low man on the ladder The person (not necessarily male) with the least amount of experience, authority, and/or influence in a social or corporate hierarchy. *It can be a little daunting going from being a senior in high school to low man on the ladder again as a college freshman. I know I'll be low man on the ladder with this internship, but it will at least give me a place to start my career!*

low man on the totem pole The person (not necessarily a man) with the least amount of experience, authority, and/or influence in a social or corporate hierarchy. *It can be a little daunting going from being a senior in high school to low man on the totem pole again as a college freshman. I know I'll be low man on the totem pole with this internship, but it will at least give me a place to start in my career!*

the low road Any method, practice, or course of action that is unethical, unscrupulous, underhanded, or otherwise base or vile. (Most often used in the phrase "take the low road.") *It's unfair that those who work the hardest will be undermined by those who choose to take the low road to success. I didn't raise my son to be the type of person who would choose the low road in life!*

lower (one's) guard To become less guarded or vigilant; to stop being cautious about potential trouble or danger. *We'll wait long enough for them to lower their guard before we launch our invasion. There will always be people in this business looking to exploit you, so you can never lower your guard.*

lower the bar To lower the standards of quality that are expected of or required for something. *Soaring rents have really lowered the bar for where people are willing to live these days. During the economic boom, regulators lowered the bar for investment bankers' accountability.*

the lowest rung of the ladder The lowest, most basic position in a given group. *Quarks are at the lowest rung of the ladder in the physical makeup of matter. Tech startups may start on the lowest rung of the ladder economically, but, given their business model, they have a very high potential for growth.*

the lowest rung on the ladder The person with the least amount of experience, authority, and/or influence in a social or corporate hierarchy. *It can be a little daunting going from being a senior in high school to the lowest rung of the ladder again as a college freshman. I know I'll be the lowest rung on the ladder with this internship, but it will at least give me a place to start my career!*

lubrication payment A small sum of money or other gifts or services to be paid or given to government officials to expedite business operations in countries that do not prohibit such activity. *Whenever I start up a new factory overseas, I make sure to bring along enough cash on hand for any lubrication payments I may need to make.*

luck in To be very lucky or fortunate; to experience particularly good luck. (A nonstandard variant of "luck out.") *I really lucked in with my graduate school program. I have the most amazing group of professors and peers!*

(one's) lucky day A particular day or moment in one's life when one experiences extremely good luck, fortune, or favor. *Wow, that's the third hand of poker I've won in a row—it must be my lucky day! Sir, today is your lucky day: you've been selected for an all-expenses-paid trip to the Bahamas!*

lucky devil Someone who has just experienced particularly good fortune, generally of whom the speaker is envious to some degree. *You just won an all-expenses-paid trip to the Bahamas? You lucky devil! Dan: "I hear Janet is getting a settlement of nearly \$2 million for her work injury." Patrick: "That lucky devil, all she did was break her ankle; now she's set for life!"*

lucky dip **1.** noun A game in which a person (typically a child) pays to search through a container in the hopes of picking out a prize that cannot be seen. Primarily heard in UK. *I remember playing the lucky dip when I was young. In those days, cheap little toys were hidden in barrels of sawdust, and you had to pick them out with your eyes closed!* **2.** noun Any process or method in which the outcome is chosen or selected at random or without certainty. Primarily heard in UK. *Buying a car online that's worth your money can be something of a lucky dip.* **3.** adjective (hyphenated and used before a noun) Of or having a process of random selection. Primarily heard in UK. *To make room selection fair for all incoming students, the university decided to implement a lucky-dip system for room assignments.*

lully prigger A particularly contemptible thief. Primarily heard in UK. *I can't believe you stole your own grandmother's car, you lully prigger!*

lump in (one's) throat A feeling that one is unable to speak due to sadness, anxiety, or another strong emotion. *I had a lump in my throat as I watched the casket of the fallen soldier return home. When Bob stood up to thank everyone at his retirement party, he got a lump in his throat and just had to nod and smile as he teared up.*

lump it An expression of annoyance and dismissal of someone or something. It means the same as "Forget it!" *Well, you can lump it because I'm not staying late to help you—that project is your responsibility!*

lump to (one's) throat A feeling that one is unable to speak due to

sadness, anxiety, or another strong emotion. *Watching the casket of the fallen soldier return home brought a lump to my throat.*

the lunatics are running the asylum The people least capable of running a group or organization are now in charge. Said especially when the result is total chaos or calamity. *With the primary schools giving their young students complete control over the curriculum, it seems as though the lunatics are running the asylum. After the recent election, a new wave of political extremists have taken power in Congress. It looks like the lunatics are now running the asylum.*

the lunatics have taken over the asylum The people least capable of running a group or organization are now in charge. Said especially when the result is total chaos or calamity. *With the primary schools giving their young students complete control over the curriculum, it seems as though the lunatics have taken over the asylum. After the recent election, a new wave of political extremists have taken power in Congress. It looks like the lunatics have taken over the asylum.*

lust for life Intense eagerness to experience all that life has to offer. *I don't mind growing old, but I sometimes miss that boundless lust for life I had when I was younger. My 80-year-old grandfather has a lust for life that continues to amaze us all!*

lust for power Intense, insatiable desire to attain power and control. *My brother's lust for power in our company has created some deep and bitter divisions between him and the rest of the family.*

lying ahead of See [lie ahead of \(someone or something\)](#).

lying at door See [lie at \(one's\) door](#).

lying before See [lie before \(someone or something\)](#).

M

mad as a hornet Enraged; extremely or inconsolably angry. *My dad was mad as a hornet after I crashed his car You make me mad as a hornet with the way you carry on sometimes, you know that?*

mad as a hornet See [\(as\) mad as a hornet](#).

mad as a wet hen See [\(as\) mad as a wet hen](#).

mad as hell Enraged; extremely or inconsolably angry. *My dad was mad as hell after I crashed his car. You make me mad as hell with the way you carry on sometimes, you know that?*

mad as hops Enraged; extremely or inconsolably angry. *My dad was mad as hops after I crashed his car. You make me mad as hops with the way you carry on sometimes, you know that?*

mad as hops See [\(as\) mad as hops](#).

mad money 1. A small sum of cash money kept aside or in reserve for emergencies, unforeseen expenses, or impulsive purchases. *Whenever we travel, my wife and I keep a small purse of mad money with us just in case we find ourselves in a difficult situation. She likes to set aside a little mad money when she's doing errands each day, so she can buy something nice for herself if she fancies it.* 2. A small sum of cash carried by a woman to pay for the fare home in the event of her quarreling with and separating from her date or escort. *My mother taught me to always have a bit of mad money on me when I go on dates, just in case things turn sour at the end of the evening.*

made from whole cloth Completely fictional or utterly false; totally made up. A reference to tailors who would falsely advertise garments being "cut out of whole cloth," when in reality, they were pieced together from different cuts. *To be honest, I don't believe a word he says—it sounds like it's made from whole cloth to me.*

made in China A phrase printed on objects (or on the labels attached to objects) that have been produced in factories in China. The phrase is sometimes used derisively to highlight a lack of quality. *I thought this piece was handcrafted by European artisans, but look—it says "made in China" on*

the bottom! I took up pottery because I was sick of using flimsy plastic cups that had been made in China!

made in the shade In a comfortable position in life, usually due to some manner of financial success or windfall. *I can't believe they sold their company for billions—they're made in the shade now! If you're born into a wealthy family, you're made in the shade while the rest of us struggle.*

made of sterner stuff Very strong, determined, or of uncompromising character, especially in comparison to others. *Having to take care of both of us growing up, my brother George was made of sterner stuff as a kid than anyone else I knew. I can't believe you let us down at the last minute. I thought you were made of sterner stuff than that!*

made out of whole cloth Completely fictional or utterly false; totally made up. A reference to tailors who would falsely advertise garments being "cut out of whole cloth," when in reality, they were pieced together from different cuts. *To be honest, I don't believe a word he says—it sounds made out of whole cloth to me.*

magic bullet 1. A drug, treatment, or medical therapy that provides an immediate cure to an ailment, disease, or condition without negative side effects or consequences. *Despite the amazing leaps in medical technology and knowledge, we're still quite a ways off from developing a magic bullet in cancer treatment. Beware any person or company trying to sell you a magic bullet for your health problems. If it sounds too good to be true, it usually is!*
2. Something that provides an immediate and extremely effective solution to a given problem or difficulty, especially one that is normally very complex or hard to resolve. *There's no magic bullet that will solve the homelessness crisis in this country.*

magic carpet A carpet capable of propelling itself through the air, usually as people ride on it. Typically featured in fantasy stories and fairy tales. *My kids love hearing fantastical stories that are full of monsters, spells, and magic carpet rides.*

magic eye A cathode-ray tube found on some radios (particularly in the mid-20th century) that displayed a visual cue to aid the tuning of the radio. *Back in my day, we needed to use a magic eye to tune our radios!*

magic moment A brief experience perceived as special in some way. *Seeing the little girl run up and hug her father when he returned home from*

deployment was a magic moment. The concert was actually pretty boring, but there was a magic moment during the flute solo that I'll never forget.

magic touch An ability to perform a particular task perfectly or with ease, especially when other cannot. *I asked Gary if he wanted to try starting the car, and sure enough he had the magic touch. Give that account to June. She has the magic touch when it comes to dealing with difficult clients.*

magic wand Something that provides an easy or immediate way to fix to a problem. *I wish I had a magic wand to get this house cleaned up before the party tonight. There's no magic wand to eliminate your debt—you just have to pay off a little each month.*

mail (something) in **1.** Literally, to send something somewhere or to someone by mail. *I mailed in the application months ago, but I still haven't heard from the university!* **2.** To perform a given task, duty, or activity with little or no attention, effort, or interest; to do something perfunctorily. *Usually such a key player on the field, the team's star running back seems to be mailing it in this afternoon. I usually love his work in film, but he totally mailed in his performance for this voice-over role.*

main man **1.** One's best or very good male friend. *Hey, I want you to come meet my main man, Will! He and I go back a long way.* **2.** One's male romantic partner or lover. *I hear Julie's got a new main man in her life. They met at a yoga retreat in India!* **3.** The most influential male in a given group, such as a boss or leader. *With his new promotion, Jared's going to be the main man of the office next month!*

main street The most prominent street in a small town. It is typically home to many businesses. *This town has a main street with a lot of cute shops.*

major league(s) An area, echelon, or sphere of great competition, success, power, achievement, etc. Refers to the major leagues of sports teams. *I know you're new here, but you need to perform much better if you want to stay in this law firm. You're in the major leagues now. Welcome to the major league of politics, senator.*

make a bed To neatly straighten the sheets and blankets of a bed after one has gotten out of it. "Make (one's) bed" is used more often to mean the same. *I have to make a bed as soon as I get up in the morning—I can't stand to look at sloppy bed clothes.*

make a beeline for (someone or something) To head directly and quickly toward something or some place. *I knew the boss was angry, so when I saw her come in, I made a beeline for the break room. Every day when I come home from work, my toddler makes a beeline for me—it's just the cutest thing.*

make a better door than a window A humorous phrase said to someone who is blocking the speaker's line of sight. *Move it, will you? You make a better door than a window!*

make a bolt for (someone or something) To run suddenly and at high speed toward someone or something. *Our taxi was late picking us up, so I'm going to have to make a bolt for the train when we get to the station! I couldn't wait to get out of school, and I made a bolt for the door as soon as the bell rang. I was so anxious to be back home that I made a bolt for my parents as soon as I saw them in the airport.*

make a break for (someone or something) To run suddenly and at high speed toward someone or something. *Our taxi was late picking us up, so I'm going to have to make a break for the train when we get to the station! I couldn't wait to get out of school, and I made a break for the door as soon as the bell rung. I was so anxious to be back home that I made a break for my parents as soon as I saw them in the airport.*

make a break for (someone or something) **1.** To start running toward a place or person. *As soon as I opened the door, my cat made a break for it and ran out into the yard. When they let us in the store, let's make a break for the sale rack before everyone else gets there.* **2.** To suddenly decide to pursue an opportunity. *Tired of working for his boss, Jake made a break for it and started his own business.*

make a bundle To make a very large amount of money, especially by doing something very successfully. *We'll make a bundle if we can manage to secure a trading partner in China. I hear Sarah is making a bundle with sales from her latest novel.*

make a clean break See [clean break](#).

make a clean break (from/with someone or something) To remove oneself wholly and permanently from a relationship, situation, or attachment. *I've been lingering too much on the mistakes I made in the past.*

It's high time I made a clean break and started fresh! The esteemed scientist, having made a clean break with her former university, has set up a new research firm in Silicon Valley. I think I need to make a clean break from Robert. Our relationship has just grown so co-dependent lately.

make a clean breast To confess one's misdeeds or wrongdoings. *I felt so guilty about cheating on the test that I had to make a clean breast of it to my teacher.*

make a decision To decide; to choose something. *What do you want for dinner? I need you to make a decision so that I can start cooking.*

make a dog's breakfast (of something) To make a mess of or completely ruin something. *I thought I could trust Jim to finish the business proposal, but he made a dog's breakfast of the whole thing.*

make a dog's dinner (of something) To make a mess of or completely ruin something. *I thought I could trust Jim to finish the business proposal, but he made a dog's dinner of the whole thing!*

make a face (at someone) To make a grimacing or humorously distorted facial expression. *Young lady, don't you make a face at me! You will eat your broccoli or you won't have any dessert. The teacher scolded Jimmy for making faces at her from the back of class. When I told him my mother was coming over for dinner, John just made a face and went down to the basement.*

make a false step 1. Literally, to misstep or stumble while one is walking. *I made a false step on the mountain path and nearly went tumbling over a cliff!* 2. By extension, to make an unwise, miscalculated, or blundering act or decision. *It seems now that the president might have made a false step with that decision.*

make a fool (out) of (someone or oneself) To do something that makes someone or oneself seem stupid or ridiculous. *I'm not going to dance too much at the party because I don't want to make a fool out of myself in front of my coworkers. I know Greg is only trying to impress Lisa, but he's making a fool out of himself by telling so many corny jokes. Don't let him make a fool of you like that—say something back!*

make a getaway To escape. *We made a getaway before the police arrived and found us at the scene of the crime. We need to make a getaway*

before Great-Aunt Mildred arrives, or else we'll be stuck listening to her for hours!

make a grandstand play **1.** In sports, to perform any excessively showy action or maneuver during play so as to impress or entertain the spectators. Originally specific to baseball, it has since been extended to any sport. *Rather than shoot the ball and secure an easy two points for the team, she decided instead to make a grandstand play by trying for a slam dunk.* **2.** By extension, to act or behave in an excessively dramatic, showy, or ostentatious manner; to show off. *Our manager is more concerned with making a grandstand play for the CEO than effectively running the office.*

make a hole in (something) To take, use up, or deplete a large amount of money available in something, such as a budget, one's wallet, etc. *The cost of repairing the car is really going to make a hole in our savings. Tammy's private piano lessons are making a hole in my wallet!*

make a hole in the water To kill oneself by drowning. *I'm still in shock that Lady Marianne made a hole in the water to avoid her arranged marriage.*

make a leg obsolete To make a show of obeisance or fealty by bowing deeply (drawing one's right leg back in the process). *As I began extinguishing the lamps for the night, a small wiry man appeared before me, wearing a comically oversized suit and making a leg in a most melodramatic fashion.*

make a long arm for (something) To extend one's arm fully toward something; to reach out for something. *Mary's new boyfriend made a long arm for the bottle of wine at the end of the table, helping himself to another glass.*

make a mark To do something that makes one famous or successful; to do something that is very important or meaningful. *The actress first made a mark with her incredible performance as Lady Macbeth on Broadway. I chose to pursue a career in medical research so that I might someday make a mark in the world with a groundbreaking discovery.*

make a mint To earn a very large amount of money, especially by doing something very successfully. *We'll make a mint if we can manage to secure a trading partner in China. I hear Sarah is making a mint with sales from her latest novel.*

make a monkey (out) of (someone or oneself) To do something that makes someone (or oneself) seem stupid or ridiculous. *I know Greg is only trying to impress Lisa, but he's making a monkey out of himself by telling so many corny jokes. I'm not going to dance too much at the party because I don't want to make a monkey out of myself in front of my coworkers.*

make a pile To earn a very large amount of money, especially by doing something very successfully. *We'll make a pile if we can manage to secure a trading partner in China. I hear Sarah is making a pile with sales from her latest novel.*

make a run for (someone or something) To run suddenly and at great speed toward someone or something. *Our taxi was late picking us up, so we're going to have to make a run for the train when we get to the station! I couldn't wait to get out of school, and I made a run for the door as soon as the bell rang. I was so anxious to be back home that I made a run for my parents as soon as I saw them in the airport.*

make a silk purse of a sow's ear To fashion something beautiful or valuable out of poor materials. Often used in the negative, such as "cannot make a silk purse of a sow's ear." *What do you want me to do with this tacky dress? I can't make a silk purse of a sow's ear!*

make a spectacle of (oneself) To attract attention by foolish or conspicuous behavior. *Katie made a spectacle of herself at the New Year's Eve party by confronting her ex-boyfriend in front of all the other guests. Darren's so clumsy that he tends to make a spectacle of himself everywhere he goes.*

make a wide stride To make great and rapid progress or advancement. *The one-time political advisor has been making a wide stride toward absolute control of the country. We've made a wide stride in our commitment to getting the economy back on its feet, but we still have a long road ahead.*

make advances at (someone) To approach someone in a flirtatious, amorous, or sexual manner; to try or begin to seduce someone. *Terry was fired after he began making advances at his secretary. I really wish I could go out to a bar or a club without a half dozen men making advances at me.*

make allowance(s) for (someone or something) 1. To

prepare adequately for someone or something. *My whole family is coming to Thanksgiving dinner now, so you better make allowance for seven more people at the table. The weather there is pretty inconsistent at this time of year, so make allowances for that when you pack.* **2.** To be forgiving or accepting of someone or something due to special circumstances. *When the weather is this bad, the company makes allowance for Gina's tardiness because she has a very long commute. The teachers have been kind enough to make allowances for Jake this semester after his mother's sudden death.*

make an end of (something) To stop, cease, or conclude something. *I'm going to make an end of the corruption in this department once and for all! I wish my parents would make an end of their bickering and just be civil to one another!*

make an honest buck To earn money in an honest, legal manner. Primarily heard in US. *After 10 years working for the mob, Jeremy was ready to finally start making an honest buck.*

make an honest woman (out) of (someone) To marry a woman that one is dating. *You've been dating Carrie for quite some time now, Pete. When are you going to make an honest woman out of her?*

make as if To behave as if; to pretend or make it appear that. *Mark always makes as if he cares deeply about other people's problems, but he's never willing to actually help. Samantha's been making as if she's writing the next great American novel, but it's just some trashy thriller.*

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make as though To behave as if; to pretend or make it appear that. *Mark's boyfriend always makes as though he cares deeply about other people's problems, but he's never willing to actually help. Samantha's been making as though she's writing the next great American novel, but it's just some trashy thriller.*

make baby Jesus cry See [make \(the\) baby Jesus cry](#).

make beard See [make \(one's\) beard](#).

make blood boil See [make \(one's\) blood boil](#).

make blood run cold See [make \(one's\) blood run cold](#).

make bones See [make \(one's\) bones](#).

make (both) ends meet To earn just enough money to pay one's bills. *To make ends meet, Phil picked up a second job delivering pizzas. After the large income tax hike, many people suddenly found it difficult to make both ends meet.*

make buckle and tongue meet To have enough money to survive. Although the exact image referred to in this phrase is unclear, it means the same as "make ends meet." *Now that I have a well-paying job, I can finally make buckle and tongue meet.*

make capital out of (something) To use something to one's advantage or profit. *Prosecutors are making capital out of the defendant's conflicting stories.*

make chalk of one and cheese of the other To favor one person or thing over another. In this phrase, "chalk" is something worthless, while "cheese" is something valuable. *I can't stand how unfairly you treat your sons—stop making chalk of one and cheese of the other!*

make contact with (someone or something) 1. To communicate with someone. *Has anyone made contact with grandma since the storm hit?* 2. To touch someone or something. *Be careful not to make contact with that plant—it's poison ivy. We have a massive leak because the construction crew made contact with a pipe while drilling in our basement.* 3. To engage with an unknown entity for the first time. *Do you think we'll ever make contact with intelligent life? The government strictly forbids anyone from making contact with the indigenous tribe.*

make day See [make \(one's\) day](#).

make do To cope or manage to do something without all the resources that one would ideally like to have. "Make do" is often followed by "with" or "without," depending on the context of the sentence. *We don't have all the spices we need for this recipe, but since the weather is so bad, we're just going to have to make do with what we have. Since I forgot to pick up milk on the way home, I guess we're just going to have to make do without it. When I was growing up, we didn't have a lot of money, but we made do.*

make ears burn See [make \(someone's\) ears burn](#).

make faces (at someone) To make distorted, silly, or humorous facial expressions (at someone) for one's own or someone else's amusement. *Jimmy, quit making faces at Sarah this instant and pay attention! Mom, tell Billy to quit making faces, he's really annoying me!*

make fair weather To flatter. *I don't trust him at all—he's always making fair weather, rather than being truthful.*

make fast work of (someone or something) To deal with, finish, or dispose of someone or something very quickly or handily; (of an object) to consume something quickly. *We'll make fast work of this project now that you've joined the team. You made fast work of that book you were reading. You must have liked it! Everyone is expecting the team to make fast work of their opponents in the upcoming match.*

make fish of one and flesh of another To favor one person or thing over another, often in a discriminatory fashion. The phrase refers to the now-outdated practice of categorizing meat as fish, flesh, or fowl. *I can't stand how unfairly you treat your sons—stop making fish of one and flesh of another!*

make game of (someone or something) To ridicule, mock, or tease someone or something; to make fun of someone or something. *I really don't appreciate you making game of my disability like that. Don't make game of your sister—you know how sensitive she is!*

make ground To become more successful, popular, important, or accepted. *The opposition to vaccinating children, while still a definite minority, has been making ground in recent years. No one thought our fast food chain would do well in a country like India, but we've started making ground!*

make ground against (something) In finance, to increase in value in comparison to something else, especially currency. *With Europe's economy still struggling to recover, the US dollar continued to make ground against the euro on Friday.*

make ground on (someone or something) To encroach on the success or popularity of someone or something; to advance or prosper at the expense of someone or something else. *The fledgling social media website has been making ground on the established leaders in recent months. An*

underdog at first, the presidential nominee has gained ground on her opponent, making this election much closer than anyone would have anticipated.

make hackles rise See [make \(someone's\) hackles rise](#).

make hair stand on end See [make \(one's\) hair stand on end](#).

make hair stand up on the back of neck See [make \(one's/the\) hair stand up on the back of \(one's\) neck](#).

make haste slowly To act with due diligence, focus, and attention to detail in order to avoid mistakes and finish a task more quickly overall. *I know we're all eager to get the new software released to the public, but remember: make haste slowly. We don't want to end up wasting time fixing bugs that shouldn't be there in the first place.*

make haste slowly Proceed quickly, yet carefully. *I know you're late for work, but make haste slowly so you don't end up in an accident.*

make heads or tails (out) of (someone or something) To understand someone or something. This phrase is usually used in the negative to convey the opposite. *After spending hours working with the new piece of software, I still could not make heads or tails out of it. I can't make heads or tails of that new guy in accounting. Sometimes, he's really friendly, and then other times he acts like he's never met me before.*

make heads roll 1. To fire or dismiss several employees. *You might notice that some of your colleagues are no longer here. The boss made heads roll because a botched presentation like that cannot happen again.* **2.** To punish and/or lash out at someone. *I will make heads roll once I find out which students have been selling test answers.*

make heavy going of (something) To make something harder or more laborious to do, especially more than is usual or necessary. *The bill was passed two years ago, but the government has made heavy going of implementing the law at a local level. The Irish rugby squad made heavy going of what should have been a relatively easy win.*

make heavy weather of (something) To make something harder or more laborious to do, especially more than is usual or necessary. *The bill was passed two years ago, but the government has made heavy weather of implementing the law at a local level. The top-ranked team made heavy*

weather of what should have been a relatively easy win.

make herself useful See [make \(oneself\) useful](#).

make him hot under the collar See [make \(one\) hot under the collar](#).

make him pay through the nose See [make \(one\) pay through the nose](#).

make him see stars See [make \(one\) see stars](#).

make him turn over in his grave See [make \(one\) turn over in \(one's\) grave](#).

make honest bucks See [make an honest buck](#).

make horns at To insult another by holding one's fist to one's head with the index and pinky fingers outstretched. The gesture suggests that its recipient is a cuckold. *How dare you make horns at me? My wife is a devoted and faithful woman!*

make it hot for (someone) To pressure someone or otherwise make them uncomfortable, usually so that they will change their behavior or act in a certain way. *The other students decided to make it hot for the classroom bully so he'd stop picking on the younger kids. If we want this guy to confess, we need to make it hot for him in the interrogation room.*

make it or break it **1.** adjective (hyphenated if used before a noun) Of, leading to, or causing an outcome that will either be a total success or a total failure. *The decision to merge the two companies will likely prove a make-it-or-break-it move for both. These next few months are going to be make it or break it for us financially.* **2.** verb To either totally succeed or fail completely; to cause or result in such an outcome. *With so many tumultuous things going on in the world, it feels as though the human race is going to make it or break it in coming years. In this industry, having a public, social following of users (or a lack thereof) will always make it or break it for a company.*

make it rain slang To throw or drop dollar bills in a show of wealth. *Let's make it rain at the club tonight, fellas!*

make it up as he goes See [make \(something\) up as \(one\) goes \(along\)](#).

make jaw drop See [make \(someone's\) jaw drop](#).

make legs See [make a leg](#).

make like To behave as if; to pretend or make it appear that. *Mark's boyfriend always makes like he cares deeply about other people's problems, but he's never willing to actually help. Samantha's been making like she's writing the next great American novel, but it's just some trashy thriller.*

make like a banana and split humorous slang To depart or leave, especially at once or in a hurry. (A pun on "to split," a slang term meaning to leave or depart, and a "banana split," an ice-cream-based dessert featuring a banana halved lengthwise.) *This carnival turned out to be really boring. Come on, let's make like a banana and split!* A: "Where are Jeff and Sally?" B: "They needed to get home to feed the baby, so they made like a banana and split."

make matters worse To make an already bad, unpleasant, or difficult situation even more so. (Sometimes used as an independent clause in the infinitive form: "to make matters worse.") *I heard that Julie is being let go from her job, and to make matters worse, she hasn't been there long enough to qualify for severance pay! Breaking up with someone is always very difficult, but don't go making matters worse by doing it in a very public place.*

make mincemeat (out) of (someone) To decisively and severely punish or defeat someone. *If he doesn't stop teasing me, I'm going to make mincemeat of him. You better practice for Sunday's match, or your opponent will make mincemeat out of you.*

make news To garner attention and be the topic of conversation. *Sam's sudden resignation really made news today—everyone in the office is talking about it!*

make (one) hot under the collar To anger someone. *I wouldn't say anything that could provoke the boss—it doesn't take much to make her hot under the collar! The way you kids deliberately disobey me makes me hot under the collar!*

make (one) pay through the nose To cause one to pay a lot of money for something. *I hate how the city makes everyone pay through the nose for parking—it's so annoying!*

make (one) see stars To strike one in the head. *If you damage my car in any way, I'll make you see stars!*

make (one) turn over in (one's) grave Figuratively, to upset

someone who is dead and buried. *The way you dress would make your grandmother turn over in her grave.*

make (one's) beard **1.** To be in a position of complete control over another person. The image here is of a barber shaving someone's beard (and thus holding a razor to that person's throat). *It took some time, but I've made his beard—now, he does anything I say.* **2.** To deceive someone. *Don't make my beard—tell me the truth about what happened!*

make (one's) blood boil To cause one to feel extremely angry. *The fact that he embezzled money from the company for years just makes my blood boil.*

make (one's) blood run cold To cause one to feel frightened or unnerved. *The screams coming from the old, dark house made my blood run cold. That gruesome scene in the new horror movie made our blood run cold.*

make (one's) bones **1.** To kill someone in order to obtain membership in a criminal organization. Used in this way, the phrase is often associated with the Mafia. *A: "Has Johnny Dukes made his bones yet?" B: "Not yet, he's still a low level guy."* **2.** To solidify one's reputation. *He made his bones as a big city detective before joining our town's police force.*

make (one's) day To cause one to feel very happy. *When my neighbors surprised me with homemade chocolate chip cookies, it really made my day. Getting compliments at work always makes my day!*

make (one's) hair stand on end To scare or horrify someone. *The screams coming from the old, dark house made my hair stand on end. When we go camping, every little noise outside my tent makes my hair stand on end. It could be a bear, after all!*

make (one's) mark To do something that will be remembered or that makes one famous or successful; to do something that is very important or meaningful. *The actress first made her mark with her incredible performance as Lady Macbeth on Broadway. I chose to pursue a career in medical research so that I might someday make my mark in the world with a groundbreaking discovery.*

make (one's) mouth water **1.** To cause one to salivate or feel hungry. *Just the thought of having a big seafood dinner tonight makes my mouth water. The smell of the burgers on the grill made Jake's mouth water.*

2. By extension, to cause one to feel happy or excited, usually with anticipation. *A business opportunity like that is enough to make anyone's mouth water!*

make (one's) own way To advance or progress, especially through life, according to one's own efforts, inclinations, or designs. *This country prides itself on letting people make their own way, relying on no one else's work but their own. We've tried to give Jack all the guidance and support we can, but at the end of the day, he has to make his own way in the world.*

make (one's) skin crawl To cause one to feel disgusted, frightened, or unnerved. *Having to look all those surgical photos made my skin crawl. The mere mention of cockroaches makes her skin crawl.*

make (one's/the) hair stand up on the back of (one's) neck To scare or horrify someone. *Walking past the cemetery alone at night made Mary's hair stand up on the back of her neck. Just the thought of going into that abandoned building makes the hair stand up on the back of my neck.*

make (oneself or something) ready (for someone or something) To become or make something prepared for something or someone. *I don't think I'll have enough time to make myself ready for the gala this evening! John, please make the spare rooms ready for Jane and the kids before they get here. Gentlemen, make ready for our immediate departure!*

make (oneself) useful To do something that is actively helpful or of assistance to others. *You know, instead of just sitting there watching TV, you could make yourself useful and take out the garbage. Towards the end of the party, I decided to make myself useful and wash the dishes.*

make plain To explain something clearly or make something obvious. *I told him that I was going call the cops if he didn't make plain his intentions.*

make public To announce or disseminate some information. *Once this report is made public, I fear we'll all be under investigation.*

make quick work of (someone or something) To deal with, finish, or dispose of someone or something very quickly or handily; (of an object) to consume something quickly. *We'll make quick work of this project now that you've joined the team. You made quick work of that book you were reading. You must have liked it! Everyone is expecting the team to make quick work of their opponents in the upcoming match.*

make sail To embark on a journey on a body of water in a boat (not necessarily one with sails). *We're about to make sail, so take care of any unfinished business in the port now or forever hold your peace! We only made sail a month ago, but it feels like we've been at sea for years now.*

make short work of (someone or something) To deal with, finish, or dispose of someone or something very quickly or handily. *We'll make short work of this project now that you've joined the team. You made short work of that book you were reading. You must have liked it! Everyone is expecting the team to make short work of their opponents in the upcoming match.*

make (someone's) ears burn To make someone uncomfortable, embarrassed, or disconcerted by what is being said. Alludes to the ears growing red from blushing. *Listening to my aunts and uncles coo over me at my high school graduation really made my ears burn. I was raised in a very strict household, so even to this day hearing someone say something vulgar makes my ears burn.*

make (someone's) hackles rise To greatly irritate, annoy, or aggravate someone. *The disrespect he showed our professor during class made my hackles rise so badly that I had to go take a walk to calm down. The politician has a gift for making his opponents' hackles rise during debates.*

make (someone's) jaw drop To cause someone to pause in astonishment, awe, or disbelief, especially with their mouth left open. *Did you see Kathy's new dress? It's so gorgeous it made my jaw drop! That play was so amazing that it made all of our jaws drop! It made my husband's jaw drop to hear that I was leaving him.*

make (someone's) teeth itch 1. To greatly irritate or annoy someone, especially to the point of affecting their nerves. *Nothing makes my teeth itch like seeing these cyclists run every red light in town! I don't know what it is about Terry, but there's something about his demeanor that just makes my teeth itch!* 2. To cause someone to be especially upset, nervous, or uncomfortable. *Please don't tell me about your surgery—it makes my teeth itch hearing about blood and gore.*

make something of it To elevate a disagreement into a fight, usually without it being warranted. *Any time Linda suffers a perceived slight, she wants to make something of it, like the world is conspiring against her. A:*

"What did you call me?" B: "You heard me. You want to make something of it?"

make something of (one's) life To become successful through one's own initiative or efforts. *Be sure to work hard and get good grades now so you'll be able to make something of your life once you're older.*

make something of (oneself) To become successful through one's own initiative or efforts. *Valerie went back to school because she wanted to make something of herself before it was too late.*

make (something) up as (one) goes (along) To improvise continuously as one does something; to do something without formal guidelines, structure, rules, etc. *None of us really knew how to play the game, so we just made it up as we went along. I completely forgot the rest of my speech halfway through, so I just started making the rest up as I went along. You can't just make up data as you go, you have to provide real evidence to support your hypothesis!*

make sport of (someone or something) To ridicule, mock, or tease someone or something; to make fun of someone or something. *I really don't appreciate you making sport of my disability like that. Don't make sport of your sister—you know how sensitive she can be!*

make teeth itch See [make \(someone's\) teeth itch](#).

make (the) baby Jesus cry To be offensive, immoral, unethical, in poor taste, etc., as might cause or provoke the displeasure or disapproval of Jesus Christ. *I try not to use vulgar language, as my mother told me at a young age that it makes baby Jesus cry. You're making the baby Jesus cry every time you lie to your parents!*

make the beast with two backs To engage in sexual intercourse with another person, referring to the exposure of each partner's back when embraced in the missionary or standing position. *I have my suspicions that, in secret, they are making the beast with two backs.*

make the best of a bad bargain To deal with and create the best possible outcome of a bad, unfortunate, or unpleasant situation or set of circumstances. *I know this data entry job isn't what you wanted for a career, but for the time being, try and make the best of a bad bargain. We weren't expecting to have to share our timeshare with others, but there's nothing we*

can do about it now, so we'd better make the best of a bad bargain.

make the cut **1.** In golf, to match or better the score necessary to remain in the final two rounds of a four-round tournament. *It wasn't looking good for her early in this tournament, but thanks to a string of great shots in the last nine holes, Ms. Ryder was able to make the cut in the end.* **2.** By extension, to meet the requirements necessary for an application to be successful or to be selected from a group of candidates. *You might have an impressive resume, but you'll never make the cut if you don't have excellent interview skills. Because of my poor grades in math, I ended up not making the cut for Harvard.*

make the hair stand up on the back of her neck See [make \(one's/the\) hair stand up on the back of \(one's\) neck.](#)

make the hard yard See [hard yards.](#)

make the welkin ring To make a very loud, reverberating sound or noise. ("Welkin" is an archaic or literary word for the skies or the heavens, only used in contemporary English as a part of this phrase.) *The candidate's speech was drowned out as the crowd made the welkin ring with their cheers. Participants of the town hall meeting made the welkin ring with their protestations.*

make the world go round To be of critical or integral importance to the ordinary operation of life or the world at large. (Sometimes used hyperbolically.) *It's an unavoidable truth that money and commerce make the world go round. I tell you, coffee made the world go round when I was in grad school!*

make themselves useful See [make \(oneself\) useful.](#)

make time with (someone) To spend time with someone, usually romantically. *Rumor has it that Jen has been making time with Frank every weekend. I wonder if they're officially a couple yet.*

make turn over in grave See [make \(one\) turn over in \(one's\) grave.](#)

make wide strides See [make a wide stride.](#)

make you hot under the collar See [make \(one\) hot under the collar.](#)

make you pay through the nose See [make \(one\) pay through the](#)

[nose](#).

make you see stars See [make \(one\) see stars](#).

make yourself ready See [make \(oneself or something\) ready \(for someone or something\)](#).

mama's boy A boy or man who is particularly close with his mother to the point of being overly dependent on her. *Lynn dumped Mark because he was such a mama's boy and always ran to her to fix his problems.*

man-about-town A fashionable man known for socializing. *Although he's been called a man-about-town by the press, he secretly prefers quiet evenings at home.*

a man after my own See [a person after \(one's\) own](#).

man after (one's) own heart A man admired by another because of perceived similarities. *I knew he was a man after my own heart when I heard he rescued that puppy.*

man and wife Two people who are married to each other. Another way of saying "husband and wife." *How are you two doing, now that you're man and wife?*

man boobs slang A derisive reference to a man's chest, especially when he is overweight and appears to have breasts. *You need to hit the gym, dude. Man boobs are not sexy.*

man bun slang A hairstyle worn by some men with long hair in which the hair is tied into a "bun" (traditionally a female hairstyle) at the top or back of the head. *My boyfriend has a man bun now, and I'm not sure how I feel about it.*

man cave A room or area of a house designated for a man to retreat from the rest of his family and relax or engage in hobbies. *My husband is watching the football game in his man cave right now.*

man crush Monday A phrase that accompanies a social media post of a man that the poster finds attractive (often their significant other or a celebrity). Often abbreviated as "MCM." Such posts occur on Mondays due to the name, created simply for alliteration. *Check out my handsome hubby on man crush Monday! Ryan Gosling is my man crush Monday.*

man down An exclamation said when someone falls down or is injured.

Man down! Mike, are you OK?

man-eater 1. An animal that has is or purportedly likely to eat humans. Most often applied to sharks and big cats such as lions. *The great white shark is a confirmed man-eater, having already attacked two victims right near the beach.* 2. A woman who has a reputation for having romantic relationships with many men. *Jill dated so many men during college that her roommates began to call her a man-eater behind her back.*

man for all seasons A man who is successful and talented in many areas. *Harold is a talented writer, director, and actor. He's a man for all seasons.*

man in the street An average person. *Just interview a man in the street so we can hear public sentiment about the new law.*

man is a wolf to man Men prey on other men. An English translation of the Latin phrase "homo homini lupus." A: *"I can't believe he was so cruel to his own brother."* B: *"Well, man is a wolf to man, after all."*

man of few words A man who does not speak often or at length. *Despite being a man of few words, Joseph was well-respected in his field because of his actions.*

man of God A man who is devout in his belief in God. *He is a man of God who has devoted his life to serving others.*

a man of his word A man who can be expected to keep or follow through with his promises or intentions; a truthful, trustworthy, or reliable person. (Feminine: "a woman of her word.") *Bob, I'm a man of my word. If I tell you I'll be at your house tomorrow morning at 10, then that's when I'll be there. I've found Martin to be a man of his word so far, so I'm confident he'll get us the best deal possible.*

man of letters A man who is well-versed in literature and related scholarly pursuits. *As a man of letters, the professor could easily speak for hours on the works of Shakespeare.*

man of many parts A man who is capable of doing many things. *Steve is a man of many parts—he's a good student, a talented musician, and a great football player.*

man of means A wealthy man. *His extravagant spending habits led everyone to believe that he was a man of means.*

a man of my kidney Someone whose temperament is similar to my own. *Adam and I like the same things and get along really well—he is a man of my own kidney.*

man of parts A man of many talents. *Patrick is such a brilliant artist and author—he is truly a man of parts.*

man of straw A weak person. "A straw man" is sometimes used as a variant. *She thought he was strong and honest, but he turned out to be nothing more than a man of straw.*

man of the cloth A priest or clergyman. *Ever since he was young, John knew he wanted to become a man of the cloth.*

(the) man of the moment A man who is currently being celebrated, honored, or admired by others, especially for a recent victory, accomplishment, or other cause for celebration. (Feminine: "woman of the moment.") *Jake was man of the moment at the office after securing the biggest customer their business had ever had. It's a surprise birthday party for you, Rob! You're the man of the moment!*

man of the world A man who is very experienced and sophisticated. *I value Robert's advice because he's a man of the world and can provide good insight into the customs of high society.*

man-of-war **1.** A warship. *My grandfather was part of the crew on a man-of-war during World War II.* **2.** A nickname for the Portuguese man-of-war, a jellyfish-like sea creature with a deadly sting. *I don't want you kids to go swimming today—there's been reports of a man-of-war in the water.*

man on the make **1.** A man looking for a sexual encounter. *Let's go to the bar tonight—lots of women will be there, and I'm a man on the make!* **2.** A man pursuing personal gain. *Ever since Tom lost that big business deal, he's been a man on the make.*

man on the street An average person. *Just interview a man on the street so we can hear public sentiment about the new law.*

man plans and God laughs A phrase that criticizes people's tendency to make plans, as there is no guarantee that plans will work out. *I used to make itineraries for our vacations, but nothing ever went as I had planned. Man plans and God laughs, right?*

man the fort To mind or take charge of a location during the time in which it is unattended by another. *Don't worry, honey, I'll man the fort at home until you get back from the grocery store. The entire editorial department left the office early for their Christmas celebration, leaving just a couple of interns to man the fort for the rest of the day.*

man up To deal with something in a more brave, stoic, or masculine way than one has done so hitherto. (Usually used imperatively.) *It's just a tiny scratch! You need to man up and quit crying about it. You need to man up and tell your boss that you expect a raise for all the hard work you do!*

a man who is his own lawyer has a fool for a client A man who tries to defend himself, rather than hiring a trained lawyer, is a fool. A: *"What do you mean, a lawyer? I'm going to represent myself!"* B: *"Well, just keep in mind that a man who is his own lawyer has a fool for a client."*

(the) man/woman of the hour A person currently being celebrated, honored, or admired by others, especially for a recent victory, accomplishment, or other cause for celebration. *Janet was woman of the hour at the office after securing the biggest customer their business had ever had. Ruth: "Hey, what's going on here?" Dave: "It's a surprise birthday party for you, Ruth! You're the woman of the hour!"*

a man/woman of the people A person who represents, understands, is in touch with, and is well liked by ordinary, everyday people. Often said of politicians or those who occupy positions of power, authority, or fame beyond that of the average person. *The president was largely elected because she was seen as a woman of the people by voters. Now that she has taken office, her political mettle will truly be tested. The billionaire CEO has tried to remain a man of the people, spending his time working alongside entry-level employees and senior management alike.*

a man/woman on a mission A person who is fiercely determined to do or get what they want. *Janet stormed into work like a woman on a mission, heading straight into her boss's office to demand a raise in her salary. When my boyfriend decides he wants to buy something, he turns into a man on a mission.*

a man/woman with a mission A person who is fiercely determined to do or get what they want. *Janet stormed into work like a woman with a mission, heading straight into her boss's office to demand a raise in her*

salary. When my boyfriend decides he wants to buy something, he turns into a man with a mission.

manbun See [man bun](#).

Mandela effect A phenomenon involving a large group of people all incorrectly remembering a past event or fact. The phrase is named for the purportedly widespread misconception that Nelson Mandela died in the 1980s while in prison. (Mandela died in 2013 after having served as president of South Africa from 1994 to 1999 following his release from prison in 1990.) *Apparently, the company's name was always spelled that way, so you guys remembering it differently must be the Mandela effect.*

manners maketh man A good man has a strong sense of morality. This phrase is typically attributed to 14th-century bishop William of Wykeham. *To hear that so many of our students intervened to stop this crime restores my faith in the youth of the world. Manners maketh man, you know.*

manoeuvre the apostles obsolete To borrow or take money from one person or source to repay the debt of another (i.e., rob Peter to pay Paul). *Mr. Hardy's firm has fallen into arrears of late, and the solicitor has been manoeuvring the apostles just to keep the business viable.*

a man's got to do what a man's got to do A man must do what he feels needs to be done, even if it is dangerous or undesirable. Sometimes said ironically. *It might be dangerous delivering water to the refugees, but a man's got to do what a man's got to do. I know it's a lot of cotton candy to eat, but a man's got to do what a man's got to do.*

man's man A man known for partaking in traditionally masculine activities. *Frank spends all of his free time playing sports, hanging out with his buddies, and working on cars. He's a real man's man.*

mansplain slang For a man to explain something to someone, usually a woman, in a condescending manner. *I've been doing this job for 20 years—I don't need some boy fresh out of college mansplaining it to me! Gee, thanks for mansplaining feminism to me.*

manspreading slang Of a man, sitting with one's legs wide apart, often encroaching on others' personal space. *Thanks to the dude manspreading next to me, I had hardly any room to myself on the subway.*

many a mickle makes a muckle Many small amounts of

something eventually become a large amount. *Can you please stop adding to the pile of stuff already on the kitchen table? Many a mickle makes a muckle!*

many a time Often; a lot. This phrase means the same as "many times." *Oh, that's my favorite restaurant—I've been there many a time! I've given you demerits for not tucking in your shirt many a time, so you'll get a detention if I see it again!*

many happy returns I wish you a very happy birthday and many more in the future. *Hey Jack, many happy returns! Are you going to do anything special to celebrate the occasion?*

many happy returns of the day I wish you a very happy birthday and many more like it in the future. *Hey Jack, many happy returns of the day! Are you going to do anything special to celebrate the occasion?*

many string to her bow See [have many strings to \(one's\) bow](#).

the map is not the territory A person or thing is completely separate from the judgments or perceptions that people place upon it. The phrase was coined by US semanticist Alfred Korzybski. *I know you dislike Ed because of how he acted in that meeting, but you don't actually know him. Just keep in mind that the map is not the territory, OK?*

the march of time The steady, unstoppable advancement of time. *Some people despair at the march of time, as they see themselves aging in the mirror, but I relish growing older and seeing the world change.*

march to (one's) own beat To do something, act, or behave in a manner that does not conform to the standard, prevalent, or popular societal norm. *My brother's eschewed the idea of a full-time career and has had every oddball job you could think of, but then he's always been happy marching to his own beat. Look, I respect the fact that you like to march to your own beat, but do you have to make a point of doing everything in a counter-cultural way?*

march to (the beat of) a different drum To do something, act, or behave in a manner that does not conform to the standard, prevalent, or popular societal norm. *My brother's eschewed the idea of a full-time career and has had every oddball job you could think of, but then he's always been happy marching to the beat of a different drum. Look, I respect the fact that you like to march to a different drum, but do you have to make a point of*

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(one's) marching orders 1. A command or direction to advance, progress, or move on. (Usually used with "get" or "give.") *We were waiting for the project leader to give us our marching orders before we began development of the next iteration of the software. Bill had been living in his parents' house for nearly a year without working when he finally got his marching orders to move out.* **2.** A notice of dismissal from one's employment. *After messing up that account, I'm terrified that I'm going to get my marching orders any day now. The boss gave Daniel his marching orders for arriving to work drunk.*

(one's) marching papers 1. A command or direction to advance, progress, or move on. (Usually used with "get" or "give.") (Note: A nonstandard combination of the synonyms "marching orders" and "walking papers.") *We were waiting for the project leader to give us our marching papers before we began development of the next iteration of the software. Bill had been living in his parents' house for nearly a year without working when he finally got his marching papers to move out.* **2.** A notice of dismissal from one's employment. *After messing up that account, I'm terrified that I'm going to get my marching papers any day now. The boss gave Daniel his marching papers for arriving to work drunk.*

mare's nest A difficult, complicated, or confusing situation. *The tax laws in this country are a mare's nest that nobody fully understands.*

Marie Celeste A place, location, or high-occupancy vehicle (especially a

ship) that is inexplicably deserted or abandoned. An allusion to the *Mary Celeste*, an American merchant brigantine that was discovered floating off the Azores Islands in 1872 with no one on board and still in seaworthy condition. (Note: The variant spelling of "Marie" is the more common usage for the idiomatic reference, likely due to its use in a story by Arthur Conan Doyle.) *We came upon a house in the woods, empty as the Marie Celeste, but left otherwise untouched.*

marked man A person who is targeted for harm or retaliation of some kind. *After Ed alerted the authorities about the corruption that took place within the company, he became a marked man.*

market day The day on which a public market is scheduled to take place. *There's no farmer's market during the week because Saturday is market day.*

marriage inequality A term applied to same-sex couples that are not able to have their relationship legally recognized (such as by marriage). *I hate that my sister is subject to marriage inequality just because she is in a relationship with a woman.*

marriage made in heaven A very happy marriage or partnership. *Cindy and Mark look so happy together. That's a marriage made in heaven. Merging our bakery with the ice cream parlor next door was a great idea—it's a marriage made in heaven.*

marry above (one's) station To marry someone who is of a higher social class or standing than oneself. A: *"I hear that the local fishmonger's daughter is betrothed to a rich foreign lawyer!"* B: *"My word, she's certainly marrying above her station, isn't she?"* For all the talk that social classes have been wiped away in recent years, you will still find people who believe one can't or shouldn't marry above one's station.

marry above (oneself) To marry someone who is of a higher social class or standing than oneself. A: *"I hear that the local fishmonger's daughter is betrothed to a rich foreign lawyer!"* B: *"My word, she's certainly marrying above herself, isn't she?"* For all the talk that social classes have been wiped away in recent years, you will still find people who believe one can't or shouldn't marry above oneself.

marry beneath (oneself) To marry someone who is of a lower social class or standing than oneself. A: *"I hear that Mr. Sullivan plans to marry a local fishmonger's daughter."* B: *"Why would a man of his esteem marry*

beneath himself like that?" Janet has a bright future with one of the best law firms in town, so it's beyond me why she's marrying beneath herself with some fast food worker.

marry into money To become wealthy or financially secure by marrying someone who is wealthy or has a wealthy family. *Ever since he married into money, George has been flaunting all of the exotic vacations he and his new wife take. During college, when I had barely enough money to eat each day, I vowed that someday I'd marry into money and start living a much more comfortable life.*

marry (someone) for (his or her) money To marry someone solely or primarily to have access to their personal wealth. *Given the extreme age difference between them, a lot of people speculated that she was simply marrying Donald for his money. I think it's quite sad that people would marry for money rather than true love of their spouse.*

marry the gunner's daughter obsolete naval Of a seaman, to be bound to a cannon or other such armament and flogged or lashed as corporal punishment. *The first mate ended up marrying the gunner's daughter for attempting to bring about a mutiny on the ship.*

marsh grass A type of grass typically found in wetlands. *Luckily, I saw the snake slithering toward us through the marsh grass before it was too late!*

mass destruction Widespread death and devastation. *If they launch a nuclear attack against us, it will cause mass destruction.*

Master of the Universe 1. Literally, the supreme being; God. *One must always keep in mind the designs and desires of the Master of the Universe if one wishes to enter into heaven in the afterlife. 2.* By extension, an extremely powerful, successful, or wealthy person, especially someone working on Wall Street in the US financial sector. *John liked to think of himself as a self-styled Master of the Universe after earning his first million playing the stock market.*

match day The day on which a sporting event (a "match") takes place. *The bar is always packed on match day, since they always have the home team on TV.*

match made in heaven A very happy marriage or partnership. *When Kelly and Julie partnered up and opened their restaurant, it was a match*

made in heaven. Cindy and Mark look so happy together. That's a match made in heaven.

a match made in heaven An extremely well-suited pairing of people or things; a match that will result in a particularly positive or successful outcome. *Mike and Timothy are a match made in heaven! I can't think of two people better suited to marry one another. The new wide receiver and the team's veteran quarterback have proved to be a match made in heaven on the field.*

a match made in hell An extremely ill-suited pairing of people or things; a match that will result in a particularly negative or disastrous outcome. (A play on the more common phrase "a match made in heaven," meaning the opposite.) *I can't understand how John and Samantha are still together—they seem like a match made in in hell to me! Increasingly lax regulations and a money-hungry culture on Wall Street proved to be a match made in hell, sparking one of the worst economic crashes since the Great Depression.*

mate See [she'll be apples](#).

matter a tuppence See [not matter tuppence](#).

a matter of course An action or result that is expected or logical. *Handshakes are usually a matter of course after an initial meeting between two people.*

matter of fact **1.** noun Something that is true and factual. *My attendance in this class is a matter of fact! You can check the sign-in sheets—I was here every week! The deficit is a matter of fact, not opinion. The numbers don't lie.* **2.** adjective Straightforward in communication. Usually hyphenated. *It's better to be matter-of-fact when you fire someone, rather than trying to dance around the subject. The instructions should be matter-of-fact, but instead the manual is written with overly descriptive language.* **3.** adjective Nonchalant or not expressing excitement. Usually hyphenated. *I don't know how you can be so matter-of-fact about winning that award—it's a great honor!*

a matter of form That which is done for the sake of procedure, formality, appearances, or the accepted norm, often implying a lack of usefulness or necessity. *I know we already covered the chapter on social economics last week, but as a matter of form, let's review its key points before beginning today's lecture. The doctors weren't too worried about her illness,*

but as a matter of form they decided to keep her in the hospital overnight.

matter of life and death Something that is gravely serious. *This top-secret project is a matter of life and death, so every bit of information in it needs to be accurate. I'm a nurse, so if I make a mistake at my job, it's a matter of life and death.*

a matter of life or death 1. An issue or circumstance that involves or carries the possibility that someone may die. *We have to get these donor organs to the hospital right away—it's a matter of life or death!* **2.** An extremely serious and important issue; a matter or circumstance that may have dire consequences. *I hope you're well prepared, because this board meeting is a matter of life or death for the company.*

matter of opinion A topic that is subject to one's preferences. *I know it's a matter of opinion, but I think that living in the city is more enjoyable than living in the suburbs.*

matter of record A recorded or proven fact. *His tardiness is a matter of record now, so it will definitely affect his performance review.*

a matter of time An inevitability or eventuality; something that is or seems sure to happen at some point in the future. *With your reckless spending behavior, it's just a matter of time before you go broke.*

matter two pence See [not matter twopence](#).

may the Force be with you A phrase used to wish one good luck. It originates from the Star Wars movie franchise. A: *"I have my last exam today."* B: *"May the Force be with you!"*

MCM An abbreviation for "man crush Monday," a hashtag that accompanies a social media post of a man that the poster finds attractive (often a significant other or a celebrity). Such posts occur on Mondays due to the name, created simply for alliteration. *Check out my handsome hubby! #MCM Ryan Gosling is my #mcm.*

me oh my See [\(oh\) me, oh my](#).

me three humorous An expression of concurrence, agreement, or willingness to participate in addition to others. Said after someone has said "me too" (i.e., "me as well"), thus creating a pun of "too" and "two." Dan: *"I'm going with you, Steve."* Greg: *"Me too!"* John: *"Me three!"*

meal ticket A person or thing used to provide permanent financial income. *This new business was supposed to be my meal ticket, but it's costing me more money than I'm making. I'm a model, so my face is my meal ticket, and I can't afford to have a blemish!*

Meals on Wheels A program that organizes food delivery to the elderly, ill, and other people who cannot leave their homes or cook for themselves. *Before he went into a nursing home, my grandfather got food delivered to him by Meals on Wheels.*

mean the world to (someone) 1. To be ardently loved by or exceptionally important to someone. *My little daughter means the world to me—I would do absolutely anything for her. Our cats mean the world to my boyfriend—he's completely obsessed with them!* 2. To be something for which someone is deeply grateful or appreciative. *Thank you so much for taking care of my kids when I was in the hospital. It really means the world to me!*

means to an end The way that one achieves a specific objective, which is not an objective or ultimate goal itself. *Having that unpaid internship was just a means to an end—it helped me get my foot in the door at the company, where I now work full-time!*

measure for drapes To begin planning or preparing to replace someone in a job or position before one has actually secured the role, especially during a political election. *The senator has been criticized as measuring for drapes in the Oval Office with a month still to go before the votes will be tallied.*

measure swords 1. To engage in a sword duel against another person. *I was a very skilled swordsman in my youth—I measured swords many times and lived to tell the tale.* 2. To fight someone or something. *Can you two stop measuring swords against each other? I'm sick of having to break up fights between you! I don't think you'll win if you try to measure swords with the big pharmaceutical company.* 3. To get a sense of one's abilities in a particular area. *After measuring swords with him this morning, I'm confident that I can beat him in the race—I know he's not as fast as I am!*

measure the drapes To begin planning or preparing to replace someone in a job or position before one has actually secured the role, especially during a political election. *The senator has been criticized for*

measuring the drapes in the Oval Office with a month still to go before the votes will be tallied.

measure twice and cut once An axiom that encourages careful first steps in order to avoid extra work later on. *I have to go back to the store because I cut the wrong size out of my last piece of material. "Measure twice and cut once" should be my new motto!*

measure twice, cut once An axiom that encourages careful first steps in order to avoid extra work later on. *I have to go back to the store because I cut the wrong size out of my last piece of material. "Measure twice, cut once" should be my new motto!*

the meat in the sandwich A neutral party who must interact with two people or groups in conflict. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *Those two had a fight recently, so I'm afraid I'll be the meat in the sandwich if we all go out together. A child of divorced parents is often the meat in the sandwich.*

meat market 1. A typically public place where one goes to find potential sexual partners. Primarily heard in US. *Our college's student bar is such a meat market on the weekends. It seems like everyone I know has hooked up with at least one person there. Everyone knows that the clubs on Leeson Street are just meat markets for single people.* **2.** A location where people are gathered, displayed, and appraised for their looks or abilities, akin to cattle being valued in a market. Primarily heard in US. *These summer training camps are really just meat markets for college football recruiters to find the most promising up-and-coming players. The restaurant is an oddity, a meat market that only hires women for their large busts.*

the meat of the matter The most important, basic, or fundamental essence or element(s) of an issue, problem, or matter at hand. *Thank you all for attending this staff meeting. Before we get to the meat of the matter, I'd like to assure each of you that your jobs are secure. Here's the meat of the matter, Bill: we feel you've not been meeting the standards of work that we should be expecting of you in recent weeks.*

meat rack A typically public place where one goes to find potential sexual partners. Primarily heard in US. *Our student bar is the college's meat rack on the weekends. It seems like everyone I know has hooked up with at least one person there. Everyone knows that the clubs on Leeson Street are just meat racks for single people.*

meat sweats Perspiration that follows the ingestion of large quantities of meat. *I definitely had the meat sweats after eating all that turkey on Thanksgiving.*

meatball surgery Battlefield surgery that is performed hastily so as to quickly stabilize a patient and prevent imminent death. Popularized (and possibly coined) by H. Richard Hornberger in his semi-autobiographical novel *M*A*S*H*, which focused on doctors serving in a fictional mobile army surgical hospital during the Korean War. Primarily heard in US. *At the height of the conflict, our surgeons were primarily concerned with meatball surgery, getting wounded soldiers patched up long enough to receive more specialized treatment down the line.*

medallion man A man who dresses in a flashy way, usually with his shirt open to expose his chest and (often gold) jewelry. Primarily heard in UK. *Once the medallion man arrived at the party, all of the women decided to leave. My husband used to be a medallion man, but thankfully his style has gotten more conservative over the years.*

Meddlesome Matty One who involves oneself in others' problems or affairs. *Why are you being such a Meddlesome Matty? I can solve this problem on my own!*

media darling A very famous and popular person who receives exceptionally positive media coverage or attention. *Ever since the election season began, the presidential hopeful has become quite the liberal media darling. The rising star has captured the world with her talent and beauty, becoming one of the biggest media darlings of recent times.*

meet a sticky end To experience an unpleasant death, usually as a result of one's own actions. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *You will meet a sticky end if you don't change your reckless ways. The serial purse snatcher met a sticky end when he encountered a little old lady trained in karate.*

meet and greet **1.** adjective (hyphenated and used before a noun) Typified by a notable figure socializing with members of the public, the press, or guests in attendance. *The meet-and-greet gala is being held to promote the presidential nominee's public profile and help drum up support ahead of the November election.* **2.** noun An event or reception in which a notable figure socializes with members of the public, the press, or guests in attendance. *The normally media-shy singer is holding a meet and greet to*

help raise awareness for her newest charity campaign.

meet head-on To confront or otherwise handle something directly. *I'm nervous about having to make a presentation to the entire board, but it is a challenge I will meet head-on.*

meet (one) halfway To compromise with someone, often in an argument or disagreement. *I'll agree to some of your requests if you'll meet me halfway and allow me to implement some of my ideas. Hey, buddy, please meet your mother and I halfway and at least try to clean your room once a month, OK?*

meet (one's) death To die. *Please stop speeding, I don't want to meet my death today!*

meet (one's) end To die. *Please stop speeding, I don't want to meet my end today!*

meet (one's) maker To die. *Please stop speeding, I don't want to meet my maker today!*

meet (one's) Waterloo To experience a final and resounding defeat. (Napoleon Bonaparte suffered his crushing final defeat at the Battle of Waterloo.) *The underdog team met their Waterloo in the championship game and lost to the best team in the league 17-1.*

meet (someone's) expectations To be as good as or have the qualities that someone predicted, expected, or hoped for. *We'd heard so many good things about the new restaurant, but the food didn't meet our expectations at all. I'm so excited for the latest movie in the series—I hope it meets my expectations!*

meet the eye To be visible or noticeable. Perhaps most commonly used in the saying "more than meets the eye." A: *"Did I put up too many decorations?"* B: *"Well, they were the first thing to meet the eye!"*

meet trouble halfway To worry, grow anxious, or distress oneself unnecessarily over something that has yet to happen. *You can't go through life meeting trouble halfway, or you'll end up paralyzed with indecision and anxiety.*

meeting of (the) minds A situation in which two or more people reach an understanding or agreement. *There was a meeting of the minds between finance industry leaders and law enforcement in order to help curb*

financial fraud. After debating for hours, we finally came to a meeting of minds and decided on a name for our band.

melon head slang A stupid or foolish person. *Don't listen to his advice! He's a total melon head when it comes to finances.*

melting pot A place where a number of different people and cultures mix in harmony. *America has traditionally been known as a great melting pot because of the diverse backgrounds and cultures of its citizens.*

member for Barkshire A person with a loud, sharp cough that sounds similar to barking. Primarily heard in UK. *Every morning, the old man woke up sounding like a member for Barkshire due to the lifetime of smoking that had taken its toll on his lungs.*

meme A unit of culture transmitted from individual to individual, especially by some form of imitation. In common usage, the term refers to any individual piece of online content, usually an image paired with text, that circulates widely and spawns many imitations and variations. *These cat memes are getting out of control.*

memory lane A set or series of memories of one's past life, likened to a roadway that one may visit or take a tour of. (Used primarily in the phrase "stroll/take a trip/walk etc. down memory lane.") *My grandmother spends more time strolling down memory lane these days than conversing about the present. It was lovely finding our old photo albums and taking a trip down memory lane. To be quite honest, it's growing quite dull doing nothing but re-visiting memory lane when I get together with my high school friends.*

ménage à trois A sexual encounter or relationship between three people. *Although exciting at first, the ménage à trois caused their relationship to suffer and ultimately end.*

mend (one's) fences To rectify a damaged relationship. *After Jill heard that her father had become ill, she decided it was time for them to mend their fences before it was too late. The politician tried to mend his fences with his constituents after the scandal, but was not able to regain their trust before the next election.*

merchant of doom A person who always focuses on the potential negative outcomes of a situation. *I refuse to watch the evening news anymore because the reporters have all become merchants of doom.*

mercy fuck vulgar slang An act of sexual intercourse between two people, one of whom pities the other.

mere mortal A human, and therefore capable of mistakes. The phrase emphasizes someone's humanity and fallibility. *I have to make my expectations more realistic and realize that she's a mere mortal. Presidents are bound to make mistakes—they're mere mortals, just like the rest of us.*

merry-andrew **1.** adjective Amusingly foolish or idiotic; of or characterized by clownish behavior or sensibilities, especially in public. *Though at first I found him quite funny, Tommy's merry-andrew routine has grown quite tiresome lately.* **2.** noun A person who acts like a clown or buffoon in public, especially for the amusement of others; a fool or idiot in general. *I know you enjoy the attention that being a merry-andrew brings, but if you act like a fool all the time, people will start believing you actually are one.*

merry dance A deliberate waste of time. *She led me on a merry dance as she tried to explain why she missed our meeting.*

mess of pottage Something of little, trivial, or no value but which appears to be attractive or valuable on first reckoning. An allusion to Esau in Genesis 25:29–32, who sells to Jacob his birthright to his family's estate for a bowl of lentil stew (pottage). *Only after the economic crash did it become fully clear what messes of pottage these sub-prime mortgages proved to be for first-time homeowners. If we allow our obsession with job creation to undermine the health of the environment, humanity will ultimately end up selling its birthright for a mess of pottage.*

mess of (something) A large, unorganized amount or collection of something. *My desk is a mess of paperwork, business cards, and office supplies. There's a whole mess of produce at the farmer's market, but it's not always easy to find what you want.*

mess with the bull and you get the horns If you anger someone, you will be faced with retaliation. A: *"Did you really yell at Stan today?"* B: *"I did, after I overheard him complaining about me to other people. Mess with the bull and you get the horns!"*

meth head Someone who abuses or is addicted to an amphetamine, especially methamphetamine. *This state is a thoroughfare for*

methamphetamine to the rest of the country, so it's little wonder that there are so many meth heads here.

method in (one's) madness A specific, rational purpose in what one is doing or planning, even though it may seem crazy or absurd to another person. Originated in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*: "Though this be madness, yet there is method in it." *He may seem scattered and disorganized, but I guarantee there's a method in his madness.*

(a) method in (one's) madness A specific, rational purpose in what one is doing or planning, even though it may appear crazy or absurd to another person. Usually used in the phrase "have/there is (a) method in (one's) madness." *You may have method in your madness, but these radical changes to the business could still prove catastrophic. I know you don't understand my motivation for this decision, but after the dust settles you'll see that there is a method in my madness.*

(a) method to (one's) madness A specific, rational purpose in what one is doing or planning, even though it may appear crazy or absurd to another person. Usually used in the phrase "have/there is (a) method to (one's) madness." *You may have method to your madness, but these radical changes to the business could still prove catastrophic. I know you don't understand my motivation for this decision, but after the dust settles you'll see that there is a method to my madness.*

Mexican standoff slang An impasse, deadlock, or stalemate from which no party involved will or can emerge victorious. Also written "stand-off." (Note: This phrase may be considered offensive to Mexicans or those of Mexican heritage.) Primarily heard in US. *No one on the board of directors was willing to compromise their position on the issue, and with each of us having veto power, it looked like we were heading into a Mexican standoff.*

mic drop **1.** verb To dramatically drop one's microphone (or, often, to mimic such a motion) after a particularly decisive or impressive performance, action, or statement. *Did you see him mic drop after that rap battle?* **2.** noun A decisive or impressive statement or action. *You were so confident during your presentation that the last slide was like, boom, mic drop! I think the partners were very impressed. That dunk was the mic drop that ended the series.*

Mickey Mouse around To play or fool around, rather than engaging

in serious activities. The phrase refers to the Walt Disney cartoon character Mickey Mouse. *Would you quit Mickey Mousing around and take this work seriously? Pete is funny, but he Mickey Mouses around too much for my liking.*

microaggression An action that is deemed to be a subtle or indirect expression of bigoted or discriminatory views or attitudes. *You may think your little digs against women are funny, but to your female co-workers, they're sexist microaggressions. Today's speaker is addressing microaggressions and racism.*

Midas touch 1. The ability to easily turn a large profit. *The new sales rep seemed to have the Midas touch, turning every lead she found into a sale.* 2. The ability to produce successful results. *The young football coach had the Midas touch as he led his undefeated team through a perfect season.*

middle-aged spread Weight that accumulates around a person's midsection due to a decrease in metabolism caused by aging. *Barry suddenly started dieting and exercising to prevent the middle-aged spread.*

middle of the road 1. Describing an option that is neither the most nor the least expensive. *I don't need a high-end TV, but I don't want the cheapest one either. I'm looking for a middle of the road option.* 2. Moderate or centrist. *Most of the voters found the candidate's middle of the road platform to be reasonable and palatable.*

might and main See [\(with\) might and main](#).

mighty oaks from little acorns grow Large and powerful things once were very small and insignificant. *It's hard to believe that her successful clothing line was once a small business run from her tiny studio apartment. Mighty oaks from little acorns grow.*

mile a minute At a very rapid pace. *Taylor was so excited to tell me about her first day at school that she was talking a mile a minute.*

a mile away Very easily. Always of something detected or observed. *I can spot Paul from a mile away, just by the way he walks. After decades as an investigator, I can identify a con man a mile away.*

a mile off Very easily. Always of something detected or observed. *I can spot Paul a mile off, just by the way he walks. After decades as an investigator, I can identify a con man a mile off.*

milk the ram To do or attempt something futile (as milking a male sheep would be). *Studying for this class is like milking the ram—I'm just not going to get it.*

millennial An individual of the generation whose members were born between roughly 1980 and 2000. *Ever since millennials started moving into our town, every other building is a yoga studio or a coffee shop.*

Miller of Dee A person who lives alone or independently from others, usually for selfish reasons. Originates from the English folk song *Miller of Dee*. Primarily heard in UK. *Dan was quickly labeled the miller of Dee because of his carefree, bachelor lifestyle.*

millstone around (one's) neck A heavy burden. *I wish I hadn't bought that house—the mortgage is a millstone around my neck.*

a mind is a terrible thing to waste Education and exercising one's mind is important. *No, you absolutely must go to college after you graduate in the spring! A mind is a terrible thing to waste!*

mind like a sieve See [have a mind like a sieve](#).

mind-numbing Extremely dull and boring. *If we have to sit through another mind-numbing lecture today, I'm going to need another cup of coffee!*

mind of (one's) own The propensity or ability to think, act, or form opinions without outside influence. It is often used (humorously) to describe an inanimate object that cannot be controlled by its owner. *I tried to tell him that wasn't the best decision to make under those circumstances, but you know he has a mind of his own, and he did it anyway. I swear, my vacuum has a mind of its own! It turns on in the middle of the night when we're all asleep!*

mind (one's) manners To be well behaved and act appropriately. *Make sure you mind your manners while you are with your Aunt Josephine. I don't want to hear about you giving her any trouble while I'm away!*

mind (one's) p's and q's To be polite and display good manners. *Be sure to mind your p's and q's when you visit your aunt this weekend! The mother reminded her young children to mind their p's and q's when they went over to their friends' houses for play dates.*

mind (one's) p's and q's To be well behaved and act appropriately;

to mind one's manners. *Make sure you mind your p's and q's while you are with your aunt. I don't want to hear about you giving her any trouble while I'm away!*

mind the gap An audio or visual instruction used in the UK and Ireland to be careful stepping over the space between a train's carriage and the platform when boarding or disembarking. Primarily heard in UK, Ireland. *Your train is now arriving. Please mind the gap.*

the mind's ear The imaginative capability to create or recall sound within one's mind; the part of the mind that experiences imagined or recalled sound. (An allusion to the "mind's eye," which is likewise responsible for mental imagery.) *I can still hear in my mind's ear the sweet laughter of my daughter when she was a child.*

mine of information Someone or something that contains a lot of knowledge about a particular topic. *You should ask Amanda for advice about your cake recipe—she's a mine of information about baking.*

miner's canary Something or someone who, due to sensitivity to his, her, or its surroundings, acts as an indicator and early warning of possible adverse conditions or danger. Refers to the former practice of taking caged canaries into coal mines—the birds would die if methane gas was present, thereby alerting miners to the danger. *Wildlife in disaster movies always acts like the miner's canary, fleeing the scene when catastrophe is imminent. John was used as a miner's canary to see the test drug's effects on the human mind.*

mint chocolate chip A popular dessert flavor that tastes like mint and contains hard chocolate pieces. *I'm getting a scoop of mint chocolate chip—what ice cream flavor do you want?*

mint condition The state of an object that is in perfect condition, as if it has never been touched or otherwise used. The phrase originally referred to coins that were never put into circulation and thus remained in the same pristine condition as when they were produced at the mint. *There's no way I'm selling my mint condition Babe Ruth rookie card—I don't care how much money it would get, it's one of my most prized possessions!*

mint it slang To earn a lot of money, usually quickly. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *That company has such a great product that it's no surprise they're minting it these days.*

mint money To earn a very large amount of money, especially by doing something very successfully. *We'll be minting money if we can manage to secure a trading partner in China. I hear Sarah has minted money with sales from her latest novel.*

miserly sort Someone disinclined to spend or part with money; a skinflint. *My date was awful. He's such a miserly sort that he told me to fill up on bread so I wouldn't want to order a full meal.*

misery guts An unhappy person who always complains. *I don't like talking to Paul because he's such a misery guts and always squashes my good mood.*

miss a beat See [not miss a beat](#).

a miss is as good as a mile Failing or losing by a small margin is just as bad as failing or losing by a large margin. *She felt that not achieving a perfect grade point average was as bad as failing all of her classes because, according to her, a miss is as good as a mile.*

Miss Right The perfect or most suitable woman to be in a relationship with or to marry. *If you're waiting for Miss Right to just appear in your life, you're never going to find someone you'll be happy with. You have to get out there and give people a chance! After my last relationship ended, I decided to stop looking for Ms. Right and focus on other priorities in my life.*

miss the cushion To fail in some way. The phrase is similar in meaning and use to "miss the mark." *I felt confident going into the interview, but I think I really missed the cushion, judging by the recruiter's facial expressions.*

miss the cut In golf, to fail to match or better the score necessary to remain in the final two rounds of a four-round tournament, thus resulting in elimination. *Despite a strong start in the tournament, Ms. Ryder fell behind in the last nine holes and ended up missing the cut.*

miss the mark To be slightly or somewhat mistaken, incorrect, or inaccurate. *I believe your statements about the city's homelessness problem have rather missed the mark. The film tries to be a commentary on the middle class in this country, but it ends up missing the mark.*

missing link 1. A hypothetical extinct animal that is believed to be the evolutionary connection between man and ape. *Scientists will never fully*

understand the evolution of man until they find the missing link. 2. Something that is significantly, noticeably absent, often because its presence would be helpful or beneficial. Participation is the missing link in your grade, so I would suggest speaking up in class going forward. I think that chlorine is the missing link in this experiment.

mission creep The gradual expansion or widening in scope of a project, action, or task, especially a military operation, beyond its initial goal or objective. *Congress is wary of granting the president's request for military authority in the region, fearing a repeat of the mission creep that plagued his last war effort.*

mission is to drain the swamp See [Up to \(one's\) neck in alligators.](#)

Mister Right A man who is regarded as the ideal romantic partner. *Marie suffered through dozens of bad dates before she finally found Mister Right.*

Mister Right See [Mr. Right.](#)

mix apples and oranges To combine or compare two different things. *You can't compare your job as a nurse to mine as an engineer—that's mixing apples and oranges!*

mix it (up) To fight or argue with someone. *That guy's always coming in here and trying to mix it up with the other patrons. When it comes to politics, Jerry sure likes to mix it with those who don't share his views.*

mixed bag A diverse mixture or group. *The conference was a mixed bag of all kinds of different people. I thought that all of my classes this semester would be interesting, but it's really been a mixed bag so far.*

mixed emotions Positive and negative emotions that are experienced simultaneously and are often in conflict with one another. *I've got mixed emotions about starting college this fall: on the one hand, I can't wait to start the next chapter in my education, but, on the other, I will be so sad leaving my friends and family behind.*

mixed feelings Positive and negative emotions that are experienced simultaneously and which are often in conflict with one another. *I've got mixed feelings about starting college this fall: on the one hand, I can't wait to start the next chapter in my education, but, on the other, I will be so sad leaving my friends and family behind.*

mixed message A signal, message, or communication that has, or is interpreted as having, multiple, ambiguous, or contradictory meanings. (Often plural.) *I keep getting these mixed messages from my ex-girlfriend. I can't tell if she just wants to be friends, or if she's interested in getting back together. I just think it sends something of a mixed message to be advertising a new production assistant position right after we went through a round of layoffs.*

a mixed picture A portrayal of a situation highlighting both positive and negative aspects of its nature or status. *Despite the government's upbeat remarks, the Federal Reserve today published a report showing a mixed picture of the status of the economy's recovery.*

mixed signal A signal, message, or communication that has, or is interpreted as having, multiple, ambiguous, or contradictory meanings. (Often plural.) *I keep getting these mixed signals from my ex-girlfriend. I can't tell if she just wants to be friends, or if she's interested in getting back together. I just think it sends something of a mixed signal to be advertising a new production assistant position right after we went through a round of layoffs.*

mocking is catching If one engages in mockery, it encourages others to do the same. A: "As soon as he started making fun of me, the other kids joined in too!" B: "Oh dear, mocking is catching, isn't it?"

a modest proposal An extreme, unorthodox, and often provocative or distasteful remedy to a complex problem, generally suggested humorously or satirically. (An allusion to Jonathan Swift's 1729 essay *A Modest Proposal*, in which he suggests that the poor of Ireland could alleviate their woes by selling their children as food.) *Here's a modest proposal, then: we create a hunting reserve where the world's wealthiest serve as game for the world's poorest, and for each hunter who makes a successful kill, their home country receives the wealth and assets of their prey.*

moll buzzer A thief, often a pickpocket, who targets women. *My mother had her purse stolen by a moll buzzer today!*

Molotov cocktail 1. A makeshift bomb, usually consisting of a gasoline-filled bottle and a wick, that is ignited before it is thrown at a target. *The riot police moved in after the demonstrators started throwing Molotov cocktails.* 2. By extension, something that has an explosive or otherwise

negative impact on a person or situation. *If you say anything negative about school board, it will be a real Molotov cocktail at this dinner party, believe me! His arrest was the Molotov cocktail that brought the whole scandal to light.*

mom slang An especially responsible and nurturing female friend. A: *"I gave the landlord that form you were supposed to hand in last week."* B: *"Aw, thanks mom! You're the best roommate ever."*

(one's) moment in the sun A brief period of time in which one is or has been particularly successful, popular, famous, etc., especially when set against an otherwise moderate or unremarkable life. *After 35 years in this one-horse town, all I want is a moment in the sun, a time when the whole world knows and loves me! Jonathan had his moment in the sun when one of his videos went viral on the Internet and, for a little while at least, he became a household name.*

Monday morning quarterback A person who acts like they have all the answers to a problem, especially in hindsight, usually without having any experience in that area. Likened to fans and commentators who criticize a football team after a Sunday game. Primarily heard in US. *Social media seems to have turned everyone into a Monday morning quarterback whenever political issues are discussed.*

money can't buy happiness Wealth and material goods will not bring long-term happiness. *The high rate of depression among lottery winners proves that money can't buy happiness.*

money for jam A very quick and easy way to earn money. Primarily heard in UK. A: *"I'm getting paid to stay in my neighbours' mansion while they're on holiday."* B: *"Wow, that'll be money for jam!"* *Twenty quid for watching a movie while the kids are asleep? Sounds like money for jam to me!*

money for jam See [be money for jam](#).

money for old rope A very quick and easy way to earn money. A: *"I'm getting paid to stay in my neighbours' mansion while they're on holiday."* B: *"Wow, that'll be money for old rope!"* *Twenty quid for watching a movie while the kids are asleep? Sounds like money for old rope to me!*

money for old rope See [be money for old rope](#).

money isn't everything A phrase downplaying the importance of money, often as an attempt at consolation. *I know you wish you were in a higher-paying field, but you actually like your job, and that is important—money isn't everything. When you think of how many celebrities have had trouble with the law or have struggled with substance abuse, it's a powerful reminder that money isn't everything.*

money laundering The criminal act or practice of processing large amounts of money obtained through illegitimate or illegal means, often in small increments through banks or other legitimate businesses, so as to conceal its source or origins. *One of the clubs downtown was shut down last week on charges of suspected money laundering for a local criminal enterprise.*

money maker 1. Something that is financially profitable *Our company is in a great position these days—our latest software release has been a huge money maker. I can't believe that simple product has been such a big money maker.* 2. slang One's buttocks. Often used in the phrase "shake your money maker." *I love to go dancing and shake my money maker! Time to hit the gym and tone the money maker!*

money pit A business, possession, or other financial commitment that requires or consumes an increasingly large amount of money, especially more than was first anticipated. *I bought this restaurant because of its prime downtown location, but with all the repairs and the huge amount of staff needed to run it, it's proven to be quite a money pit. The problem with buying used cars is that, even if they started off being cheap, they often turn into money pits as they start breaking down.*

money-spinner A lucrative business or product. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *That mobile dating app has proved to be a real money-spinner for the developer—it's making them more money than anything else they've launched before.*

money talks and bullshit walks A phrase emphasizing the persuasive power of money. The phrase was perhaps most famously used by politician Michael "Ozzie" Myers, who was recorded saying it—and accepting a monetary bribe from undercover FBI agents—during the Abscam scandal in 1980. *If you want us to help you out, here's some advice—money talks and bullshit walks!*

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money's worth An appropriate or satisfying return on one's monetary investment in an item, event, or activity. Typically used in the phrase "get (one's) money's worth." *Admission to the museum was so expensive that I felt like I had to stay all day just to get my money's worth. We certainly didn't get our money's worth out of that toy—it broke in a day!*

monkey around To waste time or procrastinate by doing something unproductive or unhelpful; to fool around or spend time idly. *Would you quit monkeying around and give me a hand cleaning the house? I should have started this essay last week, but I've been monkeying around with my new video game console.*

monkey off (one's) back The elimination of a persistent burden or problem. *I can't wait until I'm done paying my student loans—that will be a monkey off my back!*

monkey on (one's) back A persistent burden or problem. *Trust me, don't get in debt. You don't want that monkey on your back.*

a monkey on (one's) back 1. slang A drug addiction. *Did you hear? Pete checked himself into rehab to deal with the monkey on his back.* 2. A burden. *This project is such a monkey on my back right now—I can't wait for it to be over.*

monkey wrench 1. A type of wrench that has adjustable jaws. *Pass me that monkey wrench, will you? I need to get a hold of this nut here.* 2. Something that causes problems or disruptions. *Ellen's flight getting delayed really threw a monkey wrench into our plans for the day. This rain has sure put a monkey wrench into our pool party!*

monkey's allowance Something that yields more abuse than reward. The phrase refers to performing monkeys, who would earn money from passersby and then get kicked by their masters, as encouragement to continue performing. *I know they promised you a raise, but I've heard that your new*

boss is really vicious. I think you'd be getting a monkey's allowance if you worked under him.

monkeys might fly out of my butt There is no chance of that ever happening. (Used to show skepticism or cynicism over someone's hypothetical remark.) *Bob: "If we could just get Democrats and Republicans to agree on a tax reform bill, we could bring the deficit down in no time." Dave: "It might happen some day—and monkeys might fly out of my butt!"*

a month of Sundays An impossible event used as an analogy for something the speaker thinks will never happen. *You want to borrow my car? Oh, sure—in a month of Sundays! He is never going to graduate, not in a month of Sundays.*

monthly meeting A recurring administrative gathering in the Quaker religion. *Our monthly meeting is this weekend—will I see you there?*

moobs slang A derisive reference to a man's chest, especially when he is overweight and appears to have breasts. It is a portmanteau of "man boobs." Primarily heard in UK. *You need to hit the gym, dude. Moobs are not sexy.*

mooch about (somewhere) To waste time or loiter (somewhere); to spend time (somewhere) idly or listlessly. Primarily heard in UK. *I got off work a little early, so I'm just going to mooch about in the city centre for a bit before I head home. John's taken to mooching about his flat all day long ever since he lost his job.*

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mooch off (of) (someone or something) To ask for or obtain (something) through the charity of someone or something; to sponge off someone or something else. *My brother has been mooching off me and my wife ever since he lost his job. You can't expect to get very far in life just by mooching off of the success of other people.*

the moon on a stick Anything and everything that one desires or can imagine wanting (i.e., above and beyond what would be normal or appropriate). *Jim was so smitten with his co-worker that he'd probably try to*

get her the moon on a stick if she asked for it. Jonathan always wants the moon on a stick when it comes to relationships.

moonlight flit A hasty nighttime departure, typically done to avoid paying money that one owes. Primarily heard in UK. *I can't afford the rent this month, so we need to make a moonlight flit!*

mop head The part of a mop that the cloth or sponge is attached to. *I'm going to need a new mop after all—the mop head on this one is missing!*

mop the floor with (someone) To easily defeat an opponent. Primarily heard in US. *Although he wasn't favored to win the race, Jack really mopped the floor with his competition.*

mope about (somewhere) To spend or waste time (somewhere) in a brooding, listless state due to being upset, unhappy, dejected, etc. Primarily heard in UK. *John's just been moping about the flat all day long ever since he lost his job. I know you're sad about being stood up by your date, but quit moping about and go do something with your evening!*

mope around To spend or waste time in a brooding, listless state due to being upset, unhappy, dejected, etc. *John's just been moping around the house all day long ever since he lost his job. I know you're sad around being stood up by your date, but quit moping around and go do something with your evening!*

moral compass That which serves or guides a person's knowledge, sense, or intuition of correct virtues, morals, or ethics. *Our country's moral compass has surely gone awry in recent times, as our priorities seem now to favor the wealthy accumulating more wealth at the expense of any other concern.*

the moral high ground A position of moral authority or superiority that one's arguments, beliefs, ideas, etc., are claimed or purported to occupy, especially in comparison to a differing viewpoint. (Used especially in the phrase "take/claim/seize/etc. the moral high ground.") *The senator always tries to claim the moral high ground during a debate so as to shift public opinion in his favor.*

moral low ground A position of moral impropriety that one's arguments, beliefs, ideas, etc., are claimed or purported to occupy, especially in comparison to a differing viewpoint. The opposite of the more common

phrase "moral high ground." *That is a repugnant view of this case—I can't believe you're taking the moral low ground here!*

more Catholic than the Pope (himself) **1.** More stringently adherent to the laws, tenets, and doctrines of the Catholic faith than is taught or required by the papacy or the Church as a whole. (Usually used hyperbolically as a negative or mocking criticism of someone as being overly pious.) *I can't believe we're not allowed to eat meat on Fridays while we're staying with Grandma. She's more Catholic than the Pope himself! Ah, would you stop with your protestations of our mortal sins and telling us to repent every minute of the day! I swear, you're more Catholic than the Pope.* **2.** By extension, more extreme in one's beliefs, behavior, attitudes, etc., than that of the prevailing authority or standard of normalcy. *After a year, Jake had started using every dialectic cliché and slang word he had heard in his adopted country, and soon he was more Catholic than the Pope, so to speak.*

more cry than wool A great deal of fuss, noise, fanfare, or protestation over something of little or no substance, importance, or relevance. *My opponent has been making outlandish claims about my track record so as to foment distrust in the public, but I assure you, his remarks are more cry than wool.*

more haste, less speed Acting too quickly and without due diligence, focus, and attention to detail will result in avoidable mistakes and thus require even more time to complete the task satisfactorily. (The logic of the phrase is essentially "too much haste results in less overall speed.") Primarily heard in UK. *I know we're all eager to get the new software released to the public, but remember: more haste, less speed. We don't want to end up wasting time fixing bugs that could have been avoided.*

more sinned against than sinner Less guilty or worthy of blame than others, especially those who have injured or laid such blame or guilt upon one. *I may be exploiting a loophole in how much I receive in social welfare payments, but given that my retirement fund was stolen from me by fraudulent investors, I'd say I'm more sinned against than sinner. The nurse undoubtedly made questionable judgment calls in this unfortunate case; however, his hands were largely tied by ambiguous legal wordings relating to end-of-life care, and, in my opinion, he was more sinned against than sinner.*



more sinned against than sinning Less guilty or worthy of blame than others who have injured or laid such blame or guilt upon one. *I may be exploiting a loophole in how much social welfare payments I'm receiving, but given how my retirement fund was stolen from me by fraudulent investors, I'd say I'm more sinned against than sinning. The nurse undoubtedly made questionable judgment calls in this unfortunate case; however, his hands were largely tied by ambiguous legal wordings relating to end of life care, and in my opinion he was more sinned against than sinning.*

more (something) than you can shake a stick at A very large number; an amount that is more than one can count. *When it comes to family members, Jay has more than you can shake a stick at.*

more than one string to her bow See [have more than one string to \(one's\) bow](#).

the more things change, the more they stay the same Many things remain consistent even as changes happen. The phrase is often said in a resigned or sarcastic tone. *We move into a fancy new office, and still, the server crashes all the time. The more things change, the more they stay the same.*

more trouble than it is worth See [be more trouble than it's worth](#).

more/bigger/greater than the sum of its parts Describes something made up of a large collection of things or people in which the total unit is more important, impressive, successful, etc., than its components are individually. *America is certainly bigger than the sum of its parts. The global social networking site, so intrinsically connected to and supported by users, is certainly more than just the sum of its parts.*

a morning person Someone who is more active and alert in the early hours of the morning than later in the day; an early riser. *I tried dating a morning person once, but since I like to sleep in late, it didn't really work out. I suppose it's more out of necessity than anything, but I turned into a morning person as soon as I had kids.*

morning, noon, and night All day; all the time. *I've been working morning, noon, and night around here trying to get the house ready to go up for sale. You've been playing video games morning, noon, and night. I think you should take a break to do some homework.*

the most unkindest cut of all The most hurtful or malicious thing that one could say to another. The phrase originated in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* in a description of Caesar's murder. *Hearing my own mother attack my decision to adopt a child was the most unkindest cut of all.*

mote in the eye A minor flaw or indiscretion. *No, your sister isn't perfect, but at least she's never been arrested—her shortcomings are just a mote in the eye compared to your own!*

Mother Carey is plucking her chickens It is snowing. This phrase alludes to "Mother Carey's chickens," which is what sailors call birds they believe are indicative of poor weather. *Bundle up, men—Mother Carey is plucking her chickens, so we're in for another rough day on the trail.*

a mother hen A person who looks out for the welfare of others, especially to a fussy, intrusive, or overprotective degree. *Jenny can be a bit of a mother hen when we're out at the bars. I wish she would just relax a little and let us have a good time! My dad is pretty relaxed about most things, but he can be a bit of a mother hen when it comes to who I hang out with.*

mother lode **1.** In mining, the main source of a mineral in given area. *We haven't hit the mother lode of silver quite yet—but we will!* **2.** By extension, an abundance of something. *I wasn't looking to expand my record collection, but I sure hit the mother lode when I cleaned out my parents' attic! It's an exciting time to be a researcher in this field, as a mother lode of new data was recently released.*

mother lode A large amount or main source of something. Likened to the main vein of ore in a mine. *The construction workers hit the mother lode of termites during the demolition of the condemned building. The archaeologist was thrilled when she discovered the mother lode of artifacts at the excavation site.*

mother of god See [\(Holy\) Mother of God](#).

mother of pearl An iridescent substance that naturally appears in certain mollusk shells. It is often used as a decorative material for items like buttons and jewelry. *The mother of pearl earrings you gave me for my birthday are so beautiful!*

a motor mouth A person who talks incessantly or irrepressibly. *Jake is such a motor mouth that I find it exhausting talking to him! You need to quit*

being such a motor mouth in the classroom!

mount resistance To try to stop or keep something from happening. *I'm worried that the townspeople are going to mount resistance once they learn that yet another tax has been levied against them.*

mountain oysters A food made from animal testicles, often those of a sheep or calf. A: *"Let's get some mountain oysters!"* B: *"Are you sure? Did you read the description in menu?"*

mountain to climb A very difficult task or challenge. *You certainly have a mountain to climb if you intend to get this project done by Thursday.*

mouth breather Someone who is dimwitted, foolish, or stupid; someone of low or stunted intelligence. *That bully is a such a mouth breather, I bet he has the IQ of a rock.*

mouth-breather A dimwitted, foolish, or idiotic person; someone of low or stunted intelligence. Used as an insult. *I'm tired of getting picked on by these mouth-breathers. I can't wait to go to college where I can meet people who aren't afraid to think.*

mouth-breathing (used before a noun) Dimwitted, foolish, or stupid; of low or stunted intelligence. *Maybe you wouldn't have failed the exam if you weren't such a mouth-breathing nincompoop! That mouth-breathing idiot Terry parked his car in my space again. That's the third time this month!*

mouth of a sailor A tendency or proclivity to use coarse, rude, or vulgar language. *I don't know what you're letting your son watch on television, but, for a fifth grader, he sure has the mouth of a sailor! My grandmother is the sweetest old lady you'll ever know, but, my lord, does she have the mouth of a sailor!*

mouth to feed A person, usually a child, for whose care one is responsible. *The last thing I need is another mouth to feed. I can barely take care of myself!*

mouth-watering Delicious; particularly appetizing in appearance, aroma, or description, especially as makes one's mouth salivate. *I can't wait to eat—those steaks you're cooking smell mouth-watering! We've got a few new mouth-watering dishes featured on the menu that are sure to bring in more customers!*

mouthful of marbles A phrase used to describe the speech of someone

who mumbles when talking. *I have such a hard time understanding him—he always sounds like he has a mouthful of marbles.*

movable feast An event or occurrence that does not happen on a predictable schedule. *Since Easter does not fall on the same calendar date each year, it's often called a movable feast.*

move house To relocate from one house or place of residence to another. Primarily heard in UK. *We only moved house last spring, but because of Pete's new job, we're going to have to do it again next month!*

move it 1. Hurry up! Move faster! *Move it, Dad! We're going to be late for the movie!* **2.** Get out of the way, and do it quickly! *Move it, pal—your car is blocking these gates!*

move (one's) body To dance. *Get up and move your body! The band is playing your favorite song!*

move (the) deckchairs on the Titanic To partake in or undertake some task, activity, or course of action that will ultimately prove trivial or futile in its possible effect or outcome. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *For all his blustering about overhauling the education system, the prime minister might as well have been moving the deckchairs on the Titanic for all the good these proposals will do. You're applying for arts council funding? Why don't you just move deckchairs on the Titanic while you're at it?*

move the goal To alter the rules or parameters of a situation in such a way as to suit one's needs or objectives, making it more difficult for someone else to succeed, keep pace, or achieve an opposing objective. (A US variant of the more common British phrase "move the goalposts.") Primarily heard in US. *I hate arguing with that type of person. As soon as you start wearing down their logic, they just move the goal on the whole thing! We're never going to get the book design finished in time if the publisher keeps moving the goal every couple of months like this!*

move the goal line To alter the rules or parameters of a situation in such a way as to suit one's needs or objectives, making it more difficult for someone else to succeed, keep pace, or achieve an opposing objective. (A variant of the more common "move the goalposts.") Primarily heard in UK. *I hate arguing with that type of person. As soon as you start wearing down their logic, they just move the goal line on the whole thing! We're never going to get the book design finished in time if the publisher keeps moving the goal*

line every couple of months like this!

move the goalposts To alter the rules or parameters of a situation in such a way as to suit one's needs or objectives, making it more difficult for someone else to succeed, keep pace, or achieve an opposing objective. *I hate arguing with that type of person. As soon as you start wearing down their logic, they just move the goalposts on the whole thing! We're never going to get the book design finished in time if the publisher keeps moving the goalposts every couple of months like this! Claiming victory after cutting the tax by a small fraction when in fact you had said you'd abolish it altogether is really moving the goalposts, isn't it?*

move the yardsticks To alter the rules or parameters of a situation in such a way as to suit one's needs or objectives, making it more difficult for someone else to succeed, keep pace, or achieve an opposing objective. (A US variant of the more common British phrase "move the goalposts.") Primarily heard in US. *I hate arguing with that type of person. As soon as you start wearing down their logic, they just move the yardsticks on the whole thing! We're never going to get the book design finished in time if the publisher keeps moving the yardsticks every couple of months like this!*

move the/(one's) clock(s) back To adjust the time on one's clock(s) back by one hour to account for the end of daylight saving time. *Don't forget to move your clock back tonight. I hate having to move the clocks back every autumn, it's such an antiquated custom.*

move the/(one's) clock(s) forward To advance the time on one's clock(s) ahead by one hour to account for the beginning of daylight saving time. *Don't forget to move your clock forward tonight or you'll end up oversleeping tomorrow! I hate having to move the clocks forward every spring, it's such an antiquated custom.*

move through the gears To steadily increase one's momentum, as of speed, intensity, progress, or success. *The home team has been training for weeks for this showdown, but they've barely had to move through the gears against such a poor performance by their opponents. With a lot of hard work and perseverance, our little business is finally starting to move through the gears!*

Mr. Right The perfect or most suitable man to be in a relationship with or to marry. *If you're waiting for Mr. Right to just appear in your life, you're*

never going to find someone you'll be happy being with. You have to get out there and give people a chance! After my last relationship ended, I decided to stop looking for Mr. Right and focus on other priorities in my life.

Mr. Right See [Mister Right](#).

Mrs. Grundy One who strongly values traditional propriety. In the Thomas Morton play *Speed the Plough*, Mrs. Grundy is a character known for her zeal for proper conduct. *You can't wear jeans to this dinner party! Your grandmother will be there, and she is basically Mrs. Grundy!*

Mrs. Right See [Miss Right](#).

much as Regardless of or despite how much; although. *Much as I'd like to see Paris or Rome some day, I'm pretty content to stay right here in my hometown for the time being. Much as he hated the arrogant young man, Jonathan couldn't allow an innocent person to be arrested for a crime he didn't commit.*

muckamuck slang An especially important, influential, and authoritative person, especially someone who is overbearingly or arrogantly so. *We're just waiting for the muckamuck to give us the green light before we get the project started. "All hail the muckamuck," Jerry muttered under his breath as the dictator's motorcade rolled by.*

muckety-muck slang An especially important, influential, and authoritative person, especially someone who is overbearingly or arrogantly so. *We're just waiting for the muckety-muck to give us the green light before we get the project started. "All hail the muckety-muck," Jerry muttered under his breath as the dictator's motorcade rolled by.*

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muffin top Excess stomach fat that is visible over the waistband of one's pants or skirt, so named because it resembles the top of a muffin coming out of the cup it was baked in. *I've started going to the gym because I'm sick of being the only one on the beach with a muffin top at our family vacations.*

mug's game A task or activity that is foolish, dangerous, or will not result in a positive outcome. Primarily heard in UK. *Allowing your children*

to play with fireworks is a mug's game. They are bound to get injured.

mummy's boy A boy or man who is particularly close with his mother to the point of being overly dependent on her. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *Lynn dumped Mark because he was such a mummy's boy and always ran to her to fix his problems.*

mum's the word A request or pledge to keep something a secret. *Now, I don't want anyone to know that I'm pregnant yet, so mum's the word. Your secret is safe with me. Mum's the word.*

murky waters A situation or circumstance that is foreign, unclear, or unfamiliar and which may be dangerous or difficult as a result. *We're starting to get into murky waters exploiting these tax loopholes. If we aren't careful, the government may crack down on us hard! John keeps himself so closed off that I've never understood the murky waters of his emotions.*

mush (something) up To mash or crush something into a thick, soft pulp. *Make sure you mush up that banana before you give it to Katie—she's still having trouble chewing solid food.*

music to (someone's) ears Something that is pleasing to hear, such as good news. *When Michelle heard that her son and daughter-in-law were going to have a baby, it was music to her ears.*

musical chairs See [a game of musical chairs](#).

a must That which is requisite, necessary, or indispensable. *I know this book is a difficult read, but it's an absolute must if you enjoy literature. Taking the introductory course is a must if you want to sign up for the advanced class.*

must be losing it See [be losing it](#).

must needs A set phrase used to emphasize that one absolutely has to do something. *You must needs plow this field before the sun sets! He must needs apologize to her, if he ever wants to regain her trust.*

mutter (something) under (one's) breath To murmur something in such a soft, quiet voice that others cannot hear it distinctly. (Said especially of rude, unpleasant, complaining, or impertinent remarks.) *I could hear Bill muttering under his breath on the way back to his desk after his annual review. Don't you dare mutter curse words under your breath at me, young lady!*

mutter (something) under (one's) breath 1. To say threatening, consternated, or disgruntled remarks in a very soft or indistinct voice, such that no one else can hear or understand them clearly. *"You'll get what's coming to you one of these days," Janet muttered under her breath. Steven stormed off to his room, muttering curses under his breath.* 2. To say threatening, consternated, or disgruntled remarks in a very soft or indistinct voice, such that no one else can hear or understand them clearly. *"You'll get what's coming to you one of these days," Janet muttered under her breath. Steven stormed off to his room, muttering curses under his breath.*

mutual admiration society A disparaging term for two (or more) people who engage in lavish mutual praise and admiration. *I can't stand working with Tony and Linda. They praise each other from the moment they walk through the door—it's like they've formed a mutual admiration society!*

my See [my, \(oh, my\)](#).

my angle See [angle](#).

my appiecart See [\(one's\) appiecart](#).

my arse An interjection denoting disbelief. Primarily heard in UK. *Clean up the house, my arse! You've been promising to do that for months but haven't so much as lifted a finger around here. A: "John said he makes six figures a year." B: "My arse, he does. He's still living in that shabby flat."*

my artistic style See [\(the/an/one's\) artistic style](#).

my ass is on the line See [\(one's\) ass is on the line](#).

my ass off See [\(one's\) ass off](#).

my autumn years See [\(one's\) autumn years](#).

my back is up See [\(one's\) back is up](#).

my bad That was my mistake; I admit that that was my fault. Primarily heard in US. *Susan: "Jerry, I asked you to do the dishes an hour ago, and they're still piled in the sink!" Jerry: "Oops, my bad, honey. I'll do them right now."*

my bag of tricks See [\(one's\) bag of tricks](#).

my bark is worse than my bite See [\(one's\) bark is worse than \(one's\) bite](#).

my bark is worse than my bite See [\(one's\) bark is worse than \(one's\) bite.](#)

my best bet See [\(one's/the\) best bet.](#)

my best bib and tucker See [\(one's\) best bib and tucker.](#)

my better half See [\(one's\) better half.](#)

my better half See [\(one's\) better half.](#)

my biological clock is ticking See [biological clock is ticking.](#)

my blood is up See [\(one's\) blood is up.](#)

my blood ran cold See [\(one's\) blood runs cold.](#)

my boo See [boo.](#)

my butt is on the line See [\(one's\) butt is on the line.](#)

my cake is dough See [\(one's\) cake is dough.](#)

my call See [be \(someone's\) call.](#)

my conscience is clean See [\(one's\) conscience is clean.](#)

my conscience is clear See [\(one's\) conscience is clear.](#)

my door is always open See [\(someone's\) door is always open.](#)

my ears are burning See [\(one's\) ears are burning.](#)

my enemy's enemy is my friend A phrase highlighting how a common enemy can be a unifying force for otherwise disparate groups or people. *I didn't want to work with that organization until I realized that we all wanted to keep the same candidate out of the White House. That's when I realized that my enemy's enemy is my friend.*

my eye! An expression of dismissal, disbelief, or disdain for something someone has just said. A: *"It's bad luck to step on the cracks in the sidewalk, you know."* B: *"Bad luck, my eye! I don't go in for superstitious nonsense like that."* A: *"I think I'm going to drop out of college."* B: *"My eye, you are! You've got one more year to go, and you are going to finish it for Pete's sake!"*

my final resting place See [\(one's\) final resting place.](#)

my finest hour See [\(one's\) finest hour.](#)

my gig is up See [\(one's\) jig is up](#).

my God See [\(oh\) \(my\) God!](#).

my God An interjection denoting shock, distress, or surprise. *My God, that car almost ran off the side of the road! My God, is that you, James? I haven't seen you in 20 years!*

my goodness An interjection denoting shock, distress, or surprise. *My goodness, you look like something the cat dragged in! My goodness, is that you, James? I haven't seen you in 20 years!*

my gosh See [\(oh\) \(my\) gosh!](#).

my hands are full See [\(someone's\) hands are full](#).

my heart of hearts See [\(one's\) heart of hearts](#).

my hearts desire See [\(one's\) heart's desire](#).

my huckleberry See [be \(someone's\) huckleberry](#).

my ivory tower See [an/\(one's\) ivory tower](#).

my kingdom for a horse I would give all that I have for the thing that I currently lack. The phrase comes from Shakespeare's *Richard III*, when the title character bemoans his lack of a horse in the midst of a losing battle. *I'm so thirsty—ugh, my kingdom for a horse! Or, better yet, for a drink of water!*

my last breath See [the/\(one's\) last breath](#).

my last resort See [be \(one's\) last resort](#).

my little finger told me that See [\(one's\) little finger told \(one\) that](#).

my lucky day See [\(one's\) lucky day](#).

my marching orders See [\(one's\) marching orders](#).

my marching papers See [\(one's\) marching papers](#).

my moment in the sun See [\(one's\) moment in the sun](#).

my native soil See [\(someone's\) native soil](#).

my nerves are shot See [\(one's\) nerves are shot](#).

my old dutch My spouse. Taken from the 19th-century Albert Chevalier song "My Old Dutch." Primarily heard in UK. *Sure, my old dutch and I have*

had our problems, but we always work it out.

my old flame See [an/\(one's\) old flame](#).

my old stomping ground See [\(one's\) old stomping ground](#).

my old woman See [old woman](#).

my other half See [\(one's\) other half](#).

my own flesh and blood See [\(one's\) own flesh and blood](#).

my place in the sun See [\(a/one's\) place in the sun](#).

my salad days See [salad days](#).

my salad years See [salad years](#).

my second childhood See [second childhood](#).

my stripes See [\(one's\) \(true\) stripes](#).

my strong suit See [be \(someone's\) strong suit](#).

my take on See [\(someone's\) take on \(something\)](#).

my time of the month See [that/\(one's\) time of the month](#).

my true colours See [\(one's\) true colours](#).

my tuppence See [\(one's\) tuppence \(worth\)](#).

my two pennies See [\(one's\) two pennies \(worth\)](#).

my two penn'orth See [\(one's\) two penn'orth](#).

my twopence See [\(one's\) twopence \(worth\)](#).

my Venus turned out a whelp See [\(one's\) Venus turns out a whelp](#).

my way or the highway If you do not do things the way I want or require, then you can just leave or not participate. *I'm here to create the best musicians in the world, so in this room, it's my way or the highway!*

my way out of a paper bag See [\(one's\) way out of a paper bag](#).

my word See [\(upon\) my word](#).

my, my An interjection expressing surprise, incredulity, or pleasure. *Come here and let me get a look at my grandson. My, my, how you've grown in the last two years! My, my, you still know how to make the best fried chicken in town!*

my, (oh, my) An interjection expressing surprise, incredulity, or pleasure. *Come here and let me get a look at my grandson. My, how you've grown in the last two years! My, oh, my, you still know how to make the best fried chicken in town!*

a mystery to (one) Something that is difficult to understand. *Why she walked out in such a huff this morning is a mystery to me! She was acting normally before that. It was a mystery to scientists where the birds migrated to until they banded some of them and tracked their movement.*

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N

na-na na-na boo-boo A teasing nonsense phrase typically said by children. *You can't catch me! Na-na na-na boo-boo!*

na-na na-na na-na A teasing nonsense phrase typically said by children. *You can't catch me! Na-na na-na na-na!*

naff off A forceful exclamation of dismissal, disdain, or impatience. Primarily heard in UK. *Naff off, Jerry! I'm sick of listening to you gripe every day. Jenny: "I know Tom is interested in you. Why don't you go out with him?" Sally: "Would you naff off? I wouldn't be caught dead with someone like him!"*

nah, bro slang A phrase used to reject an idea or suggestion. *You want me to go into the cricket-infested basement by myself? Nah, bro! Nah, bro, I'm not going out tonight.*

a nail-biter **1.** Literally, someone who bites their fingernails, especially due to nervousness or agitation. *I was a nail-biter at a young age, and, try as I might, I've never managed to shake the habit completely.* **2.** By extension, a situation, especially a competitive one, whose outcome is particularly close or uncertain and marked by nervous apprehension. *Did you catch the football match last Sunday? Man, what a nail-biter! With how close these two candidates are, this election is sure to be a real nail-biter in its final moments.*

nail in (someone's or something's) coffin Something that will eventually contribute to someone or something's downfall or death. *That class action lawsuit is going to be the nail in the company's coffin. Every beer you drink is a nail in your coffin.*

nail it **1.** To succeed at something in a particularly impressive way. *Her presentation for the CEO went really well. She totally nailed it! A: "How was your interview today?" B: "Nailed it."* **2.** To do something perfectly or accurately. This phrase is often used humorously to describe failures. *I had all the kids guess how many jellybeans were in the jar, and Michael nailed it—exactly 251 jellybeans! When I showed my friend a picture of the cake I*

was trying to bake, alongside my sad excuse for a replica, she started laughing and said, "Nailed it!"

nail (one's) colors to the mast To refuse to cease or surrender. Because lowering a ship's flag was a customary indication of surrender, this nautical phrase emphasizes the resolve of a ship's crew. *We will nail our colors to the mast and fight on—they will never capture us! We're going to have a tough time beating this team now that they are playing with such determination. I fear they've nailed their colors to the mast.*

name and shame **1.** verb phrase To publicly name or otherwise identify a person, group, or organization that is guilty of some criminal or anti-social act so as to expose him, her, or them to public shame. *The federal agency's plan—to name and shame local criminals across the country with a published list of their names and convictions—is being branded by some advocacy groups as a violation of privacy.* **2.** noun phrase The act of exposing a culpable person, group, or organization to public shame. *Look, I'm just as upset as anyone, but I'm not willing to take part in some name and shame against everyone in the neighborhood!*

name to conjure with **1.** A name that is important or well-known. *There are definitely some names to conjure with at the upcoming industry conference!* **2.** An unusual or interesting name. *Englebert Humperdinck is certainly a name to conjure with!*

Nantucket sleigh ride An instance of a whaling ship that has hooked a whale and thus is being pulled by it. *We're going on a Nantucket sleigh ride today, boys—I can feel it! There's a whale out there just waiting for our harpoons!*

narrow at the equator Very hungry. The phrase alludes to the idea of having a slimmer midsection due to not eating. *I'm so narrow at the equator—can we please get some food now?*

narrow escape A situation in which danger or problems are barely avoided. *That guy barely made it over the tracks before the train came. What a narrow escape!*

a nasty wallop A severe and powerful blow, which may be either dealt or received. *I got a really nasty wallop from a two-by-four on the construction site last week. His left hook can deal a nasty wallop if he catches you with it.*

nasty woman A liberal-minded woman. The phrase became a rallying cry and self-identifier for supporters of Hillary Clinton after Donald Trump referred to Clinton as "such a nasty woman" during a 2016 presidential debate. *If I'm a "nasty woman" because I believe in equal rights for women, then so be it!*

(someone's) native soil The country or geographical area in which someone was born and/or raised. *Though I've spent most of my adult life in London, it's always nice to return to my native soil of Shanghai, if even for just a few days.*

the nature of the beast The traits inherent to a thing or situation, especially a negative or difficult one. *Unfortunately, exhaustion is just the nature of the beast when you're a new parent. Of course you're scared—that's just the nature of the beast when you make big changes in your life.*

nature of the beast See [\(that's\) the nature of the beast](#).

nature's way of (doing something) A natural biological process by which something is done or accomplished. *A fever is just nature's way of telling you that your body is fighting off an infection. A baby's crying when she's born is just nature's way of getting air into her lungs for the first time.*

navigable waters Bodies of water that can be traversed by trade or transport ships. *Unless you want us to get shipwrecked on the shallows, we need to plan a route through navigable waters.*

near and far All over; covering a wide area. Often used in the phrase "from near and far." *You can't blow off this meeting, people are coming from near and far to hear you speak! I will search near and far to find you the perfect wedding dress.*

near miss A situation in which danger or problems are barely avoided. Used literally, it usually refers to a potential collision of some kind. *It was a near miss when that deer jumped out in front of my car! Luckily, I swerved in time and managed to avoid hitting it. It was a near miss for the senator, whose charges were dropped due to a technicality.*

near post In football (soccer), the goal post that is closest to the player in possession of the ball. *Kick it toward the near post!*

near the knuckle Prone or likely to offend others, especially due to being sexually explicit or suggestive. *A: "What did you think of the awards*

ceremony last night?" B: "I found the presenter's jokes a bit too near the knuckle for my taste." If you want to be a great comedian, you can't be afraid of getting near the knuckle from time to time.

near to impossible Of such difficulty as to be or seem almost impossible. (Hyphenated if used before a noun.) *The promises of the candidate during her presidential campaign are near to impossible to achieve, but they have garnered a huge following of dedicated supporters. The boss keeps setting us near-to-impossible deadlines for these new projects.*

near to (one's) heart Personally important to, or loved by, someone. *That old dog is very near to my heart.*

the nearer the bone, the sweeter the meat The last parts of something are the most enjoyable. *Some of my terminally ill patients have said that they enjoy life more once they know that death is imminent. The nearer the bone, the sweeter the meat, I guess.*

neat as a bandbox Impeccably dressed; stylish. A bandbox is a container that was used to store accessories like collars and ruffs. *Dave, I just love that suit and tie on you! You look neat as a bandbox!*

neat as a new pin Tidy; clean; in good or neat order. *I expected Danny's student apartment to be a total mess, but it was neat as a new pin!*

neat as ninepence See [\(as\) neat as ninepence](#).

necessary evil Something bad that must exist or occur in order for something good to happen. *These days, student loans are a necessary evil in order to get an education that leads to a well-paying job. Some view dictators as a necessary evil who keep the region stable by suppressing more radical elements.*

necessity is the mother of innovation The need for something tends to spark creative thinking and action. A less common variant of the phrase "necessity is the mother of invention." A: "I think she'll come up with a solution if we stop stepping in to help her." B: "That's a good point—necessity is the mother of innovation, after all."

neck and crop Totally and completely, often abruptly. *I can't believe you're just going to stop financially supporting me neck and crop! How am I supposed to buy groceries this week? Even though they got an early lead, we*

came back and beat them neck and crop!

necker's knob dated A rounded knob mounted to the steering wheel of an automobile so that it may be steered with one hand. So called because the driver (typically male) is able to place his arm around his girlfriend or wife. *My grandfather gave me his old Cadillac, which still had the necker's knob on the wheel from when he first started courting my grandmother.*

a necktie party An execution by hanging or lynching carried out by a mob of people outside the process of the law. *Enraged by the lack of action by the officers of the law, the men of the town began organizing a necktie party for the notorious gangster.*

Need I say more? A rhetorical question indicating that the speaker has made a point that does not require further clarification. A: "Will I like him?" B: "He's handsome, kind, and rich. Need I say more?"

need (something) (about) as much as a fish needs a bicycle To have absolutely no need or use for something. (Adapted from a feminist slogan coined by Irina Dunn: "A woman needs a man like a fish needs a bicycle.") *I'm perfectly happy having a phone that just makes phone calls—I need a fancy smartphone about as much as a fish needs a bicycle. We have enough problems with the business as it is, so we need an audit right now as much as a fish needs a bicycle.*

need (something) (about) as much as (one) needs a hole in the head To have absolutely no need or use for something. *I'm perfectly happy having a cell phone that just makes phone calls—I need a fancy new smartphone about as much as I need a hole in the head. We have enough problems with the business as it is, so we need an audit as much as we need a hole in the head.*

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cell phone that just makes phone calls—I need a fancy new smartphone like I need a hole in the head. We have enough problems with the business as it is, so we need an audit right now like we need a hole in the head.

need-to-know A phrase used in situations where one is not going to learn all details—rather, just the essential or personally pertinent information. Often used in the phrase "a need-to-know basis." *They won't tell me anything else right now—they say all updates will be shared on a need-to-know basis. They said the information they were providing was strictly need-to-know.*

needle in a haystack Something that is very difficult to locate. *Trying to find my contact lens on the floor was like looking for a needle in a haystack.*

neither fish nor flesh Neither one thing nor another; not belonging to any suitable class or description; not recognizable or characteristic of any one particular thing. *We require a solution that directly deals with the issue at hand, but what the chancellor has put forward is, to my mind, neither fish nor flesh.*

neither fish nor fowl Neither one thing nor another; not belonging to any suitable class or description; not recognizable or characteristic of any one particular thing. *We require a solution that directly deals with the issue at hand, but the proposal that has been put forward is, to my mind, neither fish nor fowl.*

neither fish, flesh, nor fowl Neither one thing nor another; not belonging to any suitable class or description; not recognizable or characteristic of any one particular thing. *We require a solution that directly deals with the issue at hand, but what the chancellor has put forward is, to my mind, neither fish, flesh nor fowl.*

neither fish, flesh, nor good red herring obsolete Not belonging to any suitable class of thing; unfit for any purpose or to be used by anyone. This older phrase appeared in a 16th-century proverb collection, where fish refers to food for monks (who abstained from meat), flesh refers to food for the general populace, and "good red herring" refers to inexpensive fish that would have been food for the poor. *With crime as it is in this township, the law must be aggressive and dependable; unfortunately, the new constable is neither fish, flesh, nor good red herring.*

neither hide nor hair No trace or evidence of someone or something.

I don't know where Mike went. I've seen neither hide nor hair of him all day.

neremberg defence See [Nuremberg defense](#).

(one's) nerves are shot One is mentally or emotionally exhausted, overwhelmed, or overwrought. *Between dealing with mounting debt, my four children, and my recent divorce, my nerves are pretty shot at the moment.*

nest egg An allotment of money that is set aside for the future. *With the cost of living these days, it is difficult for young couples to build a nest egg and save for retirement.*

Netflix and chill slang A phrase typically used as a pretense for sexual activity—not actually watching Netflix and relaxing. A: *"He asked me if I wanted come over to 'Netflix and chill.' Should I go?"* B: *"Sure—if you want to have sex with him!"*

never a bride See [always the bridesmaid, never the bride](#).

never a rose without a/the prick There is rarely a good or positive thing, event, or circumstance that is not accompanied by something negative or unpleasant (i.e., just as a rose has thorns). A: *"I can't believe the amount of taxes I have to pay on my lottery winnings!"* B: *"Never a rose without the prick, eh?"*

never in a million years Not at any point; under absolutely no circumstances. *Never in a million years did I think that I would actually win the lottery!* John: *"Do you think Samantha will agree to go on a date with Jake?"* Tony: *"Never in a million years!"*

never in a month of Sundays Not at any point; under absolutely no circumstances. *Never in a month of Sundays did I think that I would actually win the lottery!* John: *"Do you think Samantha will agree to go on a date with Jake?"* Tony: *"Never in a month of Sundays!"*

never in (one's) wildest dreams Not in any point in time that one has ever imagined. *Never in my wildest dreams did I think that someday I'd be living in Paris!*

never let the sun go down on your anger Always make amends before the day is done; do not go to sleep angry. *I know you're mad at him right now, but you should never let the sun go down on your anger.*

never look a gift horse in the mouth If you receive a gift, do so

graciously, without voicing criticisms. The saying is attributed to St. Jerome and refers to the practice of looking at a horse's teeth to determine its age. *I know Aunt Jean isn't your favorite person, but she gave you that beautiful sweater as a present, and you should never look a gift horse in the mouth! A: "But I don't want this ancient car!" B: "Never look a gift horse in the mouth, OK? You're so lucky to get a car for free!"*

never look back 1. To show no sign of returning to past circumstances. *Once I graduate high school, I'm leaving this town and never looking back. 2.* To progress without interruption or impediment. *When we began this company, we just stuck with our dreams and our plans, and we never looked back.*

never marry for money, but marry where money is Wealth should not be one's primary focus in choosing a spouse, but it is an important consideration. *A: "My fiancée is not exactly rich, but she does have a well-paying job." B: "That's good. Never marry for money, but marry where money is."*

never miss a trick To be aware of everything that is happening or at play; to always know what is going on. *My mom lets on like she doesn't keep close tabs on us, but she never misses a trick when we get into trouble. When you're hiring a PR consultant, you want someone who'll never miss a trick.*

never misses a beat See [not miss a beat](#).

Never Never Land A fictional place where everything is perfect and everyone is happy. Taken from the name of the fantastical place in the stories of Peter Pan by J.M. Barrie. Often shortened to "Never Land." *She must think that the real world is a Never Never Land if she expects a high-paying job to be waiting for her once she's out of college!*

the never-never plan The act of buying something and paying for it in installments. Primarily heard in UK. *I'm still on the never-never plan for some of the gifts I bought last Christmas.*

Never put off until tomorrow what you can do today. Do not delay or hesitate to do something if you can finish or accomplish it today. *A: "I've just got one more short assignment and then I'll be finished with my homework, but I think I'll wait until Sunday to do it." B: "You'll enjoy your weekend more if you do it now. Remember, never put off until tomorrow what you can do today!"*

never send a boy to do a man's job Avoid assigning challenging tasks to those that are inexperienced or otherwise incapable of completing them. *I should have known better than to have an intern proofread that letter—never send a boy to do a man's job, right? I asked you to fire him and you didn't do it? Oh good grief, I'll handle it myself—never send a boy to do a man's job!*

never set the heather alight See [set the heather alight](#).

never set the heather on fire See [set the heather on fire](#).

never set the Thames alight See [set the Thames alight](#).

never set the Thames on fire See [set the Thames on fire](#).

never set the world alight See [set the world alight](#).

never set the world on fire See [set the world on fire](#).

never skips a beat See [not skip a beat](#).

never you mind Do not worry or fret over this; you do not need to concern yourself with this; this is not any of your business. *John: "Hey honey, what are you wrapping in there?" Amy: "Never you mind! It's not for prying eyes." Janet: "How are you going to convince the boss to give us the week off?" Dan: "Never you mind. I have my methods."*

a new ballgame See [a \(whole\) new ballgame](#).

new broom A new manager (of a company or organization) who has been hired specifically to make changes and improvements. *After two years of falling profits, a new broom was hired to make budget cuts and improve the corporate culture.*

a new lease of life **1.** An occasion or opportunity for a renewed enjoyment in, enthusiasm for, or appreciation of one's life. Primarily heard in UK. *After finding out that the tests came back negative for cancer, I feel as though I've been given a new lease of life! Mary's gotten a new lease of life ever since her daughter was born.* **2.** An extension or increase in the time in which something or someone can be useful or successful. Primarily heard in UK. *Our company was given a new lease of life when we partnered with the global corporation. John's film got a new lease of life when his wealthy grandfather agreed to fund the rest of the production.*

new lease on life A new chance to happy, healthy, or successful after

surviving a hardship. *After the doctor declared that her cancer was in remission, Harriet felt like she had a new lease on life.*

a new lease on life An occasion or opportunity for a renewed enjoyment in, enthusiasm for, or appreciation of one's life. *After finding out that the tests came back negative, I feel as though I've been given a new lease on life! Mary's gotten a new lease on life ever since her daughter was born.*

new man 1. A version of one's self that is completely refreshed and/or in better health and spirits, especially after an exhausting or debilitating experience. Almost always used in the phrase "feel like a new man/woman." *After he had some time to recover from the surgery, he felt like a new man.* **2.** A man who shares household and child-rearing responsibilities equally with his wife. Often capitalized. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *Jacob is definitely a New Man. He's always helping his wife around the house and taking care of the kids.*

a new man See [feel like a new man/woman](#).

new normal A previously unusual occurrence that has become commonplace. *High unemployment rates have become the new normal due to the country's economic strife. Coming home to an empty house is the new normal now that the kids have gone off to college.*

new phone, who dis slang A response one gives to make it seem like they don't know who has sent them a text message (as due to getting a new phone and losing one's contacts). *If your ex texts you again, act like you don't even care or know that it's him. Like, new phone, who dis?*

new school New and modern. The opposite of the more common descriptor "old school." *Needing to post your every movement on social media is certainly a new school way of life—we had nothing like that when I was a kid. I'm intrigued by this new school method of multiplication.*

a new slant A unique angle, approach, or perspective toward something. It is taken from sailing terminology, in which "a new slant" is applied to the boat to achieve the its optimum angle of heel. *This band is great, they really bring a new slant to the heavy metal scene. We want to hire an executive who will bring a new slant to the direction of the company.*

new standard A newly-adopted benchmark or measure; a new way of judging something. *High unemployment rates have become the new standard*

due to the country's economic strife.

new town A government-sponsored, self-sufficient community that is built in an otherwise undeveloped area. Primarily heard in UK. *Now that they've finished construction on the new town, that area is the place to be!*

the next best thing Something that is as good a substitute as possible for that which is really desired or best suited. *My walking shoes have a hole in them, so I've been using the next best thing—my hiking boots. I'm really craving some chocolate cake, but I guess this candy bar is the next best thing.*

next in line 1. Literally, next to be helped or served. *I'll help whoever's next in line. Excuse me, but I'm next in line. You'll have to wait your turn. 2.* Figuratively, next in the order of succession to a position of power, immediately after the current position holder. *Rumor has it that Margaret is next in line to take over the company after the CEO retires. The birth of the young prince means his uncle is no longer next in line to the throne.*

(the) next thing (one) knows All of a sudden; out of nowhere; without warning. *I was standing in line, minding my own business, when the next thing I know, a gunman runs into the bank and starts screaming at us to get on the ground! Tammy had only been on a few dates with Mark, but this one had been going smoothly. Next thing she knew, he got on one knee and proposed to her.*

nibs A derisive term for an authority figure, especially one who is demanding. Typically used in the phrases "his nibs" or "her nibs." *Oh, his nibs wants us to work on Saturday? Why am I not surprised?*

nice as ninepence See [\(as\) nice as ninepence](#).

nice guy A teenaged or adult male who is dependably friendly and compassionate, to the point of being seen as too boring, unchallenging, or uninspiring to be romantically involved with. *I'm tired of just being the nice guy that no girl wants to date. I want to be seen as edgy, dangerous even—someone no girl can resist!*

nice job An informal expression of praise for having done something well. (It can also be used sarcastically to mean the opposite.) *Mary: "Dad, I got an A+ on my midterm exam!" Bill: "Nice job, sweetie!" Nice job, Frank, now we're going to have to rebuild this entire model from scratch.*

nice little earner A job or business that is very profitable. Primarily

heard in UK, Australia. *This photography gig that I got a few months ago turned out to be a nice little earner.*

nice one An informal expression of praise for having done something well. (It can also be used sarcastically to mean the opposite.) *Mary: "Dad, I got an A+ on my midterm exam!" Bill: "Nice one, sweetie!" Nice one, Frank, now we're going to have to rebuild this entire model from scratch.*

nick knack See [knick-knack](#).

nickel and dime (someone) to death To assess costs or fees in enough small amounts that it adds up to a substantial sum. *Between the increases in property tax, sales tax, and income tax, I feel like the government is trying nickel and dime us to death. That phone company is nickel and diming their customers to death with all those fees.*

nickel nurser A niggardly, stingy person; a penny pincher. Primarily heard in US. *I used to hate going out to restaurants with my ex-girlfriend. She was such a nickel nurser that we'd never get anything nice to eat, and she always refused to leave a tip.*

nigger in the woodpile An outdated and highly offensive phrase that was used to describe something suspicious.

a night on the tiles A night out (often with the suggestion of celebrating and/or partying). Similar to the American phrase "a night on the town." Primarily heard in UK. *I am so excited to go out for a night on the tiles after I finish my exams this week.*

a night out An evening spent having an enjoyable time away from home, as in a restaurant, theater, bar, or other such locations. *I never knew how much I would miss being able to have a night out once we had kids. Hey John, some people in the office are planning a night out this Friday. Would you like to join us?*

night owl A person who prefers to be awake late at night. *In my younger days, I was quite a night owl and would often stay up until sunrise.*

the Nikon choir The paparazzi or a large group of photojournalists, especially when actively engaged in photographing someone or something of great interest. (Refers to the Nikon brand of camera.) *As soon as the starlet walked out onto the red carpet, the Nikon choir swelled to a nearly deafening volume.*

nine-day wonder A person or thing that generates interest for only a short amount of time. *The band's biggest fear was becoming a nine-day wonder, soon to be forgotten when the next big sound hit the airwaves.*

nine days' wonder Something that generates interest for only a short amount of time. *The musician feared becoming a nine days' wonder, forgotten long before he ever achieved success in his career.*

nine lives What one is said to have after surviving despite a near encounter with death or disaster. From the common myth that cats have nine lives. *I can't believe he survived after his parachute didn't open! He must have nine lives or something. It seems as though the CEO has nine lives, as her company has faced near ruin several times but has managed to remain standing after all these years.*

nine tailors make a man **1.** A phrase spoken after the custom of ringing church bells for a deceased male. The number of times the bells rang traditionally indicated the deceased person's sex, with a male receiving nine "tellers," or tolls, of the bell. *A: "Did you hear the bells ringing?" B: "I did. Nine tailors make a man."* **2.** The phrase was also used to mock tailors as frail and ineffectual, in comparison to the average man. *You will certainly best him in a duel. He's a tailor, after all, and nine tailors make a man!*

nineteen to the dozen Very rapidly, hurriedly, and/or energetically. *My aunt can get talking nineteen to the dozen if you get her on a topic she's passionate about. Sam came running nineteen to the dozen when he heard his son crying out to him from the back garden.*

nip and tuck **1.** noun A cosmetic surgery procedure, often (but not always) one performed on the face. *Many women consider getting a nip and tuck as they age, but I think my wrinkles make me look distinguished.* **2.** noun A minor change to improve something, often the appearance of something. *The house just needs a little nip and tuck before it is ready to go up for sale.* **3.** adjective Of a contest or competition, having a very close margin between the competitors. *This race has been nip and tuck, and we won't know who has won until the final vote is counted.* **4.** adverb Very closely competing; head-to-head. *The two teams went nip and tuck down to the final seconds of the game.*

nip in the air A slight chill. *I need to grab my jacket because there's definitely a nip in the air tonight.*

nip slip slang The exposure of a woman's nipple, usually accidentally. *I can't believe I had a nip slip in front of all those people—it was so mortifying! With the way every celebrity nip slip gets plastered all over the Internet these days, I can't afford to not wear undergarments—ever!*

no big deal Not inconvenient or difficult at all; not at all troublesome. A: *"Thanks so much for watching the kids for me last night, there was an emergency at work."* B: *"No big deal, man. I'm happy to help out." It's no big deal if you want me to drive you to the airport tomorrow.*

no big whoop (Something) not inconvenient or difficult at all; not at all troublesome. John: *"Thanks so much for watching the kids for me last night. There was an emergency in work."* Dave: *"No big whoop, man. I'm happy to help out." Seriously, it's no big whoop if you want me to drive you to the airport tomorrow.*

no biggie (Something) not inconvenient or difficult at all; not at all troublesome. John: *"Thanks so much for watching the kids for me last night. There was an emergency in work."* Dave: *"No biggie, man. I'm happy to help out." It's no biggie if you want me to drive you to the airport tomorrow.*

no bucks, no Buck Rogers No money, no space travel. The phrase comes from *The Right Stuff*, a movie about the beginnings of US space exploration. "Bucks" is a slang term for money, while "Buck Rogers" was a space-traveling comic strip character in the early 20th century. *Government funding for the space program has been down in light of recent disasters. It's a sad reality for us astronauts—no bucks, no Buck Rogers.*

no buts Without excuses, compromises, or caveats of any kind. *You need to be on time for school tomorrow morning—no buts about it!*

no buts (about it) 1. Without a doubt or reservation. *We're definitely going to lose our jobs after this merger, no buts about it.* 2. Absolutely no excuses, discussion, or protestations (about something). *I don't care how, but you make sure you're at your son's party tomorrow—no buts about it! No buts—just do as I tell you!*

no chill slang The inability to be calm and composed. *My new kitten is adorable but seriously has no chill. She runs around the apartment all day long!* A: *"I like Sam, but he's just too intense about everything."* B: *"Yeah, he has no chill."*



no cigar A phrase said when one is almost correct or successful but ultimately fails. Most commonly heard in the phrase "close but no cigar." Cigars were once commonly used as prizes or awards. *You all had some very good guesses—they were close but no cigar.*

no comparison See [\(there's\) no comparison](#).

no-count **1.** adjective Totally worthless; lazy, untrustworthy, or incorrigible; good-for-nothing. (Short for "no-account.") *That no-count son-in-law of mine has gotten himself arrested for public drunkenness again. That's the third time in as many months!* **2.** noun A worthless, lazy, or incorrigible person; a ne'er-do-well. *It grieves me each time my son comes home with a new no-count of a boyfriend, but it's not for me to choose whom he dates.*

no cover No additional cost for entry or entertainment (called a cover charge), as at a bar, club, or restaurant. *When we were in college and money was tight, we only went out to bars and clubs that had no cover. I hear there's going to be no cover at the band's gig next week.*

no DAPL See [DAPL](#).

#no filter See [#nofilter](#).

no flies on (one) One is very active or works at a fast past. Alludes to the idea that flies do not or cannot settle on fast-moving animals. *There are certainly no flies on Judy. She works so fast that the rest of her team can't keep up with her.*

no frills Void of extraneous details or embellishments; not fancy, decorous, or elaborate; simple. *It's a real no frills kind of place, so we can get dinner someplace nicer, if you want. My history teacher is not someone who gets impressed by a beautiful cover page, so I made sure that my project was straightforward and no frills.*

no good deed ever goes unpunished Due to the cruelty, ignorance, or selfishness of the world or others, one's good deeds or good intentions will often result in more trouble than they are worth. An ironic and sardonic twist on the more standard moral that "no good deed goes unrewarded." *Janet: "I decided to help George clean out his gutters, but now he's got me doing all sorts of repairs around the house!" Bill: "I guess no good deed ever goes unpunished, eh?"*

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no good to beast or man See [be no good to man or beast](#).

no guts, no glory Success does not come without the courage to take risks. *I was certainly nervous to start playing again after such a bad injury, but no guts, no glory, right?*

no hard feelings No ill will; no resentment or anger. Often said as a standalone phrase. *I'm sorry that things ended this way. No hard feelings? Unfortunately these layoffs are out of our control. I hope there are no hard feelings.*

no horse in this race A phrase said when one is not invested in or affected by the outcome of something. *I'm not upset that vacation time might be reduced because I have no horse in this race. I'm just a part-time employee, so I don't get paid vacation days as it is. Now that I've stopped practicing medicine, new regulations don't bother me in the slightest—I have no horse in this race anymore.*

no ifs or buts Without excuses, compromises, or caveats of any kind. *Clean up your toys right now, young man—no ifs or buts!*

no ifs, ands, or buts Without excuses, compromises, or caveats of any kind. *The new boss said that if we're even one minute late, we'll be fired—no ifs, ands, or buts.*

no joy 1. military aviation No visual confirmation of another aircraft (especially an enemy) has yet been made; no information available at this time. *Ground control: "Pilot, be aware that you have traffic at 11 o'clock." Pilot: "Copy that, no joy so far."* 2. By extension, no luck; I've been unsuccessful thus far. Primarily heard in UK. *I've been having no joy finding this book I need for class tomorrow.* 3. Literally, no pleasure or enjoyment. *I take no joy in making staff redundant, but it's part of being a manager, I'm afraid.*

no joy in Mudville A phrase used to describe an overall sense of sadness and/or disappointment. It comes from the poem "Casey at the Bat." *Believe me, there's been no joy in Mudville ever since my sister and her boyfriend broke up. There will be no joy in Mudville once Billy learns he didn't make the basketball team.*

no man's land 1. The area of unoccupied land that separates warring factions. *Make sure not to go too far out into no man's land on this offensive.* 2. A situation that is ambiguous due to uncertainty about how to proceed. *This lawsuit is a bit of a no man's land—the Supreme Court may have to set a precedent.* 3. An unowned, desolate and/or barren piece of land. *Out past the mountains lies a no man's land with nothing but dirt and scrub bushes.*

no matter how thin you slice it, it's still baloney It does not matter how finely you try to articulate or argue this point, it is still false, nonsense, or foolishness. *Jim: "But you see, redistributing the wealth of the country by introducing scaled tax increases will benefit everyone!" Susan: "Jim, no matter how thin you slice it, it's still baloney: tax hikes will hurt everyone, period."*

no matter how you slice it Regardless of how a situation is analyzed, viewed, or portrayed, the truth of it remains unchanged. *No matter how you slice it, the drastically lower sales numbers this year are bad news for the company's prospects for growth.*

no matter what/when/where/why/who/how Used to emphasize that something is always the case or that something must be done (by someone). *No matter how I approach it, I just can't seem to understand this math problem. No matter who does it, this report has got to be finished and on my desk by the end of the week.*

no mean feat See [be no mean feat](#).

no mean feat A considerably great, difficult, or noteworthy achievement or outcome. *Defeating an incumbent president is no mean feat, but we feel confident that our candidate has what it takes. Well done, John. Getting an A+ on that exam was no mean feat!*

no more Nothing in addition to that which has come before or already been said or done. *Oh, no more chicken for me, thanks—I'm full! No more mentions of my ex-girlfriend, all right? My heart just can't take it.*



no one ever went broke underestimating the intelligence

of... The full saying is "No one ever went broke underestimating the intelligence of the American people/public," or some variation thereof, meaning that people being swindled won't realize or question it, which makes them a prime source of income for others. It is typically attributed to writer H.L. Mencken. A: *"We can't sell this shoddy product to people!"* B: *"Oh please, no one ever went broke underestimating the intelligence of the American people."*

no one ever went broke underestimating the taste of...

The full saying is "No one ever went broke underestimating the taste of the American public," or some variation thereof, meaning that people will gladly accept something lowbrow or inferior, which makes them a prime source of income for others. It is typically attributed to writer H.L. Mencken. A: *"We can't pitch this script to the studio—it's truly awful!"* B: *"Oh please, no one ever went broke underestimating the taste of the American public!"*

no one in his/her/their right mind would (do something)

No one who is sane would consider doing something; someone would have to be crazy to do something. (In this case, "their" is used as a singular, gender-neutral pronoun.) *All I'm saying is that no one in their right mind would ask the boss for a raise with the economy the way it is right now. Everyone knows Jake is a mess—no one in her right mind would date him.*

no one should be judge in his own cause

A phrase that aims to preserve impartiality, as a judge would likely be swayed or otherwise affected if they were intimately involved in the issue at hand. It is a translation of the Latin legal maxim *nemo debet esse iudex in propria causa*. A: *"My lawyers are seeking a mistrial in an attempt to get a different judge—one with no ties to my former company."* B: *"That's a good idea. No one should be judge in his own cause."*

no plan survives contact with the enemy

Military plans always need to be changed once they are enacted in real-life military situations. The saying emphasizes the need for flexibility, as opposed to strict adherence to strategy. It is attributed to Helmuth von Moltke the Elder, a 19th-century Prussian field marshal. *Men, be ready to make changes on the battlefield—we all know that no plan survives contact with the enemy.*

no point crying over spilt milk See [\(there's\) no point crying over](#)

[spilt milk](#).

no pressure Said ironically to emphasize that what is being discussed carries a large amount of importance or makes one feel that one must try very hard to succeed. A: *"I don't want you to feel intimidated, but this employee review will have a huge bearing on whether or not you're kept on at the end of the year."* B: *"Wow, no pressure or anything!"*

no prizes for guessing (something) A phrase indicating that the answer is very easy to deduce. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *No prizes for guessing why Sarah didn't show up to work on the day after her birthday.*

no quarter See [give \(someone\) no quarter](#).

no quarter See [grant \(someone\) no quarter](#).

no question of See [be no question of \(doing\) \(something\)](#).

no question that See [be no question that \(something will happen/is the case\)](#).

no score What is said when neither side in a sports game has scored any points yet. A: *"How's the game?"* B: *"Ah, no score, but our guys look good so far."*

no screaming hell Rather unremarkable or unimpressive. Primarily heard in Canada. *My job may be no screaming hell, but I get a steady pay cheque every week and that's good enough for me right now. It was a pretty lame club. The music was mediocre, and the women there were no screaming hell.*

no screaming hell See [be no screaming hell](#).

no-show 1. Someone or something that does not arrive at a location as expected. *I don't even bother inviting her to parties anymore because she's always a no-show. We were hoping to catch a glimpse of the eagle returning to the nest, but it looks like it's a no-show today.* 2. The act of not making an expected arrival. *The event had to be cancelled because of a no-show by the caterers.*

no skin off my back See [be no skin off \(one's\) back](#).

no skin off (one's) back No cause of concern or interest to one; no source of difficulty, threat, or risk. *Hey, it's no skin off my back if you want to get a tattoo. I'm just saying that it's something you may regret someday.* A:

"Do you mind if I store some of my stuff in your garage for a while?" B: "Eh, it's no skin off my back."

no slouch See [be no slouch](#).

no slouch A phrase used to describe someone very hardworking, enthusiastic, and/or skillful. *Tom might not be the friendliest coworker in the world, but he's no slouch when it comes to running the company's IT systems.*

no stretch of the imagination See [by no stretch of the imagination](#).

no time to lose A phrase said in situations that require immediate and/or fast action. *You need to get to the hospital—there's no time to lose! Speed up, guys, we have no time to lose if we want to make this flight!*

no use crying over spilt milk See [\(it's/there's\) no use crying over spilt milk](#).

no use to beast or man See [be \(of\) no use to man or beast](#).

no way shape or form See [in no way, shape, or form](#).

no-win situation A problem that has no ideal solution. *In this day and age, most political candidates find themselves in a no-win situation when it comes to pleasing all of their constituents. If I leave for work now, I'm going to be stuck sitting in traffic, and if I wait until the traffic clears, I'm going to be late. It's a no-win situation.*

no wonder It is not surprising or unexpected at all. *You just worked a 20-hour shift? No wonder you look so tired. No wonder. This wire is completely frayed. I'm surprised the TV kept working as long as it did.*

a nobody Someone who is entirely unimportant, unsuccessful, or without power or influence. *He's a nobody at the office; no one even knows he exists.*

a nod is as good as a wink A small sign is enough to a person who is ready to act. *I'm prepared to start on this project once you all are ready, so a nod is as good as wink to get me going.*

NODAPL See [DAPL](#).

nod's as good as a wink An acknowledgement of the true but hidden meaning of an expression or statement. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *Even though you said otherwise, I know you really have no interest in going out tonight—a nod's as good as a wink.*



#nofilter A common hashtag on the social media and photo-sharing platform Instagram for pictures that have not been altered with the variety of filters offered in the app. *What a gorgeous sunset tonight. #nofilter*

nom **1.** verb To eat something, often excitedly. ("Nom" is generally deemed imitative of the sound of eager eating.) *Do you have anything I can nom on? I'm starving! I can't wait to finally sit down and nom on this pizza—it looks so good!* **2.** nom An expression of one's excitement for something they are eating or are about to eat. In this usage, "nom" is often repeated more than once. *I can't wait to finally sit down and have some of this pizza—nom nom nom.*

a non-denial denial A statement that seems and/or is intended to act as a direct denial to an allegation, but which, when taken literally or examined closely, does not deny the allegation at all. The phrase is most commonly associated with evasive answers of politicians facing scrutiny or accusations of misconduct. *When pressed by journalists over certain large, undisclosed expenditures he had recently made, the senator gave a classic non-denial denial of any wrongdoing, stating ambiguously that any such spending was simply associated with the running of his campaign.*

non sequitur A statement that does not logically fit into the current conversation. *Good luck getting answers from him—his every response to my questions so far has been a non sequitur. A: "I changed the oil in the car." B: "Well, that's a complete non sequitur, since I asked if you were hungry!"*

non-starter **1.** An issue, topic, or person that makes no progress or shows little evidence of future success. *I know you worked really hard on that proposal, but it's a non-starter—the committee refuses to even consider it. You want to be a doctor? Boy, that's a non-starter—you can't even handle the sight of blood! I wouldn't have too much faith in Bobby—he's a nonstarter, and this business will probably just become another in a long line of failures for him.* **2.** sports One who does not start the game or race. This phrase is often used in horse racing. *I watched the race—what happened to our horse? Why was he a non-starter? I may be a non-starter now, but my goal is to supplant the first-string quarterback in time.*

none of (one's) beeswax Something that is of no concern to another. This phrase is a less formal or serious version of "none of (one's) business." *It's none of your beeswax why I left the party early the other night.*

none of (one's) business Something that is of no concern to another. *It's really none of his business what I do with the money I earn.*

nook and cranny Every possible place or part of something, down to the smallest ones. *You need to clean every nook and cranny of this room before your grandmother gets here—it has to be spotless for her! I looked in every nook and cranny of the attic and couldn't find that box anywhere.*

nook or cranny Every possible place or part of something, down to the smallest ones. *You need to clean every nook or cranny of this room before your grandmother gets here—it has to be spotless for her! I looked in every nook or cranny of the attic and couldn't find that box anywhere.*

the noose is hanging Preparations are complete. The phrase originally referred to public executions, and so it sometimes implies that an audience is assembled for whatever has been prepared. *The actors are here, the stage is set, and the auditorium is filled. The noose is hanging, people—it's time to start Act I. I prepped the lab for the experiment, so the noose is hanging, whenever you want to begin.*

nose candy slang Cocaine in powdered form, typically ingested by snorting through the nose. *The party was already getting a little too wild for me, but when the nose candy started making an appearance, I knew it was time to leave.*

nose for A special ability to find or do something others would consider difficult. *A good police officer has a nose for finding criminals.*

a nose for something An intuitive ability to detect or excel at something. *I've always been able to learn languages easily. I guess I just have a nose for it. He's got a real nose for determining which way the stock markets are going to shift.*

nose into (something) To investigate something; to try to find information about something, especially private, secret, or sensitive matters. *The last thing we need right now are tax auditors nosing into our accounts. You really need to stop nosing into other people's affairs, or you're going to start losing friends.*

the nose knows An odor has made something obvious. *Oh, the nose knows—somebody was definitely smoking in my house! It's time to give the dog a bath. Trust me, the nose knows.*

nose of wax Someone or something that can be easily influenced or changed. *You need to set some boundaries if you want them to stop treating you like a nose of wax! He is not just a nose of wax for you to bend to your whims.*

nose out of joint A phrase said of one who is upset, usually due to another's actions or words. *Yeah, she's got her nose out of joint, but I don't think I said anything that offensive.*

nose-pick **1.** noun An instance or act of removing nasal mucus (i.e., "boogers") with one's finger. *After walking on that dusty trail all day, I felt like I needed a good nose-pick!* **2.** verb To remove nasal mucus (i.e., "boogers") with one's finger. *Mark! Don't nose-pick like that in class! Now please go wash your hands.*

nose-picker Someone who uses their finger to remove mucus from the nose. *I am bound and determined to make sure my kids don't become nose-pickers!*

nose-picking The act of removing nasal mucus (i.e., "boogers") with one's finger. *Nose-picking is a filthy habit. I've spent a lot of time getting my kids to quit doing it.*

nose to the grindstone A phrase said of one who is working hard and/or diligently on something. Sometimes used as an imperative. *I'm so impressed your grades, honey—you really put your nose to the grindstone this year, and it paid off! I've got to keep my nose to the grindstone if I'm going to get this promotion. We need to finish this project tonight! Nose to the grindstone, people!*

nosebleed seat A seat very high up in a stadium or theater, as for a sporting event, musical performance, play, etc., which typically costs less money but has a restricted view. "Nosebleed" refers jocularly to the effects of extremely high altitudes on the body, which can often cause nasal hemorrhaging, among other symptoms. *I wish you wouldn't be so stingy when you're buying tickets. I'm sick of watching football games in the nosebleed seats! I waited too long to get tickets to the concert, so all that was left was a nosebleed seat way in the back.*

the nosebleed section A seating area very high up in a stadium or theater, as for a sporting event, musical performance, play, etc., which

typically costs less money but has a restricted view. "Nosebleed" refers jocularly to the effects of extremely high altitudes on the body, which can often cause nasal hemorrhaging, among other symptoms. *I wish you wouldn't be so stingy when you're buying tickets. I'm sick of watching football games up in the nosebleed section! I waited too long to get tickets to the concert, so all that was left was a seat in the nosebleed section way in the back.*

the nosebleeds A seating area very high up in a stadium or theater, as for a sporting event, musical performance, play, etc., which typically costs less money but has a restricted view. "Nosebleed" refers jocularly to the effects of extremely high altitudes on the body, which can often cause nasal hemorrhaging, among other symptoms. *I wish you wouldn't be so stingy when you're buying tickets. I'm sick of watching football games up in the nosebleeds! I waited too long to get tickets to the concert, so all that was left was a seat in the nosebleeds way at the back.*

nosy parker A person who likes to meddle or pry into other people's lives. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *I have to be careful about what I tell Betty because she's such a nosy parker that she'll bombard you with questions at the slightest provocation.*

not a bad sort Not a mean, aggressive, or unpleasant person overall. *John has his flaws, but he's not a bad sort. I think he just rubs people the wrong way sometimes.*

not a dicky bird See [not \(hear\) a dicky bird](#).

not a hope in hell Absolutely no possibility of succeeding, coming to pass, or achieving something. *There's not a hope in hell that you'll find me living in this town after I graduate.*

not a little A lot; a great deal. *Your unexpected absence caused not a little tension among the board members, so I'd apologize to them immediately, if I were you.*

not a minute too soon At the last possible moment before it is too late; just in the nick of time. *The police arrived not a minute too soon, and the would-be burglar was apprehended before anything could be stolen. A: "The surgeon has just arrived." B: "And not a minute too soon! This patient needs an operation immediately!"*

not a moment too soon At the last possible moment before it is too

late; just in the nick of time. *The police arrived not a moment too soon, and the would-be burglar was apprehended before anything could be stolen.* A: "The surgeon has just arrived." B: "And not a moment too soon! This patient needs an operation immediately!"

not a peep from/out of (someone) Not a single word or sound from someone. Amy: "Hi Samantha, thank you for watching the kids for us. How were they?" Samantha: "They were great. I put them to bed at 8, and there hasn't been a peep out of them since!" There wasn't a peep from the students for the rest of the class after I sent Jonathan to detention.

not all it is cracked up to be See [be not all it's cracked up to be](#).

not all it's cracked up to be Not as good, enjoyable, special, or worthwhile as people insist or believe. *Honestly, the movie isn't all it's cracked up to be. Maybe I'm just not the right audience for it. If you ask me, amusement parks just aren't all they're cracked up to be.*

not any hard feelings No ill will; no resentment or anger. *I'm sorry that things ended this way, but I hope there aren't any hard feelings.*

not anything to write home about To be not especially remarkable or noteworthy; to be rather dull, mediocre, uninteresting, or unimportant. A variant of the more common phrase "nothing to write home about." A: "Have you eaten in that new sushi restaurant yet?" B: "Yeah, I went there last week. It was OK, but it isn't anything to write home about." *His performance hasn't been anything to write home about so far. To be honest, we were expecting much more from him when we recruited him out of Dartmouth.*

not anywhere near 1. Completely unlike; not at all similar. *This design's not anywhere near what I had in mind—you'll just have to start over from the beginning.* **2.** A great deal less; not nearly. *I do pretty well in math, but I'm not anywhere near as gifted as my older sister.*

not as black as (one) is painted Not as evil, malicious, or malignant as one is described or believed to be. *Everyone is afraid of the old hermit who lives on the edge of town, but after having a few conversations with him, he's not nearly as black as he's painted. The biker gang plays up its tough demeanor and hellish reputation, but they're really just a bunch of regular guys and not as black as they're painted.*



not bat an eyelash See [bat an eyelash](#).

not bat an eyelid See [bat an eyelid](#).

not be lost on (someone) To have a significant or noticeable impact or effect on someone; to be valued, appreciated, or understood by someone. *I assure you, Senator, the implications and possible consequences of the proposed law have not been lost on me. I hope all our efforts to help your career have not been lost on you, John.*

not be the only pebble on the beach To be only one of many other excellent or more suitable people, things, opportunities, or possibilities in the world that one may find. Said especially if someone has recently been unlucky or unsuccessful with someone romantically or in some endeavor. *I know you are broken up about Janet leaving you, but she's not the only pebble on the beach. I'm pretty disappointed that I didn't get the job, but I'm trying to remind myself it wasn't the only pebble on the beach.*

not be worth a brass farthing See [be not worth a brass farthing](#).

not be worth a plug nickel See [be not worth a plug nickel](#).

not bear the sight of (someone or something) To be unable to tolerate, accept, or endure someone or something; to severely dislike or be thoroughly repelled by someone or something. *I know I couldn't bear the sight of that horrible receptionist every day if I were to work here. He's just so mean and unpleasant! I can't bear the sight of my mother-in-law, but there are a few occasions each year where I can't avoid having to spend time with her. I absolutely cannot bear the sight of shellfish. Just being near it is enough to make me gag!*

not been herself See [be not \(oneself\)](#).

not been sleeping a wink See [not sleep a wink](#).

not believe a word of it To doubt every word or aspect of a particular claim or story. *Yes, I've heard the story, and I don't believe a word of it—Cheryl is a very reputable businesswoman. My kids told me the vase broke during an earthquake at our house this afternoon. Naturally, I don't believe a word of it.*

(not) breathe a word To share information that is supposed to be kept secret. Often used in the negative to encourage silence. *And if you breathe a*

word of this to the cops, we'll come after you. I was told not to breathe a word, but I knew I had to tell someone about such serious allegations.

not by a long chalk Not at all; not by great or any means. Primarily heard in UK. *I'm not beaten yet, not by a long chalk!*

not by any means Not in any way; not at all; absolutely not. A: "Tell me the truth: you thought that the play was awful." B: "Not by any means! It wasn't perfect, but I definitely enjoyed it." *Not by any means shall our country be drawn into yet another war overseas.*

(not) care a fig To be concerned about someone or something. Typically used in the negative to convey the opposite. *I don't care a fig about making money, I just want to do something with my life that makes life better for others. I haven't cared a fig for the show ever since they killed off my favorite character. Do whatever you want, I don't care a fig.*

not care a hang (about something) To not care in the slightest (about something or someone); to attach no importance to someone or something. *I don't care a hang about making money, I just want to do something with my life that makes life better for others. I haven't cared a hang for the show ever since they killed off my favorite character. Do whatever you want, I don't care a hang.*

(not) care a hoot To be concerned about someone or something. Typically used in the negative to convey the opposite. *I don't care a hoot about making money, I just want to do something with my life that makes life better for others. I haven't cared a hoot for the show ever since they killed off my favorite character. Do whatever you want, I don't care a hoot.*

(not) care a toss slang To be concerned about someone or something. Typically used in the negative to convey the opposite. Primarily heard in UK. *I don't care a toss about making money, I just want to do something with my life that makes life better for others. I haven't cared a toss for the show ever since they killed off my favorite character. Do whatever you want, I don't care a toss.*

not care (a) tuppence To not care in the slightest (about something or someone). Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *I don't care a tuppence how you get it done, just make sure the deed to that estate is in my possession within a fortnight! I know that Jeremy Lawson has a crush on me, but to be honest I couldn't care tuppence for him.*

not care two pins (about something) To not care in the slightest (about something or someone); to attach no importance to someone or something. *I don't care two pins about making money, I just want to do something with my life that makes life better for others. I haven't cared two pins for the show ever since they killed off my favorite character. Do whatever you want, I don't care two pins.*

not care twopence To not care in the slightest (about something or someone). Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *I don't care twopence how you get it done, just make sure the deed to that estate is in my possession within a fortnight! I know that Jeremy has a crush on me, but to be honest I couldn't care twopence for him.*

not crap where you eat See [don't crap where you eat](#).

not do a stroke (of work) To not do any work at all. *Now that Jim's retired, he just spends all day on the couch watching television. He won't do a stroke of work around the house! I'm going to have a long night ahead with this term paper, as I haven't done a stroke up till now.*

not dry behind the ears Not yet fully mature; not well experienced in some situation or for some role. *You boys can't enlist for the army, you aren't even dry behind the ears yet!*

not feel oneself To not feel physically or mentally well; to not feel as one normally should. *I'm sorry for getting upset at you earlier. I just don't feel myself today. I know Mary hasn't felt herself ever since her cousin died.*

not feeling (oneself) To not feel physically or mentally well or as one normally should. *I'm sorry for getting upset at you earlier, I'm just not feeling myself today. Mary hasn't been feeling herself ever since she lost her job.*

not find her way out of a paper back See [couldn't find \(one's\) way out of a paper bag](#).

not get a wink of sleep To not get any sleep. *Our newborn son is rather colicky, so my wife and I haven't gotten a wink of sleep the last few nights.*

not get anywhere To make no progress at all; to be stuck or at an impasse. *Look, we've been discussing this issue all day and we haven't gotten anywhere. Let's take a break and start again tomorrow. A: "How did the negotiations go today?" B: "We didn't get anywhere. I don't know how we're*

going to get this deal approved by the deadline."

not give a continental To be disinterested or indifferent. During the American Revolution, the Continental Congress issued a form of currency known as the "continental" that proved worthless due to rapid depreciation. *If you think I care what he says, you're wrong—I don't give a continental! I know you don't give a continental about your room being clean, but can you at least pick the clothes up off the floor once in a while?*

not give a damn about (someone or something) rude slang To not care about, or have any interest in, someone or something. *I don't give a damn what you do with that old clunker. I just don't want it sitting in my driveway any longer!*

not give a fig about (someone or something) To not care about, or have any interest in, someone or something. *Jared does not give a fig about wedding planning so his bride-to-be has to make all of the decisions.*

not give a hang (about something) To not care in the slightest (about something or someone); to attach no importance to someone or something. *I don't give a hang about making money, I just want to do something with my life that makes life better for others. I haven't given a hang for the show ever since they killed off my favorite character. Do whatever you want, I don't give a hang.*

not give a monkey's To be disinterested or indifferent. This version is truncated to avoid the expletives that often follow "monkey's." *If you think I care what he says, you're wrong—I don't give a monkey's! I know you don't give a monkey's about your room being clean, but can you at least pick the clothes up off the floor once in a while?*

not give a rap about (someone or something) To not care about, or have any interest in, someone or something. *Kathrine does not give a rap about politics, so she has never bothered voting in any election.*

not give a rat's arse (about something) rude To not care in the slightest (about something or someone); to attach no importance to someone or something. Primarily heard in UK. *I don't give a rat's arse about making money, I just want to do something with my life that makes life better for others. I haven't given a rat's arse for the show ever since they killed off my favorite character. Do whatever you want, I don't give a rat's arse.*

not give a rat's ass for/about (something or someone)

rude slang To not care at all about something or someone); to attach no importance to someone or something. *I don't give a rat's ass about making money, I just want to do something with my life that makes life better for others. Do whatever you want, I don't give a rat's ass.*

not give a shite (about something)

rude To not care in the slightest (about something or someone); to attach no importance to someone or something. Primarily heard in UK, Ireland. *I don't give a shite about making money, I just want to do something with my life that makes life better for others. I haven't given a shite for the show ever since they killed off my favorite character. Do whatever you want, I don't give a shite.*

not give a tinker's damn about (someone or something)

rude slang To not care about, or have any interest in, someone or something. *Fred does not give a tinker's damn about what anyone else thinks of him.*

not give (a) tuppence

To not care in the slightest (about something or someone). Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *I don't give a tuppence how you get it done, just make sure the deed to that estate is in my possession within a fortnight! I know that Jeremy has a crush on me, but to be honest I couldn't give tuppence for him.*

not give two pins (about something)

To not care in the slightest (about something or someone); to attach no importance to someone or something. *I don't give two pins about making money, I just want to do something with my life that makes life better for others. I haven't given two pins for the show ever since they killed off my favorite character. Do whatever you want, I don't give two pins.*

not give twopence

To not give in the slightest (about something or someone). Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *I don't give twopence how you get it done, just make sure the deed to that estate is in my possession within a fortnight! I know that Jeremy has a crush on me, but to be honest I couldn't give twopence for him.*

not going to take it sitting down See [not take \(something\) sitting down](#).

not gotten a wink of sleep See [not get a wink of sleep](#).

not half bad See [\(it's\) not half bad](#).

(not) half the person/man/woman (one) used to be Having a reduced, diminished, or weakened physique, disposition, conviction, prowess, or mental acuity, as after some action, event, or trauma. Sometimes used in the negative but to the same effect. *Poor Mary, she isn't half the person she used to be since that car accident. Have you seen John lately? He lost so much weight that he's like half the man he used to be!*

not have a hope in hell To have no possibility of succeeding, coming to pass, or achieving something. *They don't have a hope in hell of getting into the playoffs this year.*

not have a hope in hell (of doing something) To not have any chance at all of doing or achieving something. *With that giant supermarket opening up across the street, our little grocery store won't have a hope in hell of staying open. You think you can beat me? Ha! You don't have a hope in hell.*

not have a penny to (one's) name To be extremely poor; to have very little or no money to spend. *During college, when I didn't have a penny to my name, I survived off of ramen noodles for months at a time. They used to be so well off, but the economy crashed and their business closed, and they don't have a penny to their name anymore.*

not have all day To be in a rush; to not have much or any time to spare. Usually used in the present tense. *How long is this repair job going to take? I don't have all day!*

not have all (one's) buttons To be crazy or unstable. *Stay away from the corner house, kids—the old man who lives there doesn't have all his buttons. After yet another sleepless night, I'm starting to feel like I don't have all my buttons.*

not have anything on 1. To have no plans scheduled; to have nothing happening at a particular time. *I don't have anything on this weekend, do you want to hang out?* **2.** To have no clothes on; to be naked. *One moment, please. I'm just out of the shower and don't have anything on!*

not have anything on (someone or something) 1. To have no discernible advantage over someone or something else; to not be any better than someone or something. *Yeah, you're pretty good at basketball, but you don't have anything on my older brother Steve. Video game systems have*



gotten pretty impressive in recent years, but in my opinion they don't have anything on the classic systems from the '90s. **2.** To have no decisive incriminating evidence against someone; to have no proof of wrongdoing or criminality about someone. *The police can insinuate all they want, but they know they don't have anything on me that'll stick.* **3.** To have no information available about someone or something. *I got this history book for my report, but it actually doesn't have anything on the topic I want to write about! The library is horribly outdated—it doesn't even have anything on the current president!*

not have much between the ears To be rather stupid, dull, or dimwitted; to not have much common sense or basic intelligence. *She seems nice enough, but I get the sense that she might not have much between the ears. Jake always goes out with really attractive guys that don't have much between the ears.*

not have (one's) heart in (something) To not be emotionally invested or enthusiastic about something; to have no drive or will to do something. *The score was very close during the first half, but as the home team has slipped further behind you can tell that they don't have their hearts in the game anymore. I tried to write a novel after I left college, but in truth I just didn't have my heart in it enough to finish one.*

not have the faintest idea To have no knowledge or understanding about something. *I do not have the faintest idea where I left my car keys. He does not have the faintest idea how hard it is to run a business.*

not have the foggiest idea To have no knowledge or understanding about something. *He does not have the foggiest idea how hard it is to run a business. I do not have the foggiest idea where I left my car keys.*

not have two nickels to rub together To be extremely poor; to have very little or no money to spend. Primarily heard in US. *During college, when I didn't have two nickels to rub together, I survived off of ramen noodles for months at a time. They used to be so well off, but the economy crashed and their business closed, and they don't have two nickels to rub together anymore.*

not have two pennies to rub together To be extremely poor; to have very little or no money to spend. *During college, when I didn't have two pennies to rub together, I survived off of ramen noodles for months at a time.*

They used to be so well off, but after the economy crashed and their business closed, they don't have two pennies to rub together anymore.

not having any See [be not having any \(of it\)](#).

not (hear) a dicky bird To not hear, say, or receive a sound, utterance, or item of communication. ("Dicky bird" is sometimes hyphenated.) *We've had him detained for four hours, but he won't say a dicky bird to us about his involvement in the robbery. We haven't heard a dicky-bird out of the kids all night—I think one of us should go check on them.*

not herself See [be not \(oneself\)](#).

not hold still for (something) To not accept, tolerate, endure, or put up with something. *I won't hold still for Jonathan's infidelity anymore: I'm filing for divorce tomorrow! The people of this country will not hold still for the persecution administered by the despots and corrupt politicians in government.*

not in a million years Not at any point; under absolutely no circumstances. *Not in a million years did I think that I would actually win the lottery! John: "Do you think Samantha will agree to go on a date with Jake?" Tony: "Not in a million years!"*

not in a month of Sundays Not at any point; under absolutely no circumstances. *Not in a month of Sundays did I think that I would actually win the lottery! John: "Do you think Samantha will agree to go on a date with Jake?" Tony: "Not in a month of Sundays!"*

not in Kansas See [be not in Kansas anymore](#).

not in the biblical sense See [\(but\) not in the biblical sense](#).

not-invented-here syndrome A prejudicial belief that products, systems, software, etc., that were not developed within a company or organization are not as suitable or well made as those that are created in-house. *I think the boss's not-invented-here-syndrome stems from experiences he had using third-party software in his previous business, which apparently cost them thousands of dollars trying to implement.*

not just a pretty face Having distinguishing achievements, intelligence, skills, or abilities beyond what was or may have been assumed. Although the opposite of the phrase ("just a pretty face") always indicates physical attractiveness, this version primarily emphasizes a person's

contributions, with the assertion of attractiveness often being intended as humorous. *Sure, I know how to fix your computer. I'm not just a pretty face, you know!* Bob: *"I didn't know Jerry had a PhD in engineering."* Dave: *"I guess he's not just a pretty face."*

not just a pretty face See [be not just a pretty face](#).

not just another pretty face See [be not just another pretty face](#).

not knock yourself out See [don't knock yourself out](#).

not know A from a windmill To be stupid. It references the vaguely similar shape of the letter A and a windmill. *How do you manage to burn pasta? It's like you don't know A from a windmill.*

not know B from a battledore To be really stupid, or perhaps illiterate. The now-outdated term "battledore" was often used in reference to a children's primer. It was likely used in this phrase simply for the sake of alliteration. *How do you manage to burn pasta? It's like you don't know B from a battledore.*

not know if (one) is afoot or on horseback To be so totally and utterly confused as to be unaware of one's actions. *I've had such a long day that I don't know if I'm afoot or on horseback—I think I need to lie down! I finally got Billy a math tutor because his test grades clearly showed that he didn't know if he was afoot or on horseback in that class.*

not know if (one) is coming or going To be in a state of utter confusion or chaos. *There are so many things going on at once these days that I don't know if I'm coming or going!*

not know if (one) is coming or going To be in a state of confusion, especially due to being overly busy or overwhelmed. *I have so many appointments today, I do not know if I am coming or going.*

not know (someone) from a bar of soap To be completely unaware of or know nothing about someone; to have never met the person indicated. *My girlfriend got really excited when a movie star apparently walked past us, but I wouldn't know him from a bar of soap. Someone I wouldn't know from a bar of soap just contacted me online, claiming to be a distant relative.*

not know the time of day To be completely unintelligent, daft, or not alert. *We paid for her to attend the best university in the state, but three*

years in, she still doesn't know the time of day. How can you expect me to respect my boss when he doesn't even know the time of day?

not know whether one is coming or going To be in a state of utter confusion or chaos. *There are so many things going on at once these days that I don't know whether I'm coming or going!*

not know whether (one) is coming or going To be in a state of confusion, especially due to being overly busy or overwhelmed. *Lisa has been so busy getting everything ready for the party, she doesn't know whether she's coming or going.*

not lost on her See [not be lost on \(someone\)](#).

not matter tuppence To not matter in the slightest; to be totally unimportant. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *It doesn't matter tuppence how you get it done, just make sure the deed to that estate is in my possession within a fortnight! She doesn't come from an upper class background, but it wouldn't matter tuppence whether she were the Queen of Sheba or a beggar in the street: I love her, and that's all I care about!*

not matter twopence To not matter in the slightest; to be totally unimportant. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *It doesn't matter twopence how you get it done, just make sure the deed to that estate is in my possession within a fortnight! She doesn't come from an upper class background, but it wouldn't matter twopence whether she were the Queen of Sheba or a beggar in the street: I love her, and that's all I care about!*

not mind her See [don't mind \(someone\)](#).

not miss a beat To not slow down, pause, or lose one's place, especially in spite of a potential distraction or disruption. *The boss didn't miss a beat during the meeting when his son-in-law walked in 45 minutes late. You can't fluster my mother. No matter how you try to shock or annoy her, she never misses a beat.*

not monkey around with me See [don't monkey around with me](#).

not much between the ears See [be not much between the ears](#).

not much cop Not very good; not noteworthy or exceptional at all. Primarily heard in UK. *I was really looking forward to the film, but it was not much cop, I'm afraid. I just wasn't much cop as an accountant, so I packed up my career and spent a year travelling abroad.*

not much for looks Not very attractive. *I know Edmund is not much for looks, but Clarissa is madly in love with him nonetheless. Sure, the garden is not much for looks right now, but I have big plans for it.*

not of sound mind See [of sound mind](#).

not on my watch That will not happen while I am in charge or on the lookout. *Calhoun: "Sheriff, those bandits could come back to town any day now. We're all terrified that they're going to rob us again!" Sheriff: "Not on my watch, Calhoun. I'll have those bandits locked up for life if they ever show their faces around here again!"*

not on your nelly An expression of one's refusal to do something. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *A: "Will you go out to the barn and clean up after the horses?" B: "Not on your nelly!"*

not on your tintype obsolete Absolutely not; no way; not on your life. A tintype (also called a ferrotype) was a photograph made on a sensitized metallic base in the late 19th and early 20th centuries; why or how it came to be used in this phrase, however, is unknown. Primarily heard in US. *David: "Hey John Boy, come over and help me paint the house this afternoon." John: "Not on your tintype, Davey! I've got plans tonight and have no intention of getting dirtied up before then!"*

not open (one's) mouth To be completely silent; to remain discreet (about something); to not tell anyone (about something). *All the while our teacher was shouting at us, we didn't open our mouths. Don't open your mouth about this! I would die of embarrassment if anyone were to find out.*

not ourselves See [be not \(oneself\)](#).

not patronize me See [don't patronize me](#).

not play around with me See [don't play \(around\) with me](#).

not playing with a full deck 1. Not mentally sound; crazy or mentally deranged. *A: "Look at that guy talking to himself on the corner." B: "I reckon he's not playing with a full deck."* 2. Not very bright or intelligent; dimwitted. *Jim's a nice guy, but with some of the foolish things he does, I wonder if he's not playing with a full deck.*

not put stock in (something) To not pay any attention to something; to have or invest no faith or belief in something; to not accept

something. *I wouldn't put stock in John's promises if I were you because, more often than not, he'll end up letting you down. I don't know how the company expects its managers to perform well when it doesn't put stock in their abilities.*

not quite Not exactly. A: "Are you promoting me?" B: "Not quite, but if you do well in this new position, I think you will get promoted in the future." *I'm an A student, so of course I'm not quite pleased to get an A-!*

not reveal her colors See [reveal \(one's\) \(true\) colors](#).

not reveal her stripes See [reveal \(one's\) \(true\) stripes](#).

not rocket science See [be not rocket science](#).

not rule in or rule out See [rule in](#).

not safe for work A phrase (often abbreviated as "NSFW") that typically accompanies online posts, articles, or videos that might be considered racy or otherwise inappropriate in the workplace.

not safe for work See [NSFW](#).

not say a dicky bird See [not \(hear\) a dicky bird](#).

not say boo to a fly To be particularly shy, diffident, or timid by nature. Primarily heard in Australia. *My brother is a very sweet, warm-hearted man who wouldn't say boo to a fly. How can you suspect him of committing this crime? The neighbour's daughter is just the cutest little thing, but she couldn't say boo to a fly.*

not say boo to a goose To be particularly shy, diffident, or timid by nature. Primarily heard in UK. *My brother is a very sweet, warm-hearted man who wouldn't say boo to a goose. How can you suspect him of committing this crime? The neighbour's daughter is just the cutest little thing, but she won't say boo to a goose.*

not say boo (to anyone) 1. To be particularly shy, diffident, or timid by nature. Primarily heard in US. *My brother is a very sweet, warm-hearted man who wouldn't say boo to anyone. How can you suspect him of committing this crime?* 2. To not say a word (to anyone); to keep quiet. Primarily heard in US. *The neighbor's daughter is just the cutest little thing, but she wouldn't say boo the whole time we were there. I trust you didn't say boo to those coppers about the little side business we've been running here?*

not see farther than her nose See [can't see farther than the end of \(one's\) nose](#).

not see (one) for dust To not see one because they have suddenly disappeared or quickly departed. *If I won the lottery, you would not see me for dust! After Greg got that big job offer, we did not see him for dust.*

not see straight 1. To have impaired vision, often due to drunkenness. *I once got so drunk I couldn't see straight. I'll never do that again.* **2.** To not be able to function, typically due to anger, frustration, fatigue, etc. *When I found out that my brother took my car without asking, I was so angry with him I couldn't see straight. I'm so tired right now that I can't see straight. You'd better drive me home.*

not see the point See [see the point \(of something\)](#).

not see the point in See [see the point in \(doing\) \(something\)](#).

not set the heather alight See [set the heather alight](#).

not set the heather on fire See [set the heather on fire](#).

not set the Thames alight See [set the Thames alight](#).

not set the Thames on fire See [set the Thames on fire](#).

not set the world alight See [set the world alight](#).

not set the world on fire See [set the world on fire](#).

not shit where you eat See [don't shit where you eat](#).

not short of a penny See [be not short of a penny \(or two\)](#).

not show her butt See [show \(one's\) butt](#).

not show her cards See [show \(one's\) cards](#).

not show her colors See [show \(one's\) \(true\) colors](#).

not show her colours See [show \(one's\) \(true\) colours](#).

not show her hand See [show \(one's\) hand](#).

not show her stripes See [show \(one's\) \(true\) stripes](#).

not skip a beat To not slow down, pause, or lose one's place, especially in spite of a potential distraction or disruption. *The boss didn't skip a beat during the meeting when his son-in-law staggered in, reeking of booze. You*

can't fluster my mother. No matter how you try to shock or annoy her, she never skips a beat.

not sleep a wink To not get any sleep. *Our newborn son is rather colicky, so my wife and I haven't slept a wink the last few nights.*

not so bad OK; fine. Usually said when something exceeds low expectations. *I know the chicken doesn't look too appealing, but it's really not so bad. A low grade on one paper is not so bad, Steph—it's not like you're failing the class!*

not so fast 1. Literally, slow down; don't move or do something so quickly. *OK, now just ease the car around this turn. Whoa, not so fast!* 2. exclamation Stop right there! Don't move! *Not so fast, Mark! I have a few things I need to discuss with you about your behavior in class before you leave.*

not something to write home about To be not especially remarkable or noteworthy; to be rather dull, mediocre, uninteresting, or unimportant. A variant of the more common phrase "nothing to write home about." A: *"Have you eaten in that new sushi restaurant yet?"* B: *"Yeah, I went there last week. It was OK, but it isn't something to write home about." His performance hasn't been something to write home about so far. To be honest, we were expecting much more from him when we recruited him out of Dartmouth.*

not stand still for (something) To not accept, tolerate, endure, or put up with something. *I won't stand still for Jonathan's infidelity anymore: I'm filing for divorce tomorrow! The people of this country will not stand still for the persecution administered by the despots and corrupt politicians in government.*

not stand the sight of (someone or something) To be unable to tolerate, accept, enjoy, or endure someone or something; to severely dislike or be thoroughly repelled by someone or something. *I know I couldn't stand the sight of that horrible receptionist every day if I were to work here. He's just so mean and unpleasant! I can't stand the sight of my mother-in-law, but there are a few occasions each year where I can't avoid having to meet her. I absolutely cannot stand the sight of shellfish. Just being near it is enough to make me gag!*

not suitable for work See [NSFW](#).

not suitable for work See [not safe for work](#).

not take (something) lightly To regard something with a great amount of seriousness or gravity. *I hope you aren't taking these allegations lightly—they could mean a life in prison! I can promise you that I won't take this job interview lightly.*

not take (something) sitting down To refuse to accept something unpleasant, unfortunate, or unjust without resistance, argument, or action. *I just found out my wife has been cheating on me for the last year, and I'm not about to take it sitting down! I've been at this job for nearly 30 years and not once have I been given a raise. I'm telling you that I won't take this sitting down any longer!*

not take stock in (something) To not pay any attention to something; to have or invest no faith or belief in something; to not accept something. *I wouldn't take stock in John's promises if I were you because, more often than not, he'll end up letting you down. I don't know how a company expects its managers to perform well when it doesn't take stock in their abilities.*

(not) the be-all and end-all The most important event or thing. Often used in the negative. *My little sister thinks that a date with the captain of the football team is just the be-all and end-all of her life right now. Oh honey, I know you're disappointed, but failing the driver's license test is not the be-all and end-all. You'll just practice some more and then take it again.*

not the done thing See [be not the done thing](#).

not the half of it/(something) Only a small or insignificant part or detail of something. A: *"I thought Peter got fired for coming to work late."* B: *"That's not the half of it! Wait until you hear what else he did."*

not the only pebble on the beach See [not be the only pebble on the beach](#).

not themselves See [be not \(oneself\)](#).

not to say As well as; in addition to being. Used to indicate a stronger, more emphatic, or more candid description to what has just been written or spoken of. *I think it would be an incredibly ill-advised, not to say downright foolish, not to accept his offer at this point in time. His behavior is boorish, not to say contemptible.*

not too bad Fairly or mostly good; satisfactory. (Used primarily in conversation.) A: "How's your new schedule this semester?" B: "Not too bad. I don't have any classes before 11 AM, so that's a win in my book!" John: "Hey, I haven't seen you in ages! How are things?" Dave: "Eh, not too bad. Just working away, so can't complain."

not touch (someone or something) with a barge pole To not want to become in any way involved in or with something or someone. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *Ever since the tax scandal in our last company, employers won't touch us with a barge pole. Get that cocaine away from me, I wouldn't touch that with a barge pole!*

not touch (someone or something) with a barge pole To not do or be involved with something at all; to refuse to get close to something. Primarily heard in UK. *I'm not going to tell you what decision to make, but I personally wouldn't touch that deal with a barge pole.*

not touch (someone or something) with a ten-foot pole To not do or be involved with something at all; to refuse to get close to something. *Although his twin brother absolutely loves sushi, Bobby will not touch it with a 10-foot pole.*

not touch (someone or something) with a ten-foot pole To not want to become in any way involved in or with something or someone. Primarily heard in US. *You might think John is attractive, but I wouldn't touch him with a ten-foot pole. He seems like a creep. Get that cocaine away from me, I wouldn't touch that with a ten-foot pole!*

not up to much Disappointing; of low-quality. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *I gave you a failing grade because your paper wasn't up to much, and I know you can do better.*

not up to par Not as good as what was expected, required, or demanded; not satisfactory or adequate. *Jim, I know you've been going through a tough time since your wife passed, but these reports just aren't up to par. I used to eat there all the time, but to be honest, their food hasn't been up to par recently.*

(not) up to scratch As good as what was expected, required, or demanded; satisfactory or adequate. "Scratch" in this phrase may refer to the starting line of a race. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *Jim, I know you've*

had a lot going on at home, but these reports just aren't up to scratch. How much money do you think it will take to bring my car up to scratch?

not up to scratch Not acceptable or satisfactory; not attaining a particular standard. *Your papers have been very good, but, frankly, this one is not up to scratch.*

not up to scratch Not as good as what was expected, required, or demanded; not satisfactory or adequate. *Jim, I know you've had a lot on your plate, but these reports just aren't up to scratch. I used to eat there all the time, but to be honest their food hasn't been up to scratch recently.*

not up to snuff Not acceptable or satisfactory; not attaining a particular standard. *Your papers have been very good, but, frankly, this one is not up to snuff.*

not up to snuff Not as good as what was expected, required, or demanded; not satisfactory or adequate. *Jim, I know you've been going through a tough time since your wife passed, but these reports just aren't up to snuff. I used to eat there all the time, but to be honest, their food hasn't been up to snuff recently.*

not up to the mark Not as good as what was expected, required, or demanded; not satisfactory or adequate. *Jim, I know you've been going through a tough time since your wife passed, but these reports just aren't up to the mark. I used to eat there all the time, but to be honest, their food hasn't been up to the mark recently.*

not utter a word To be completely silent; to remain discreet (about something); to not tell anyone (about something). *All the while our father was shouting at us, my sister and I didn't utter a word. Tom, don't you dare utter a word about this! I would die of embarrassment if anyone were to find out.*

not what it is cracked up to be See [be not what it's cracked up to be](#).

not win for losing See [\(one\) can't win for losing](#).

not worth a brass farthing See [be not worth a brass farthing](#).

not worth a brass farthing Completely worthless or useless; having little or no value. Refers to farthings, obsolete British units of currency worth one-quarter of a penny that were once made from a copper alloy (brass). Primarily heard in UK. *I was so excited when my grandfather said he'd give*

me his car, but this old clunker isn't worth a brass farthing. Over the years working here, I've come to realize that the boss's word isn't worth a brass farthing.

not worth a continental Completely worthless or useless; having little or no value. During the American Revolution, the Continental Congress issued a form of currency known as the "continental" that proved worthless due to rapid depreciation. *I was so excited when my grandfather said he'd give me his car, but this old clunker isn't worth a continental. Over the years working here, I've come to realize that the boss's word isn't worth a continental.*

not worth a dime slang Worthless; undeserving of even the smallest amount of money. Primarily heard in US. *These wild abstract paintings are not worth a dime to me—they give me a headache! That house is not worth a dime, if you ask me. I mean, the ceiling has already partially collapsed, and the foundation is sinking!*

not worth a fig Unimportant; insignificant. *I know you're upset that the decor wasn't exactly as you designed it, but that's not worth a fig when you consider how spectacular the gala was overall.*

not worth a hill of beans Of little or no importance, value, or worth. *For all the congressman's posturing about overhauling the tax system, his plan to do so is not worth a hill of beans.*

not worth a plug nickel obsolete Completely worthless or useless; having little or no value. (A variant of "not worth a plugged nickel.") Refers to coins (not only nickels) that were "plugged"—that is, those that had a hole drilled in their center and were filled with cheaper metals—which made the coins illegitimate and worthless if spotted. Primarily heard in US. *I was so excited when my grandpa said he'd give me his car, but this old clunker isn't worth a plug nickel. Over the years working here I've come to realize that the boss's promises aren't worth a plug nickel.*

not worth a plug nickel See [be not worth a plug nickel](#).

not worth a red cent Worthless. *I don't know how I'm going to tell that woman that her prized collectibles are not worth a red cent.*

not worth a straw Lacking value or worthless. *His opinion is not worth a straw to me.*



not worth a whistle Worthless or useless to such an extent that the person or thing in question does not merit the effort of being whistled at. *I wouldn't have too much faith in Bobby—he's not worth a whistle, and this business will probably just become another in a long line of failures for him. I was so excited when my grandpa said he'd give me his car, but this old clunker isn't worth a whistle.*

not worth the candle Said of an activity or undertaking whose outcome, product, or returns are not worth the time and resources that it requires. An allusion to gambling by candlelight, a significant expense at one point in time. If the winnings were not sufficient, then they didn't warrant the needless use of a candle. *The local council considered the construction of a new power grid throughout the county, but because it would cost millions and only marginally increase efficiency compared to the current infrastructure, they decided that it wasn't worth the candle.*

not worth the paper it's printed on Useless; unimportant; insignificant. *Oh, that memo is not worth the paper it's printed on. You know the boss is going to completely change her mind about it in a few days anyway! Due to the recent hyperinflation, the nation's currency is now not worth the paper it's printed on.*

not worth the trouble To not be important, useful, or beneficial enough to justify the effort or difficulty required (to do something). *With how much it will cost to get this car to run again, fixing it is not worth the trouble.* A: "Why don't you apply to some community service projects during the summer vacation?" B: "Eh, it's not worth the trouble."

not worth writing home about To be not especially remarkable or noteworthy; to be rather dull, mediocre, uninteresting, or unimportant. A variant of the more common phrase "nothing to write home about." A: "Have you eaten in that new sushi restaurant yet?" B: "Yeah, I went there last week. It was OK, but it isn't worth writing home about." *His performance hasn't been worth writing home about so far. To be honest, we were expecting much more from him when we recruited him out of Dartmouth.*

not your daddy's Very modern or updated; no longer what an older generation would expect or be used to. *With every building now featuring wireless Internet and touch-screen monitors integrated into the desks in each classroom, this is certainly not your daddy's high school anymore.*

not your dad's Very modern or updated; no longer what an older generation would expect or be used to. *With every building now featuring wireless Internet and touch-screen monitors integrated into the desks in each classroom, this is certainly not your dad's high school anymore.*

not your father's Very modern or updated; no longer what an older generation would expect or be used to. *With every building now featuring wireless Internet and touch-screen monitors integrated into the desks in each classroom, this is certainly not your father's high school anymore.*

not yourself See [be not \(oneself\)](#).

notch below Not as good as something else in the same category. *Joanne is a good author, but her books are a notch below best-sellers in the same genre.*

a notch in (someone's) bedpost A casual sexual partner, especially a one-night stand, counted as a tally in the overall number of someone's sexual partners. *Janet was never interested in a serious boyfriend during college; she was only looking for notches in her bedpost. So is that all I am to you, John? A notch in your bedpost?*

a notch in (someone's) belt A remarkable success or achievement, especially one in a successive string, list, or tally of other such ones. (Can also be formulated as "a notch in the belt of (someone).") *The successful negotiation of the merger between the two companies was another notch in the young executive's belt. It wasn't a particularly difficult match, but the win is nevertheless a notch in the belt of the defending champion.*

a notch on (someone's) bedpost A casual sexual partner, especially a one-night stand, counted as a tally in the overall number of someone's sexual partners. *Janet was never interested in a serious boyfriend during college; she was only looking for notches on her bedpost. So is that all I am to you, John? A notch on your bedpost?*

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nothing is so good for the inside of a man as the outside of a horse

Riding a horse is very calming. A: "He's been so stressed lately that I think a week at the ranch will really serve him well." B: "Of course. Nothing is so good for the inside of a man as the outside of a horse."

nothing like 1. Completely unlike; not at all similar. *This design is nothing like what I had in mind—you'll just have to start over again from the beginning. This rusty hunk of junk's nothing like the car you promised to get me!* 2. A great deal less; not nearly. *I do pretty well in math, but I'm nothing like my older sister. She was a genius!*

nothing personal See [\(it's\) nothing personal](#).

nothing special See [be nothing special](#).

nothing special Nothing exceptional or particularly wonderful, remarkable, beautiful, great, etc. *I don't know why everyone is so enamored of this actress—she's nothing special, in my opinion.* A: "What are you doing for your birthday?" B: "Nothing special. We'll probably just stay in."

nothing to be sneezed at Not something that should be ignored, dismissed, or treated with disdain; something that is not inconsequential. *The amount of votes she managed to muster is nothing to be sneezed at. Sure, a hundred bucks isn't a huge amount to have won, but it's definitely nothing to be sneezed at!*

nothing to be sniffed at Not something that should be ignored, dismissed, or treated with disdain; something that is not inconsequential. *The amount of votes she managed to muster is nothing to be sniffed at. Sure, a hundred bucks isn't a huge amount to have won, but it's definitely nothing to be sniffed at!*

nothing to complain about Things are fine. A casual response to questions like "How are you?" or "How've you been?" A: "Hey Pat, how are you?" B: "Ah, nothing to complain about."

nothing to do with See [to do with](#).

nothing to sneeze at Not something that should be ignored, dismissed, or treated with disdain; something that is not inconsequential. *She never really had a chance of winning, but the amount of votes she managed to muster is truly nothing to sneeze at. Sure, a hundred bucks isn't a huge*



amount to have won, but it's definitely nothing to sneeze at!

nothing to sniff at Not something that should be ignored, dismissed, or treated with disdain; something that is not inconsequential. *The amount of votes she managed to muster is nothing to sniff at. Sure, a hundred bucks isn't a huge amount to have won, but it's definitely nothing to sniff at!*

nothing to write home about To be not especially remarkable or noteworthy; to be rather dull, mediocre, uninteresting, or unimportant. *It gets good reviews, but the new sushi restaurant is really nothing to write home about. His performance has been nothing to write home about so far. To be honest, we were expecting much more out of him when we recruited him.*

nourish a serpent in (one's) bosom To befriend, look after, or take care of someone who proves to be traitorous, untrustworthy, deceitful, or ungrateful. (A less common variant of "nourish a viper in one's bosom.") *I thought the profligate had seen the light and was seeking redemption, and so I took him into my care. But before long, I knew I had nourished a serpent in my bosom, as I awoke one morning to find myself robbed blind! I thought our love was not only mutual but indestructible; and yet, I have nourished a serpent in my bosom all these years: my darling husband has cast me out, having run off with a younger woman.*

nourish a snake in (one's) bosom To befriend, look after, or take care of someone who proves to be traitorous, untrustworthy, deceitful, or ungrateful. *I thought the profligate had seen the light and was seeking redemption, and so I took him into my care. But before long, I knew I had nourished a snake in my bosom, as I awoke one morning to find myself robbed blind! I thought our love was not only mutual but indestructible; and yet, I have nourished a snake in my bosom all these years: my darling husband has cast me out and run off with a younger woman.*

nourish a viper in (one's) bosom To befriend, look after, or take care of someone who proves to be traitorous, untrustworthy, deceitful, or ungrateful. *I thought the profligate had seen the light and was seeking redemption, and so I took him into my care. But before long, I knew I had nourished a viper in my bosom, as I awoke one morning to find myself robbed blind! I thought our love was not only mutual but indestructible; and yet, I have nourished a viper in my bosom all these years: my darling husband has cast me out and run off with a younger woman.*

Now I've seen everything! I can't imagine seeing anything as amazing, unexpected, strange, or unbelievable as this! (Usually used hyperbolically.) *Democrats and Republicans agreeing on a tax reform law? Now I've seen everything! I just saw the intern totally reduce the boss to tears in a shouting match—now I've seen everything!*

now (one's) cooking (with gas) Now one is making progress or doing something right. *That's how to do it, team! Now you're cooking with gas! Adjusting those parts made all the difference. Look how fast it goes! Now we're cooking!*

now (someone) has gone and done it Someone has just done something very grave, foolish, and/or irreparable. *"Now you've gone and done it! My mother's gonna tan our hides for breaking that!"*

now (that) you mention it What you've just said reminds me of or makes me realize something. A: *"Have you spoken to Jake recently? It feels like I haven't seen him in a long time?"* B: *"You know, now that you mention it, it's been nearly a month since I've heard from him!"* Now you mention it, his ears are kind of small.

now (that) you mention it An expression used when one remembers or realizes something because of what the other person has just said. A: *"The weather's been a bit unpredictable lately, huh?"* B: *"Now you mention it, I hear there could be a blizzard next week."* A: *"I hate filling out these tax forms."* B: *"Now that you mention it, I don't think I ever filed my taxes last year!"*

now that's something See [be \(really\) something](#).

NSFW An abbreviation for "not safe/suitable for work." It typically accompanies online posts, articles, or videos that might be considered racy or otherwise inappropriate in the workplace. *Unless you want the boss to yell at you, don't click on that link that says "NSFW."*

nuclear option 1. The use of nuclear weapons, as by the military, often considered a last resort. *I'm worried about the repercussions if our military officials choose the nuclear option.* **2.** In the US Senate, a course of action allowing the majority party to end filibustering with a simple majority, rather than the usually required supermajority of 60%. *Senators could, however, use the nuclear option to approve that nomination.* **3.** An especially drastic



decision or action. *Calling the CEO about this issue is definitely the nuclear option—let's see what we can do on our own first.*

nudge nudge (wink wink) spoken A phrase spoken after a statement which emphasizes or points out a euphemistic underlying meaning or innuendo. *To be honest, we didn't see many sights on our vacation. We spent most of the time in bed, though there wasn't much sleeping, nudge nudge, wink wink!*

nudge (someone) into (doing) (something) To gently coax, persuade, or convince someone into some situation or to do something. *I had never really intended to get married, but my girlfriend really wanted to and eventually nudged me into the decision. You have to nudge people into making changes in their lifestyle; they really don't like being pressured or guilted into it.*

nudge (someone or something) (somewhere) To gently push someone or something into a place, area, or position. *I could tell John was nervous about being at a party with people he didn't know, so I nudged him into the room. Would you mind nudging the table out of the way a little?*

nugget of information A particular or singular thing that someone has written or said which is especially informative, interesting, useful, etc. Can also be used sarcastically to imply that what is said is banal, useless, or uninformative. *Amidst the rather rambling speech delivered by the prime minister, there was one little nugget of information that voters would do well to keep in mind. This book is a fascinating read, and it's filled with nuggets of information about the war. Thanks for that nugget of information, Jeff. I'm sure sunbathing tips will really come in handy in Iceland!*

nugget of truth A singular element of truth or wisdom within or among a greater story, narrative, speech, or claim, especially when most or all other elements are fictitious or of questionable veracity. *I think the governor's speech is a bunch of hogwash by and large, but there is a nugget of truth in what he said about the need for lower taxes. Conspiracy theories survive because they are usually laced with little nuggets of truth that give them the air of credibility.*

nugget of wisdom A particular or singular thing that someone has written or said which is especially wise, sagacious, or informative. Can also be used sarcastically to imply that what is said is banal, useless, or

uninformative. *My uncle loves to give advice, and he's never short of little nuggets of wisdom whenever we go to visit him. Thanks for that nugget of wisdom, Jeff. I'm sure sunbathing tips will really come in handy in Iceland!*

number cruncher 1. A person who works primarily with mathematics. *We hired Tom to be the company's number cruncher and see if we could save money on our taxes.* **2.** A computer used to solve complicated mathematical problems. *After I finish installing my new RAM, this computer's going to be a real number cruncher.*

number one with a bullet 1. Of a song, number-one on *Billboard* Magazine's charting system and still gaining in terms of sales or playtime on the radio. (The "bullet" in this phrase refers to an icon placed next to a song that makes rapid progress in the charts.) *And now, number one with a bullet, here's the new hit single from Taylor Swift!* **2.** By extension, far better than anything/anyone else; having rapidly become the best, most authoritative, or most dominant among others in a certain group. *The findings of this remarkable study truly mark Dr. Colvin as number one with a bullet in her field. The tech giant started off humbly, but it became number one with a bullet in the mid-90s.*

Number Ten The address of the residence of the prime minister of the United Kingdom (10 Downing Street), used by extension to refer to the prime minister or the current UK government. *Swift condemnation of the attack has come from Number Ten, with the prime minister vowing retribution. There are a huge number of people working at Number 10 who never receive the praise or scorn that is often directed solely at the prime minister.*

numbers game 1. The use of mathematics to deliberately manipulate facts or results. *The accounting in that company was just a numbers game, so it's no wonder they got audited.* **2.** A scenario in which an increase in a certain type of action should lead to greater chance of a particular outcome (e.g. success). *Dating is a numbers game. The more people you meet, the better your chances are at finding love.*

Nuremberg defense A plea or legal defense strategy in which the defendant claims that their actions were solely the result of carrying out the orders of superiors and that, as such, they should not be found guilty of such actions. Refers to the use of such a defense by political and military leaders of defeated Nazi Germany in the Nuremberg Trials of 1945–46. *Against the*

charge of unlawful murder during wartime, the staff sergeant's defense attorney put forward a Nuremberg defense, claiming that the killings were carried out under direct orders by superior officers.

nurse a drink To consume a beverage, especially alcohol, rather slowly, either as a means of conserving it or to avoid getting drunk. *I spent too much money and got drunk too often when I would go to bars in college, so I've learned to just nurse a drink or two when I go out nowadays.*

nurse a serpent in (one's) bosom To befriend, look after, or take care of someone who proves to be traitorous, untrustworthy, deceitful, or ungrateful. (A less common variant of "nurse a viper in one's bosom.") *I thought the profligate had seen the light and was seeking redemption, and so I took him into my care. But before long, I knew I had nursed a serpent in my bosom, as I awoke one morning to find myself robbed blind! I thought our love was not only mutual but indestructible; and yet, I have nursed a serpent in my bosom all these years: my darling husband has cast me out and run off with a younger woman.*

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nurse (one's) drink To consume one's beverage, especially alcohol, rather slowly, either as a means of conserving it or to avoid getting drunk. *I spent too much money and got drunk too often when I would go to bars in*

college, so I've learned to nurse my drinks when I go out nowadays.

nurture a serpent in (one's) bosom To befriend, look after, or take care of someone who proves to be traitorous, untrustworthy, deceitful, or ungrateful. (A less common variant of "nurture a viper in one's bosom.") *I thought the profligate had seen the light and was seeking redemption, and so I took him into my care. But before long, I knew I had nurtured a serpent in my bosom, as I awoke one morning to find myself robbed blind! I thought our love was not only mutual but indestructible; and yet, I have nurtured a serpent in my bosom all these years: my darling husband has cast me out and run off with a younger woman.*

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nut-cutting time A point in time in which extreme, drastic, or decisive action is required; a period, usually near the end of an endeavor, when pressure to succeed is most intense; crunch time. The phrase refers to having to cut a nut off or away from a bolt because rust has immobilized it to the point where there's no other way to remove it. *He may not be as flashy a player as some of the other star quarterbacks out there, but when it comes to nut-cutting time, there's no one I'd rather have leading my team. It's nut-cutting time now, and the senator is going to have to pull out all of the stops if he's to have any chance of winning this election.*



nut (someone) 1. To hit someone very hard with one's head; to head-butt someone. Primarily heard in UK. *He was talking so much nonsense that I felt like grabbing him by the lapels and nutting him!* 2. slang To strike someone in the testicles, especially with one's knee. *I can't believe Sarah nutted Jake when she found out he had been cheating on her!*

nut (something) out To discover, through careful consideration, deliberation, or investigation, the solution to something. *Each of us has hit the same stumbling block in the assignment, so we're going to get together this weekend and nut it out together.*

nuzzle up against (someone or something) 1. Of an animal, to rub its nose against someone or something in an affectionate manner. *We were nervous about bringing the baby home, but when we did, our cat nuzzled up against the baby carrier right away.* 2. To snuggle up against or rub softly against someone or something. *When my daughter was a young girl, the only way she'd fall asleep was if she nuzzled up against her favorite teddy bear. I'm cold! Nuzzle up against me and warm me up, my love.*

nuzzle up (to someone or something) 1. Of an animal, to rub its nose against someone or something in an affectionate manner. *I've never really liked being around dogs. Even when they're just nuzzling up to me, it makes me nervous.* 2. To snuggle or cuddle (up to someone or something). *When my daughter was a young girl, the only way she'd fall asleep was nuzzled up to her favorite teddy bear. Everyone makes a big deal about going out on Friday nights, but my girlfriend and I are usually happy just to nuzzle up on the couch with a good movie.*

O

o dark 100 See [oh dark hundred](#).

o dark 30 See [oh dark thirty](#).

oat opera A film or theatrical production about the American West (i.e., a western), especially one that is clichéd or formulaic. *My grandfather and I had a tradition of watching old oat operas every Sunday on TV.*

oater A film or theatrical production about the American West (i.e., a Western), especially one that is clichéd or formulaic. *My grandfather and I had a tradition of watching old oaters every Sunday on TV.*

Obamacare A nickname for the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, which was passed during US President Barack Obama's tenure in office as his signature legislation. *Obamacare was an attempt to provide universal healthcare.*

objective is to drain the swamp See [Up to \(one's\) neck in alligators](#).

Occam's razor A maxim that the simplest theory should be applied to a situation or experiment first. This concept is named for its ardent defender, 14th-century philosopher William of Occam. *I think our initial hypothesis is too complex. Occam's razor would suggest we consider the simplest possible explanation.*

odd and curious Strange and intriguing. *We've had some odd and curious findings ever since making that change to the experiment.*

odd couple A particularly unlikely or mismatched pair of people. *Though the senator and her running mate are quite the odd couple on paper, the partnership is clearly intended to broaden the scope of her appeal to voters in the upcoming election. We're a bit of an odd couple, all right, but the differences between my girlfriend and I seem to balance each other out.*

odd duck A rather unusual, strange, or peculiar person. *His new girlfriend is nice enough, but she's a bit of an odd duck, don't you think?*

odd fish Someone deemed strange by others. *No, I didn't invite Joey—he's*

an odd fish, if you ask me. You can't say weird stuff like that, unless you want everyone else to think you're an odd fish.

(the) odd man out **1.** Someone who is excluded from or left out of a group for some reason. *Ever since his injury, John has been odd man out when his friends go to play football together. I never really fit in with others. Even in elementary school I was usually the odd man out.* **2.** Something or someone that is decidedly or markedly different, atypical, or unusual in comparison to others in a group. *My clunky old truck is quite the odd man out next to all my coworkers' new SUVs. You're going to be odd man out if you go to a dinner party dressed like that!*

(the) odd one out **1.** Someone who is excluded from or left out of a group for some reason. *Ever since my injury, I've been odd one out when my friends go to play football together. John never really fit in with others. Even in elementary school, he was usually the odd one out.* **2.** Something or someone that is decidedly or markedly different, atypical, or unusual in comparison to others in a group. *My clunky old truck is quite the odd one out next to all my coworkers' flashy new sports cars. You're going to be the odd one out if you go to a dinner party dressed like that!*

odds and sods An assortment of small, miscellaneous items, especially those that are not especially important or valuable. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *I can never find my what I need amongst all the odds and sods in this drawer! I wish the house weren't so cluttered up with odds and sods.*

of a kind Having inferior, mediocre, or incomplete characteristics of something. *He writes poetry of a kind, but it's nothing that will set the world ablaze. The office has a gym of a kind, but it's in such disrepair that no one really uses it.*

of a morning/afternoon/evening **1.** Very often at this time of day; on most occasions at this time of day. *My father has a ritual of an evening, enjoying the newspaper with a measure of whiskey after dinner in front of the fire.* **2.** At some point at this time of day. *There's a soccer club playing at the park if you're ever stuck for something to do of a morning in the summertime.*

of a piece See [\(all\) of a piece](#).

of a size Similar in size. *When I first had the twins, Jordan was much bigger, but he and Adam are of a size these days.*



of biblical proportions Of a huge or catastrophic size, magnitude, or severity. *The typhoon laid waste to the coast of Japan, causing damage of biblical proportions. An evacuation of biblical proportions has been underway since the civil war began.*

of great price Of high value. *This museum is home to treasures of great price, many of which we are going to see on our tour today.*

of little avail Of or having very little or no benefit, efficacy, or effect. *We did our best to keep Sarah from finding out about her dad, but it was of little avail. I protested of little avail to keep Jeff in the company.*

of no account Of no or very little importance, significance, or worth. *Sure, his writing is OK, but he only published a few articles in some tiny magazine of no account. Don't worry, the investigators on this case are of no account, so I'm confident our involvement will go undetected.*

of no avail Of or having very little or no benefit, efficacy, or effect. *We did our best to keep Sarah from finding out about her dad, but it was of no avail. I protested of no avail to keep Jeff in the company.*

of no use to beast or man See [be \(of\) no use to man or beast](#).

of (someone's) ilk Of the same type, class, or kind as someone. *You can bet that, down on the docks, there are a great many men of his ilk loitering about at night.*

of sound mind **1.** Having full, unimpaired thought, memory, and cognitive understanding; able to think and understand for oneself. *My grandfather may be in a wheel-chair at 94, but he's still of sound mind—sharper than a lot of people I know, actually!* **2.** law By extension, being fully mentally competent and thus able to stand trial or be otherwise legally responsible. *The state-appointed psychiatrist determined that the defendant was not of sound mind when signing the contract, and thus is not legally bound to honor the terms therein.*

of that ilk **1.** Scottish archaic Of the same territory, estate, or location of that name. (Implies the person is a proprietor or from a land-owning family or lineage.) *John Johnstone of that ilk, the last remaining man of that line, died of consumption at an early age.* **2.** Of that same or a certain type, class, or kind. *It really surprises me that they would let men of that ilk into a respectable place like this.*

of the blackest dye To the furthest degree or extent. *If you are trying to get your poor mother to take the blame for you, you are really a criminal of the blackest dye!*

of the deepest dye Of the worst or most extreme type. *On outskirts of the kingdom was a prison filled with criminals of the deepest dye.*

of the first magnitude Of major importance or significance. *You have to study Shakespeare because he is a poet of the first magnitude. We need to close the highway immediately—this is an accident of the first magnitude.*

of the same kind Very much alike. *I knew we would be best friends as soon as we met—we're two of the same kind, you and me.*

of the same stripe Of the same or similar kind; in the same vein; along the same lines. *You'll often get arguments of the same stripe from undergraduate students full of undigested learning, who think they know how to fix all of society's ills. He identifies himself as a socialist, but not of the same stripe as the Marxists and Leninists of the mid-20th century.*

of unsound mind Having impaired or dysfunctional thought, memory, and/or cognitive understanding; unable to think and/or understand for oneself. *My poor grandfather has been of unsound mind ever since he suffered that stroke last year.*

off again, on again Irresolute; wavering in certainty or constancy; inconsistent. *Commitment from the board regarding the merger of the two companies has been off again, on again since the plan was first proposed. Mike and I were dating pretty seriously for about a year, but we've just been off again, on again since then.*

off at a tangent On a course of discussion that is irrelevant or divergent from the topic at hand. Primarily heard in UK. *If we keep going off at a tangent, we'll never get through this meeting. It's impossible to get through a conversation with my mother because she's always going off at a tangent.*

off board Stock trading that is done outside of an official exchange (such as the New York Stock Exchange). *That was an off board transaction—the boss wasn't supposed to hear about it.*

off chance A slight, remote, or unlikely possibility. *The washing machine is probably busted, but there's an off chance I might be able to fix what's wrong with it. I don't think Jack would go on a date with me, but on the off*

chance that he says yes, I'm going to ask him anyway!

off-color Rude or vulgar; likely to offend others, especially due to being sexually explicit or suggestive. Primarily heard in US. A: *"What did you think of the awards ceremony last night?"* B: *"I found the presenter's jokes a bit too off-color for my taste." I'm afraid I may have gotten on your friend's bad side with my off-color remarks.*

off guard Temporarily not careful or vigilant; unprepared for danger or surprises. *I'll be honest, the question caught me off guard. I should have been more prepared for the interview. If we catch the defense off guard, this could be a big play.*

off-kilter 1. Out of equilibrium; not straight, level, or aligned properly; in a state of confusion or chaos. *I felt a bit off-kilter for a while after receiving that blow to the head during football practice. The economy has remained off-kilter in many countries across Europe, even as the global economy has started to recover. Between my divorce, the death of my best friend, and the financial troubles at work, it seems like everything in my life has gone off-kilter recently.* 2. Not working correctly or properly; out of order; out of w(h)ack. *It sounds like your car's engine is a bit off-kilter. I'd recommend taking it to a mechanic before you go for any long drives.*

off like a prom dress See [be off like a prom dress \(in May\)](#).

off like a prom dress (in May) A humorous phrase said of a quick or sudden departure. Likened crassly to the stereotypical quickness or eagerness with which American high school students have sexual intercourse after the prom. Primarily heard in US. *I'll have just one more drink, but I've got to be off like a prom dress after that. Jared was off like a prom dress in May once his ex-girlfriend showed up to the party.*

(off) on a tangent Addressing a topic or topics not relevant to the main discussion. *I tried to address the customer's problem, but she kept going off on a tangent and I couldn't understand what her true complaint was. In the middle of our conversation about my finances, my advisor went on a tangent about current events.*

off (one's) chump Crazy or insane. *He must be off his chump to pay that much money for that old car. Am I completely off my chump for starting a business in this economy?*



off (one's) dot Crazy or insane. *If one more person complains about my cooking, I'm going to go off my dot! If you think I'm going to help you move that sofa up four flights of stairs, you're off your dot!*

off (one's) dot Crazy; mentally unsound; extremely foolish. *I'm going to go off my dot if I have to hear that blasted song once more! I think Jane's grandmother is a little off her dot these days. You must be off your dot if you think that's a good idea!*

off (one's) face Very intoxicated from drugs or alcohol. *You were really off your face last night! How do you feel this morning? A: "Do you remember anything you said to me at the party?" B: "Not at all—I was off my face that night."*

off (one's) feed Uninterested in eating. *That gory horror movie completely put me off my feed. She's been off her feed since coming down with a cold.*

off (one's) game Unable to perform as well as usual. *She never misses that shot. She must be off her game today. Staying up late last night really put me off my game at work.*

off (one's) gourd slang Crazy. *After yet another sleepless night, I'm starting to feel like I'm off my gourd. He's off his gourd if he thinks this plan is going to work!*

off (one's) guard Not being especially careful or vigilant; not prepared for danger or surprises; being careless or inattentive. *He's got a lot of tricky moves, so don't be caught off your guard! We'll wait until he's off his guard, and then we'll take him and his company for all they're worth!*

off (one's) meds **1.** Literally, not taking one's prescribed medications. *I've been able to think more clearly after going off my meds—my mind doesn't feel as foggy. I knew as soon as she walked in that she was off her meds—she never acts that way when she's on her regimen.* **2.** Crazy or insane. Potentially offensive due to the implication of mental illness. *She's off her meds if she thinks she can come in here and talk to me in that tone of voice! When Paul suddenly decided to pick up and move across the country, everyone said he must be off his meds.*

off (one's) nut Crazy or insane. *I think you're off your nut for changing careers this late in life, but, hey, follow your dreams. He's off his nut if he*

thinks he can get that engine fixed by this weekend.

off (one's) own bat Without prompting from another. *If you want to make more money, you'll have to take on new clients off your own bat. Susie didn't wait for her parents to tell her to take out the garbage. She did it off her own bat.*

off (one's) rocker Crazy; mentally unsound; extremely foolish. *I'm going to go off my rocker if I have to hear that song one more time! I think Jane's grandmother is a little off her rocker these days. You must be off your rocker if you think that's a good idea!*

off (one's) trolley Crazy or insane. *When he told me about his plan to renovate the old, condemned house, I immediately thought he was off his trolley. You must be off your trolley if you think you can lift that heavy box by yourself.*

off pat Perfectly; to a point of flawless and effortless execution. (Typically "have or learn something off pat.") *I made sure to learn my speech off pat before the ceremony so I wouldn't spend the whole time looking down at piece of paper. My sister is such a musical prodigy that she can have a song off pat after listening to it only once or twice.*

off plumb Not completely or precisely vertical. *I think we need to call the builder again because that wall is definitely off plumb.*

off-roader A vehicle designed to be used on rough terrain, usually recreationally, as opposed to everyday driving on paved streets. *We're going to take our off-roaders out to the desert this weekend.*

off the boat See [fresh off the boat](#).

off the chain 1. slang Very wild, raucous, or unfettered; free and unrestricted. *This street party has been going for almost three days straight. It's totally off the chain!* 2. Very exciting; excellent; extremely fun or enjoyable. *I knew the movie would be good, but man! That was off the chain!*

off the deep end slang Crazy or irrational. A: *"Now your father thinks the neighbors are plotting against him."* B: *"Wow, he's really gone off the deep end!"* *Whoa, man, stop yelling! I only put a tiny scratch on your car, so there's no need to go off the deep end.*

off the grid 1. Not connected to municipal utility systems, such as the water supply or the main electrical grid. *I just need to get enough solar*

panels installed to disconnect from the city's electricity supply and my house will be completely off the grid. **2.** Free from governmental observation or control; not traceable through any means of commerce or communication that could be linked to one's identity. *Fearing for his life, the whistle-blower from the intelligence agency was forced to live off the grid for a number of years, eschewing anything that might leave a digital footprint for someone to find.*

off the radar Unseen or undetected for a long time. *Mr. Smith has gone off the radar since his wife died, so I'm going to stop by his house this afternoon and check on him. That rebel group's operations have been completely off the radar for years—I worry we'll never be able to find them.*

off the rails See [be off the rails](#).

off the reservation **1.** Outside the bounds of control, propriety, or acceptance of a given group. The phrase refers to the forced relocation of Native Americans to Indian reservations in the United States. Because of this origin, the phrase can be considered offensive or inappropriate. *The youths in this area seems content to remain largely off the reservation, as if they are beholden to no form of authority.* **2.** Different or contrary to the accepted norm. *The vice president seems to be off the reservation regarding his views on legalizing marijuana.*

off the table Withdrawn or no longer available, as for consideration, acceptance, discussion, etc. *I wouldn't wait too long to accept the job offer—it might be off the table before you know it. Before we begin this debate, let me clarify that you are both to focus solely on the question of the economy—all other topics are off the table.*

off the table See [be off the table](#).

off to a false start See [be off to a false start](#).

off trolley See [off \(one's\) trolley](#).

off your chump See [off \(one's\) chump](#).

off your dot See [off \(one's\) dot](#).

off your dot See [off \(one's\) dot](#).

off your face See [off \(one's\) face](#).

off your feed See [off \(one's\) feed](#).

off your game See [off \(one's\) game](#).

off your gourd See [off \(one's\) gourd](#).

off your guard See [off \(one's\) guard](#).

off your meds See [off \(one's\) meds](#).

off your nut See [off \(one's\) nut](#).

off your own bat See [off \(one's\) own bat](#).

off your rocker See [off \(one's\) rocker](#).

offer affordance(s) To provide the means for something to happen or take place. *Of course, man-made systems of organization in any field inherently offer affordances for error and exploitation, as the human element can neither be escaped nor denied. While many see the increasing amount of technology as a detriment to children's minds, one cannot underestimate how it also offers affordance to their increased capacity to learn and access information.*

offer an olive branch (to someone) To extend an offer or gesture of peace, reconciliation, truce, etc. (to someone), so as to end a disagreement or dispute. (Can also be formulated as "offer someone an olive branch.") *The conservatives in Congress seem to be offering an olive branch to Democrats on the issue of raising the debt ceiling. If you find yourself in a spat with a friend, try to be the bigger person and be the one to offer an olive branch. I was still hurt by the way my parents had lied to me, but I decided to offer them an olive branch at Christmas.*

offer chapter and verse See [give chapter and verse](#).

an offer one can't refuse An offer in which the repercussions for refusing would be so great that to do so would be either be dangerous or ill-advised. It often implies the "offer" is a threat, but this is not always the case. The phrase was coined by Mario Puzo in his 1969 novel *The Godfather*, and popularized by the 1972 Francis Ford Coppola film adaptation of the same name. *If he's not willing to agree to the contract, I might have to bring a few men over and make him an offer he can't refuse. The buyout deal was worth \$9 billion to the company, so, really, it was an offer we couldn't refuse.*

offer (someone) (one's) condolences To extend a semi-formal declaration or expression of sympathy to someone who has experienced a recent pain, grief, or misfortune, especially the death of a relative or loved

one. *Tom, I just heard about your wife's passing and wanted to offer my most sincere condolences. We're calling over after lunch to offer condolences to the family. Jane wasn't able to make it to the funeral, but she wanted to offer you her condolences nonetheless.*

offer the olive branch (to someone) To extend an offer or gesture of peace, reconciliation, truce, etc. (to someone), so as to end a disagreement or dispute. (Can also be formulated as "offer someone the olive branch.") *The conservatives in Congress seem to be offering the olive branch to Democrats on the issue of raising the debt ceiling. If you find yourself in a spat with a friend, try to be the bigger person and be the one to offer the olive branch. I was still hurt by the way my parents had lied to me, but I decided to offer them the olive branch at Christmas.*

Officer Friendly A police officer who is perceived as non-threatening due to his calm and amiable demeanor. *Dale, I know you think aggression is the best way to get information, but you'd be surprised how easy it is to get people to talk to you when you're Officer Friendly. Stop yelling at me! I want Officer Friendly to do my interrogation!*

often as not See [as often as not](#).

often as not See [\(as\) often as not](#).

oh dark hundred In military time, a non-specific time in the early morning, before the sun rises. *Why are we meeting at oh dark hundred? That's too early to do anything besides sleep!*

oh dark thirty In military time, a non-specific time in the early morning, before the sun rises. *Why on earth are we meeting at oh dark thirty? That's too early to do anything besides sleep!*

(oh) me, oh my old fashioned An interjection expressing surprise, incredulity, or pleasure. *Come here and let me get a look at my grandson. Me, oh my, how you've grown in the last two years! Oh me, oh my, yours is still the best apple pie in town!*

oh my See [my, \(oh, my\)](#).

oh my fucking God rude slang An exclamation of surprise or indignation. *Oh my fucking God, I cannot believe he said that—so embarrassing!*

(oh) (my) God! An exclamation of surprise, alarm, dismay, annoyance,

or exasperation. *My God, look at the time! How is it nearly midnight already? God, Bill! Would it kill you to take out the trash once in a while? Oh my God! That cyclist nearly hit me!*

oh my goodness gracious A mild exclamation of surprise, alarm, dismay, annoyance, or exasperation. *Oh my goodness gracious, what a generous gift! Oh my goodness gracious! Don't scare me like that!*

(oh) (my) gosh! A mild exclamation of surprise, alarm, dismay, annoyance, or exasperation. ("Gosh" here is a substitution for "God," the use of which in an oath can be considered blasphemous.) *Gosh, look at the time! How is it nearly midnight already? Oh my gosh! That cyclist nearly hit me! My gosh, Bill! Would it kill you to take out the trash once in a while?*

oh really An interjection of interest, surprise, or irritation, usually said in response to a comment from another person. *Oh really? How do you know my mom? Oh really? Well, if you don't need me telling you what to do, then I guess you don't need me cooking for you either!*

oh well A dismissive phrase typically said after something disappointing has happened. A: *"So we can't go tonight, actually—the store is closed."* B: *"Oh well, we'll just go tomorrow then." I thought I studied enough to get an A, but I guess not. Oh well.*

oil and water Two objects, elements, factors, forces, people, etc., that do not or cannot mix together readily. (Usually used comparatively, as in "X and Y are like/as oil and water.") Refers to the natural tendency of oil and water to separate. *My dad is like oil and water with my mom's boyfriend, so I don't know how they're going to get through the family reunion in each other's company. The more I pay attention to the news, the more it seems that politics and common sense are as compatible as oil and water.*

oil burner A device that burns oil and gives off heat, such as a furnace or boiler. *Turn on the oil burner, will you? It's freezing in here!*

oil field trash slang A typically blue-collar worker who is employed in the extraction or production of petroleum. (Can be considered pejorative, depending on the context and the intention of the speaker or author.) Sometimes simplified to "oil trash." *The oil rigs are the only big employers around these parts, so 9 out of 10 people you meet are oil field trash like me. The businessmen who control the oil companies in this country don't give a rat's behind about us oil field trash who make the whole thing work.*

oil of angels Money, particularly when used as a bribe. "Angel" was formerly a term for a type of coin. *I think we'll be seated soon—I gave the hostess some oil of angels. Oil of angels is the only thing that's going to save you from some goons breaking your kneecaps.*

oil trash slang A typically blue-collar worker who is employed in the extraction or production of petroleum. (Can be considered pejorative, depending on the context and the intention of the speaker or author.) *The oil rigs are the only big employers around these parts, so 9 out of 10 people you meet are oil trash like me. The businessmen who control the oil companies in this country don't give a rat's behind about us oil trash who make the whole thing work.*

a okay See [A-OK](#).

the old Adam The evil or reckless side of human nature, as attributed to the Biblical Adam (who disobeyed God's orders). *I'm so sorry I yelled at you like that—the old Adam really got a hold of me there. The old Adam is in each of you, but do not succumb to it. Turn away from sin, children.*

old as the hills See [\(as\) old as the hills](#).

old chestnut A topic, saying, or joke that has been repeated so much that it has become boring or irksome. *Whether there's truth in it or not, I can't stand that old chestnut "follow your heart."*

old codger An affectionate or playfully derisive term for a cantankerous, eccentric old man. *My grandpa is such an old codger, but we all love his gruff ways.*

the old days The past; a bygone era. *How did ladies wear these corsets in the old days? It's only been a few minutes, and I already can't breathe! In the old days, people respected their grandparents. These brats today won't put down their phones long enough to talk to anyone!*

old enough to vote 1. Old enough to vote in political elections. *I'm so excited to finally be old enough to vote—the presidential election can't come soon enough!* 2. Mature enough to understand difficult or complex issues. *Your son is old enough to vote, so it's time he learns about your past.*

old fart An older person, typically male, especially one whose views or attitudes are considered boring or old-fashioned. *Ah, don't mind that old fart. He's just cantankerous because he isn't up to speed with the way of today's*

youth. *I've fully embraced that I'm going to be a stodgy old fart when I get older.*

an old flame See [an/\(one's\) old flame](#).

old fogey An older person, especially one whose views or attitudes are considered boring or old-fashioned. *Ah, don't mind that old fogey. He's just cantankerous because he isn't up to speed with the way of today's youth. I've fully embraced that I'm going to be a stodgy old fogey when I get older.*

an old hand One who has experience doing a particular task. *If you have any questions, ask Andrea—she's done this job before and is an old hand at filing. I've been a bus driver for seven years, so I'm an old hand at this.*

an old head on young shoulders A young person who acts or speaks like an older person. *Katie may only be 13, but she is so insightful. She's really an old head on young shoulders. Tommy seems like an old head on young shoulders since he's always repeating the outdated phrases he hears from his grandmother.*

old in and out See [in and out](#).

the Old Lady of Threadneedle Street A nickname for the Bank of England (which is located on Threadneedle Street in London). Primarily heard in UK. *You can try all you want, but you won't get a penny from the Old Lady of Threadneedle Street.*

old maid **1.** dated A disparaging term for an older, unmarried woman. *She had a few suitors in her youth, but now Edna is an old maid. My parents are pressuring me to get married—they don't want any of their daughters to become an old maid.* **2.** A fussy, prudish person. *You better make sure the place settings are perfect, what with the old maid coming to dinner tonight.* **3.** A card game in which players pair matching cards and try to avoid being the last one holding the only card with no mate, dubbed the "old maid." *When my kids were little, they loved playing old maid.*

old money **1.** Families who have amassed great wealth over a very long time; individuals of such a family. *If you don't think that old money is controlling our elected officials, you need to get your head examined! You can always tell which students in this university come from old money.* **2.** A great amount of inherited wealth that has been passed along a family line for many generations. *He hasn't had a job in years, relying instead on his*

family's old money.

old rose A shade of pink with a greyish tint. *I'm thinking of painting my room old rose—what do you think?*

old salt A sailor, especially a man, who is older and/or has had a lot of experience on the seas. *The bar was packed with old salts who'd travelled all across the world, sharing stories of their adventures.*

old saw An oft-repeated saying, maxim, or proverb; a cliché or hackneyed expression. *My dad has a few old saws he never hesitates to share with my kids whenever we come to visit. A: "An apple a day keeps the doctor away!" B: "That old saw is as untrue as it is annoying!"*

old school (hyphenated if used before a noun) slang Of or characterized by an earlier era or older style. Can either refer to that which is considered antiquated or old-fashioned, or else to that which is remembered fondly or nostalgically. *My dad likes to play music on this old-school record player. I don't know why he doesn't just get an iPod. Whoa, a vintage Ford Mustang. That's so old school, man! Her parents are pretty old school when it comes to living together before marriage.*

an old shoe Someone or something that is very familiar or comfortable, especially in an agreeably unpretentious or unrestrained manner. *This car may have seen better years, but it's still like an old shoe to drive around in. My grandma is such an old shoe. She's just the best person to be around.*

old sins cast long shadows Old indiscretions can continue to have consequences well into the future. *A: "I know I made a mistake, but that happened years ago! Why are we still talking about it?" B: "Because old sins cast long shadows."*

old sins have long shadows Old indiscretions can continue to have consequences well into the future. *A: "I know I made a mistake, but that happened years ago! Why are we still talking about it?" B: "Because old sins have long shadows."*

old skool (hyphenated if used before a noun) slang Of or characterized by an earlier era or older style. (Variant spelling of "old school.") Can either refer to that which is considered antiquated or old-fashioned, or else to that which is remembered fondly or nostalgically. *My dad likes to play music on this old-skool record player. I don't know why he doesn't just get an iPod.*



Whoa, a vintage Ford Mustang. That's so old skool, man! Her parents are pretty old skool when it comes to living together before marriage.

the old sod The country of one's birth or lineage; one's native soil. Primarily heard in UK. *Some day, when I've earned enough, I'll be able to move my family back to the old sod.*

old stick A person (used in a familiar, offhand, or mildly disparaging manner). Primarily heard in UK. *He's a bit strange, but he's not a bad old stick, all the same.*

(one's) old stomping ground A favorite place where one used to frequent; a location where one used to spend a lot of time. *It's been a long time since I've been back to my old stomping ground by the lake! After the reunion, everyone from the old gang of friends went to our old stomping ground with some cans of beer, just like we used to do back in high school.*

(old) stomping ground A favorite place where one used to frequent; a location where one used to spend a lot of time. *It's been a long time since I've been back to the stomping ground by the lake! After the reunion, everyone from the old gang of friends went to our old stomping ground with some cans of beer, just like we used to do back in high school.*

old windbag pejorative A person (not necessarily elderly) thought to speak at too great a length or to say little of value, often with an air of pretentious authority. *Ah, quit prattling on about the government, you old windbag! You don't know the first thing about politics.*

old wives' tale A now-debunked story or idea that was once believed, often superstitiously. *How can you believe in that old wives' tale? Oh, that's just an old wives' tale! A broken mirror does not guarantee seven years' bad luck.*

old woman 1. A mildly disparaging term for (one's) mother. (Variant of "old lady.") *One second, I need to ring my old woman and tell her where we're going after school.* 2. (One's) girlfriend, wife, or romantic partner. *Jane's always having to check in with her old woman whenever she comes with us on a night out. My old woman and I have been putting aside some savings for a vacation in the Bahamas this summer.* 3. An exceptionally fussy, timid, circumspect, or anxious person, especially a woman. *Ah, don't be such an old woman. Come out with us this Friday and live a little!*



older adult A person past middle age, perhaps (but not necessarily) elderly. *Now that I'm an older adult, I have all these aches and pains that I never felt before. You don't have to speak loudly to them, you know—not all older adults have trouble hearing.*

older brother A male who is older than one or more of his siblings. *I'll ask my older brother to help us with the move. Connie's older brother will be there on Saturday, and I'd really like you to meet him. Our neighbor Jim was like an older brother to me when I was growing up.*

older sister A female who is older than one or more of her siblings. *I'll ask my older sister to help us with the move. Connie's older sister will be there on Saturday, and I'd really like you to meet her. Our neighbor Jill was like an older sister to me when I was growing up.*

an olive branch See [an/the olive branch](#).

oll korrekt An intentional misspelling of "all correct" that is the origin of the abbreviation "OK." The phrase dates to the 19th century. *My copy editor marked my article "oll korrekt" as a joke.*

OMFG rude slang An abbreviation for "oh my fucking God," an exclamation of surprise or indignation. *OMFG I cannot believe he said that—so embarrassing!*

on a cloud Very happy. *I've been on a cloud ever since I got asked to the prom—even a pop quiz can't dampen my mood! Don't tell your sister the bad news yet—she's still on a cloud over her promotion.*

on a collision course Of a person, group, or object, on a certain path to conflict, collision, destruction, or ruin with someone or something else. *The radical left-wing coalition is set to be on a collision course with the majority conservative government this January. Little did the passengers know that they were riding a train on a collision course with disaster.*

on a full stomach Having just recently eaten to the point of being full. *Everyone knows you shouldn't go swimming on a full stomach, or you'll get horrible cramps!*

on a hunch With or based on a strong intuition (about something), rather than absolute knowledge. *I opened the cabinet underneath the sink on a hunch that we'd find the keys there. On a hunch, I'd say that the president is likely to veto the bill.*

on a lark On a whim or fancy; for fun or as a joke. *On a lark, we all decided to ditch our Friday classes and drive to New York City for the weekend.*

on a losing wicket In a situation in which one is unlikely or unable to win; doing something that is likely or certain to fail. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *Teachers who try to keep mobile phones out of their classrooms are on a losing wicket these days. The prime minister, knowing his party has been batting on a losing wicket regarding immigration reform, today announced a major U-turn in his position on the matter.*

on a losing wicket See [be \(batting\) on a losing wicket](#).

on a rampage Causing great destruction, disruption, or chaos; behaving very violently or aggressively. *Many ancient artifacts were destroyed while enemy forces were on a rampage in the holy city. Our teacher went on a rampage this morning, screaming at the kids for their misbehavior.*

on a regular basis Quite often and/or in a consistent, regular manner. *The general manager drops into the restaurant on a regular basis, so the staff members have to be on their toes at all times.*

on a side note Parenthetically or incidentally; by the way; in addition to but less important than what was just being discussed. *So we should have the report finished up by this afternoon. Oh, and on a side note, I managed to organize a meeting with the CEO tomorrow.*

on a sticky wicket In the midst of or dealing with a particularly awkward or difficult situation or circumstance. (Refers to the pitch, called a "wicket," used in the game of cricket and the difficulty of playing on one after it has been wetted with rain.) Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *I found myself on a bit of a sticky wicket when the boss saw me kissing his daughter at the cinema. I'll be batting on a sticky wicket if I arrive at the train station and don't have enough money for the tickets!*

on a (subject or activity) kick Experiencing a particularly intense and constant enthusiasm for some subject or activity. *Jim's been on a real cycling kick ever since he bought that new bike. I'm on a bit of a politics kick at the moment, but I reckon it will die down once the election season is over.*

on a tangent See [\(off\) on a tangent](#).

on a tear 1. Very active, often suddenly. A: *"Why is mom cleaning every*

room in the house?" B: "Oh, she's been on a tear ever since she saw a mouse in the basement this morning." Well, your grandmother is on an earlier flight, so I've been on a tear trying to get everything ready for her arrival. **2.** Drinking heavily. A: "I didn't expect Pete to be drunk already!" B: "Oh, he's been on a tear all day."

on a whim Based on a sudden, impulsive urge, desire, or idea; without careful planning or because of a capricious inclination. *On a whim, we drove to the beach for the weekend. Major governmental policies cannot be decided on a whim; they have to be carefully and rationally thought through.*

on a/the toss of a/the coin **1.** Literally, based on the outcome of a coin toss (i.e., the 50% chance that it will be either heads or tails). *The team who starts off with the ball is always decided on the toss of a coin. We both wanted the last slice of pizza, so we're letting the outcome be determined on a toss of a coin.* **2.** By extension, purely at random; relying entirely on chance. *New restaurants come and go in this area, their fates essentially decided on the toss of a coin. The economy is such an unpredictable beast that it seems to change on a toss of a coin.*

on about Talking excessively about something in a way that bores or bothers the listener. Primarily heard in UK. *I had to leave the room because the professor was on about the laziness of our generation yet again. Are you still on about me forgetting your birthday? That was months ago!*

on acid Under the influence of lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD), a powerful psychedelic drug commonly known as "acid." *The man was reportedly on acid when claimed he could fly and tried to jump off the building.*

on acid See [be on acid](#).

on again, off again Irresolute; wavering in certainty or constancy; inconsistent. *Commitment from the board regarding the merger of the two companies has been on again, off again since the plan was first proposed. Mike and I were pretty serious for about a year, but our relationship has been on again, off again ever since we graduated.*

on air Broadcasting live, as on television or radio. *Please try to control your language—we can't have any cursing while we're on air.*

on air See [on \(the\) air](#).



on all hands 1. Everywhere; on all sides. *Thanks to that bad storm, there are tree branches and other debris on all hands.* 2. Unanimously. *We reached that decision on all hands, so it's not going to be easy to convince us to change our minds.*

on an average Typically. *On an average, how many cupcakes does your shop sell daily?*

on an empty stomach Without having eaten anything recently or in a long while; being very hungry. *Don't go into your final exam on an empty stomach, or you won't be able to focus.*

on an empty stomach Without having eaten anything recently or in a long while; being very hungry. *You shouldn't go into your final exam on an empty stomach or you won't be able to think straight!*

on an irregular basis Not very often and/or in an inconsistent, irregular manner. *The general manager drops into the restaurant on a pretty irregular basis, so the members of staff tend to be pretty laid back here.*

on bad terms In a state of utter disagreement, dislike, or contempt with someone else. *My ex-husband and I wanted to part amicably, but ever since the divorce trial started, we have been on really bad terms.*

on beam ends See [on \(one's\) beam-ends](#).

on behalf See [on \(someone's\) behalf](#).

on behalf See [on \(someone's\) behalf](#).

on Carey Street euphemism Bankrupt; in severe or crippling debt. Named for the street in London where the bankruptcy court for the United Kingdom was at one time located. *You're going to end up on Carey Street if you don't get your company's expenditures under control!*

on death's door step See [at death's doorstep](#).

on fleek slang A phrase said of something that looks good or is perfectly done. *Ooh, eyebrows on fleek! Did you use a brow filler? That outfit is totally on fleek—I love it.*

on her best behaviour See [be on \(one's\) best behavior](#).

on her part See [on \(someone's\) part](#).

on her wrong side See [on \(someone's\) wrong side](#).

on hire Available for employment. *I hear that Sasha's old tutor is available on hire—I think she would make a great addition to our teaching staff.*

on in years Advanced in age; old or becoming old. *I might be a little bit on in years, but I'm no fool when it comes to technology! Your grandfather's getting on in years, so you may need to speak a bit more loudly around him.*

on leave In the midst of an official extended absence from one's work, school, etc. *Jane just had a baby, so she's on leave. I've been on leave for the past few weeks as my illness has gotten worse.*

on long finger See [on the long finger](#).

on my life An oath emphasizing that what one has said or is about to say is absolutely true or sincere. *On my life, I've never accepted bribes from anyone in my time as a police officer!*

on (one's) beam-ends In a precarious and/or desperate situation. The phrase was originally used to describe the tilted position of a ship before it capsizes. *My sister's on her beam-ends now that she's lost her job—I might have to lend her some money so she doesn't lose her house. Tell me the truth, doc—am I on my beam-ends, or do I still have treatment options available?*

on one's behalf See [on \(someone's\) behalf](#).

on (one's) best behavior Being very polite or exercising exceptionally good manners. Primarily heard in US. *Now, you kids must be on your best behavior for your Auntie this weekend! Good morning, class. I hope everyone was on their best behavior for the substitute teacher yesterday.*

on (one's) bill On the list of items one is expected to pay for. *Just pick out whatever you want and put it on my bill. Can you explain this strange charge on my bill?*

on (one's) coattails Benefiting from someone else's success; using someone else's success as a means to achieve one's own. *Everyone knows you've been on the governor's coattails these last two years, but once her term ends, you'll be on your own. A: "I can't believe Jonathan got his paper published in that prestigious journal." B: "Oh, it's only because he's on his professor's coattails."*



on (one's) good behavior Being very polite or exercising exceptionally good manners. Primarily heard in US. *Now, you kids must be on your good behavior for your Auntie this weekend! Good morning, class. I hope everyone was on their good behavior for the substitute teacher yesterday.*

on (one's) honor **1.** With utmost sincerity; with one's serious promise or oath. Primarily heard in US. *On my honor, I swear to you that I did not steal that money! If, on your honor, you promise to behave yourself, I'll let you go to the party with your friends.* **2.** With a sincere intent (to do something) without being watched or scrutinized; according to the honor system. Primarily heard in US. *To save on the cost of employing daytime staff to mind the till, we ask patrons on their honor to leave the correct payment for their items before leaving the shop.*

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on (one's) lonesome Completely alone. Primarily heard in UK. *My friends have all gone on holiday and left me here on my lonesome. You can't leave a boy that young on his lonesome! He needs to be supervised all the time!*

on (one's) own **1.** By or through one's individual efforts or means. *I had to finish designing the website on my own after many of our workers were laid off.* **2.** Without the assistance or support of, or dependence upon, anybody else. *I don't need anyone's pity or help, I can make it all on my own, thank you very much.*

on (one's) own initiative Without requiring or having been given instruction, prompting, or guidance from others; by one's own effort or energy. *Few things impress employers more than implementing business solutions on your own initiative. I just think Jennifer needs to do things on her own initiative more, instead of waiting to see what her boyfriend wants to*

do all the time.

on (one's) own volition Of one's own choice. *No one told me to leave. I left early on my own volition. You failed this class on your own volition—don't try to blame it on me!*

on (one's) pat Without or not near to anyone else; on one's own; all alone. Shortened from the Australian rhyming slang "on one's Pat Malone," referring to a ballad about an Irishman called Pat Malone, who suffered numerous misfortunes after emigrating to Australia. Primarily heard in Australia. *To be quite honest, after a hectic week of work, I much prefer having a drink on my pat than being around a bunch of people. Mary's been on her pat ever since Rupert broke up with her last week.*

on (one's) Pat Malone Without or not near to anyone else; on one's own; all alone. Australian rhyming slang referring to a ballad about an Irishman called Pat Malone, who suffered numerous misfortunes after emigrating to Australia. Primarily heard in Australia. *To be quite honest, after a hectic week of work, I much prefer having a drink on my Pat Malone than being around a bunch of people. Mary's been on her Pat Malone ever since Rupert broke up with her last week.*

on (one's) person In one's possession. *He always had an umbrella on his person, even on sunny days.*

on (one's) plate A non-specific way to speak of all the tasks or responsibilities that one must address. *I'm sorry I'm late, I just have so much on my plate right now. I'll handle the report—I know you've got a lot on your plate right now with the merger and all.*

on (one's) tod Without or not near to anyone else; on one's own; all alone. A shortening of the Cockney rhyming slang "on one's Tod Sloan," referring to a once-famous American horse jockey who fell into disrepute in the early 20th century and died penniless and alone. Primarily heard in UK. *To be quite honest, after a hectic week of work, I much prefer having a drink on my tod than being around a bunch of people. Mary's been on her tod ever since Rupert broke up with her last week.*

on (one's/its) knees **1.** In a position or manner of supplication or humble entreaty. *Jeb might have scorned me for the manual labor job I offered him here 10 years ago, but he's been on his knees begging for it now that the economy has gone south.* **2.** In a weakened or desperate state; in a

condition or state of decline or near ruin. *The megacorporation, once so dominant, has been on its knees ever since news of its involvement in the banking scandal became public knowledge.*

on opposite sides of the barricade(s) Occupying conflicting, opposing, and/or contrary positions on some issue or in some situation. *Unfortunately, it seems more and more to be the case that those who would see the economy recover and those who strive for social equality find themselves on opposite sides of the barricade.*

on our best behavior See [on \(one's\) best behavior](#).

on our bill See [on \(one's\) bill](#).

on our coattails See [on \(one's\) coattails](#).

on our good behavior See [on \(one's\) good behavior](#).

on our honor See [on \(one's\) honor](#).

on our honour See [on \(one's\) honour](#).

on our knees See [on \(one's/its\) knees](#).

on our lonesome See [on \(one's\) lonesome](#).

on our own initiative See [on \(one's\) own initiative](#).

on our own volition See [on \(one's\) own volition](#).

on our pat See [on \(one's\) pat](#).

on our Pat Malone See [on \(one's\) Pat Malone](#).

on our plate See [on \(one's\) plate](#).

on our tod See [on \(one's\) tod](#).

on own See [on \(one's\) own](#).

on pain of With the threat of undergoing something extremely bad or unpleasant as a punishment. Often used in the phrase "on pain of death." *The prisoners were forced to march on pain of death from the POW camp across the burning desert. On pain of having our pay docked, we were told we had to come in every Saturday until further notice to take care of the backlog of work.*

on pain of death With the threat of dying or being executed as a punishment. Sometimes used hyperbolically. *The prisoners were forced to*

march on pain of death from the POW camp across the burning desert. I am on strict instructions from my wife not to peek into the garage until she's done her surprise project, on pain of death!

on person See [on \(one's\) person](#).

on quite a sticky wicket See [on a sticky wicket](#).

on shipboard Aboard a ship. *I always feel so sick when I'm on shipboard, even when the seas are calm.*

on (someone's) behalf **1.** As the representative of someone else; in lieu of someone. *The boss isn't here at the moment, but I'd be happy to sign for the package on her behalf.* **2.** In the interest or for the benefit of someone else. *Children don't understand until they're older that everything their parents do is on their behalf.*

on (someone's) behalf For the benefit, interest, or support of someone; as an agent, representative, or in place of someone. *Our lawyer will be telephoning the department tomorrow on our behalf to ensure our application goes through as planned. This decision is on your behalf, so don't act so ungrateful!*

on (someone's) part **1.** As far as is related to, regards, or concerns someone; to the degree that someone is involved or a part (of something). *On the employees' part, the company's merger means that many will be losing their jobs. Jane on her part has been instrumental in getting this project off the ground.* **2.** As comes from or is done by someone. *Guarantees on the banks' part must be provided to assure the country's citizens that their money is safe during this period of recovery. There has been no shortage of effort on his part to make sure this campaign has been successful.*

on (someone's) wrong side Displeasing to someone; provoking someone's anger, contempt, or dismissal. *The best way to get through this class is to say nothing unless called upon, and to make sure you don't get on the teacher's wrong side! I thought it was all in good fun, but I might have gotten on her wrong side with my sarcastic comments.*

on talking terms Being amicable enough with someone as to have a conversation with him or her. A: *"I didn't realize that you and Stella were on talking terms again after your fight."* B: *"Yeah, ever since we apologized to each other, we've been getting along great!" I'm not on talking terms with*



him right now, so you better not talk to him either.

on (the) air Broadcasting live, as on television or radio. *Please try to control your language, we can't have any cursing while we're on air. Places, everyone! We're on the air in five, four, three...*

on the anvil In a formative but immature or unready state; being prepared, discussed, planned, etc., but not yet ready. *The details of the proposed merger are still on the anvil, but we should see something ready before the end of the summer. I've had a couple of projects on the anvil recently, but nothing has taken any definite shape yet.*

on the anxious seat 1. Sitting in an area at a revival meeting that has been designated for the atonement of sins. Primarily heard in US. *You need to go spend some time on the anxious seat after treating your sister so poorly!* 2. Feeling uneasy and nervous, usually while awaiting the outcome of something. *I know I'm going to be on the anxious seat until I get my test results back. Fans are certainly on the anxious seat while this goal is being reviewed.*

on the back foot In a position of disadvantage, retreat, or defeat. *A large portion of our funding was cut at the last minute, so we were starting this project on the back foot from the get-go. The once-dominant airline company has been on the back foot ever since several no-frills competitors entered the market.*

on the back of (something) In immediate succession after something else has happened and/or as a result of it. *On the back of their first album's unexpected success, the band began receiving offers to play gigs all over the world.*

on the beam-ends In a precarious and/or desperate situation. The phrase was originally used to describe the tilted position of a ship before it capsizes. *My sister's on the beam-ends now that she's lost her job—I might have to lend her some money so she doesn't lose her house. Tell me the truth, doc—am I on the beam-ends, or do I still have treatment options available?*

on the beat 1. Keeping time with the rhythm of a song. *We're going to go through the dance routine once more—let's try to stay on the beat this time, people!* 2. Regularly patrolling a certain area. When used in this way, the phrase is usually applied to police officers. *I always see police officers on the beat in our neighborhood.*

on the beaten track Following that which is commonly used by or known to most people, as of a course, route, or trend. *I know people say to be adventurous when traveling, but I like to stay on the beaten track in places I don't know very well. I generally stay on the beaten track with books. I'm not fond of reading those that get too weird or are meant for academics.*

on the bleeding edge Having or knowledgeable of the most advanced technology in a given area, activity, or endeavor. *The university's laboratory is on the bleeding edge when it comes to cancer research. Their latest smartphone is truly on the bleeding edge.*

on the bounce In continuous, consecutive, unbroken succession. (Used primarily in reference to sporting outcomes.) Primarily heard in UK. *After six losses on the bounce, the new manager of the football team is already being replaced. They had 10 straight wins on the bounce heading into this tournament, but they were outclassed and eliminated in the very first round.*

on the bright side Considering the positive, beneficial, advantageous, etc., aspects of a situation, especially one that is or would be otherwise negative, detrimental, or disadvantageous. *Look on the bright side—at least you got a severance package. The movie is sold out, but, on the bright side, there are plenty of other ones I wouldn't mind seeing.*

on the brink of (something) On the verge of doing something or of having some imminent event happen, especially that which is bad or disastrous. *The company is still doing business, but ever since the recession hit they've been teetering on the brink of closing down. The crew is so maddened by the pay cuts that everyone is on the brink of mutiny. We're on the brink of success with these experiments, I just know it.*

on the bum Not working correctly or properly; out of order; broken. *My car has been on the bum ever since I let my brother borrow it for the weekend. I think our washing machine is on the bum—these clothes are all sopping wet and don't smell clean!*

on the cards Very likely or certain to happen, occur, or take place. *They've played very well, but it doesn't look like a championship title is on the cards for this team today. A: "Do you have anything on the cards for tomorrow?" B: "No, it's looking like a pretty slow Saturday for me."*

on the chance See [on the \(off\) chance](#).

on the clock **1.** Currently engaged in work during one's normal working day or assigned hours. *I'd love to go have a beer with you, but as you can see by the uniform I'm wearing, I'm actually on the clock right now.* **2.** Of a taxi (and by extension, its driver), currently engaged to carry a passenger and having an active meter. *Sorry, but I can't stay to chat. I've got a taxi waiting outside that's still on the clock!* **3.** Currently displayed on a motor vehicle's speedometer or odometer (also called a mileometer). *I can't believe I got a ticket for speeding—I was only going 50 on the clock! This car may have 200,000 kilometers on the clock, but it still runs as smooth as ever.*

on the cuff **1.** With the expectation, promise, or obligation that payment will be given in the future. *I'm not getting paid till next week, but we really need a new TV, so I decided to buy this one on the cuff.* **2.** Without payment being necessary; for free. *After the waiter spilled those drinks on my wife, the manager offered us our meal on the cuff.*

on the day hell freezes over See [be the day hell freezes over](#).

on the down low In a state of secrecy or minimal public knowledge; being known only by a select few people. *Keep this on the down low, but Janet is planning to break up with Kevin next week. My parents know about the pregnancy, but I'd like it to stay on the down low otherwise.*

on the downside Considering the negative, adverse, disadvantageous, regrettable, etc., aspects of a situation, especially one that is or would be otherwise positive or beneficial. *My son will automatically have EU citizenship because he's being born in Ireland, but on the downside, we have to apply separately for American citizenship.*

on the edge of (something) Very close to doing something or of having some imminent event happen, especially that which is bad or disastrous. *The company is still doing business, but ever since the recession hit, they've been teetering on the edge of closing down. The crew are so maddened by the cuts to their pay that everyone is on the edge of mutiny.*

on the fiddle Engaged in deceitful, fraudulent, or dishonest means of obtaining money. *My career will be over if anyone ever finds out I was on the fiddle during my time as the company treasurer. There are always politicians on the fiddle, looking for ways to use their positions of power to earn a bit more money.*



on the front foot In an advantageous position, especially over an opponent; in an aggressive or attacking state or position. *The defending champions started the first half of the match truly on the front foot, but they've started losing momentum here in the second half. The senator came out on the front foot during the debate, remaining on the attack the whole way through.*

on the full-tilt boogie See [full-tilt boogie](#).

on the game Engaged in prostitution; regularly having sex for money. (Used especially in reference to women.) *A large number of prostitutes are on the game from a young age as the victims of sex trafficking.*

on the go 1. Constantly in motion, active, or working. *I feel as if I need to always be on the go; life's too short to be idle!* 2. Leaving or departing, often unexpectedly or with great haste; on the move. *Look out, that toddler's on the go!*

on the grapevine Through or via an informal means of communication or information, especially gossip. *There is always some absurd rumor or piece of misinformation on the grapevine at work, but I try to just tune most of that out. I heard on the grapevine that John is planning to propose to Samantha next week!*

on the gravy train In a state, position, or job where one makes an excessive amount of money without expending much or any effort. *I'll be on the gravy train once I get paid from the settlement of the lawsuit! My brother ended up on the gravy train when he married his wife, whose family owns one of the largest oil companies in the world.*

on the Greek calends See [the Greek calends](#).

on the high-road to Needham Headed toward trouble, often financially. "Needham" is not a specific location but rather a pun on the word "need." Primarily heard in UK. *You're on the high-road to Needham with the way you keep spending money! Have you ever heard of a savings account? Billy keeps sneaking out at night, and I'm worried that he's on the high-road to Needham.*

on the hip In a vulnerable position; lacking power. *The prosecution really has me on the hip now—I don't think there's any way I'm going to win this case.*

on the hook **1.** Held responsible (for something); obliged or committed (to something). *I would think very carefully signing your name to those documents. If something goes wrong in the company, it could be you on the hook. I'm on the hook for nearly half a million dollars after my partner skipped town with the company's pension fund!* **2.** In a continually and/or indefinitely delayed condition or state. *We've had the suspect on the hook in the interrogation room for about 12 hours now. We're keeping him guessing in the hopes that he'll let some information slip.*

on the hop **1.** Continually active; very busy; having a hectic or chaotic schedule. *I've been on the hop all day long getting various things done. I'm glad to be home now!* **2.** In a state of unpreparedness; unawares. (Used primarily in the phrases "catch someone on the hop" or "caught on the hop.") *If we attack before sunrise, we just might be able to catch our enemies on the hop! I hadn't prepared anything to say at the reception, so I was caught on the hop a bit when they asked me to say a few words.*

on the horn **1.** Currently using or speaking (to someone) on the telephone. *Jerry, get on the horn to the warehouse and tell them we need a few more pallets of paper. After our dreadful meal that night, I was on the horn to the manager the very next morning.* **2.** dated Lustful or sexually excited, especially of a man; having an erection. *Sarah became quite embarrassed when she noticed that her date was on the horn in the middle of the movie.*

on the hush In a state of secrecy or minimal public knowledge; being known only by a select few people. *I need to tell you some important news, but you have to keep it on the hush, OK? Apparently it's on the hush, but I just found out John and Tracey are getting married soon!*

on the hush-hush In a state of secrecy or minimal public knowledge; being known only by a select few people. *I need to tell you some important news, but you have to keep it on the hush-hush, OK? Apparently it's on the hush-hush, but I just found out John and Tracey are getting married soon!*

on the inside Near to or in a position of power, influence, or confidence, and thus having access to secret, classified, or sensitive information. *If we want to find out the inner workings of the company, we need to get in touch someone on the inside! Once I'm on the inside, I'll be able to feed you information about the governor's campaign strategy.*

on the Internet, nobody knows you're a dog A phrase that highlights the anonymous nature of online correspondence. It originally appeared in a cartoon by Peter Steiner. A: *"I can't say something that mean, even to a stranger."* B: *"Oh, sure you can! On the Internet, nobody knows you're a dog."*

on the jar Partially open, as of a door; ajar. *Leave that door on the jar, will you? I love the scent of an early spring morning! He never would have overheard our conversation if you hadn't left the door on the jar!*

on the leading edge Having or knowledgeable of the most advanced technology in a given area, activity, or endeavor. *The local university's laboratory is on the leading edge when it comes to cancer research. Their latest smartphone is truly on the leading edge.*

on the lines of (something) Approximately or imperfectly similar to something; very like something, but not quite the same. *Well, that's on the lines of what I have in mind for the new kitchen, but there are a few tweaks you need to make before it's right.*

on the long finger In a state of postponement or procrastination. (Used especially in the phrase "put something on the long finger.") Primarily heard in Ireland. *It looks like increased funding for education has been left on the long finger by the Dáil yet again. I've been meaning to send in my college applications, but I keep putting it on the long finger.*

on the make **1.** Increasing or advancing towards great financial or social success. *I hear John's company is really on the make these days! They're really up-and-coming in the real estate market.* **2.** Seeking wealth, success, or an improved social status, often ruthlessly or in a self-serving manner. *Ever since graduation, Thomas has been on the make, using anyone he knows or can exploit to further his career.* **3.** Seeking sexual partners or activity; making sexual advances or propositions. *John turns into a real slimeball when he gets drunk and is out on the make.*

on the march **1.** Literally marching or walking, as of an army. *Enemy forces are on the march, and we expect them to arrive by morning. We've got to be on the march soon if we hope to reach the camp by sundown.* **2.** Making progress or gaining momentum. *Your new initiative is on the march—I heard the boss talking about it this morning! The new education bill is on the march—it looks like it will be approved without much resistance.*

on the nail Immediately, promptly, or without delay; on the spot. Primarily heard in UK. *I could put the bill on my credit card, but if it's all right with you I'd rather we divvy it up here and pay on the nail. After a few bad experiences with lodgers, I've learned to demand cash on the nail for the rent every Sunday, no exceptions.*

on the off chance Because there is a very slight, remote, or unlikely possibility (that something may happen or be the case). *You'll probably need to replace your washing machine, but on the off that I can fix it, let me open it up and take a look. I don't think Jack would go on a date with me, but on the off that he says yes, I'm going to ask him anyway!*

on the (off) chance In the unlikely event. *On the off chance that you get home before me, can you put the roast in the oven?*

on the outside chance Because there is a very slight, remote, or unlikely possibility (that something may happen or be the case). (A less common variant of "on the off chance.") *You'll probably need to replace your washing machine, but on the outside chance that I can fix it, let me open it up and take a look. I don't think Jack would go on a date with me, but on the outside chance that he says yes, I'm going to ask him anyway!*

on the outside, looking in Excluded from something that one wanted to participate in. *All of my friends were invited to the biggest party of the year, and here I am, on the outside, looking in. We need to win some games, or else we'll be on the outside looking in during the playoffs.*

on the pad Accepting bribes. A phrase typically said of police officers. *He's made some very uncharacteristic decisions lately, which makes me wonder if he's on the pad.*

on the plus side Considering the positive, beneficial, advantageous, etc., aspects of a situation, especially one that is or would be otherwise negative, detrimental, or disadvantageous. *My wife went into labor while we were still away in Europe. The whole ordeal was really stressful, but on the plus side, our son now has EU citizenship!*

on the pull Seeking sexual partners or activity; hoping or trying to have sexual intercourse. Primarily heard in UK. *This bar is always filled with seedy guys on the pull. I went out on the pull last Friday night, but I was too drunk to find any luck.*

on the radar (screen) Considered important or noteworthy; within the spectrum of (someone's) awareness, attention, or consideration. *If you want this issue to be on the radar of mainstream America, you have to frame it as something that will hit people in their wallets. There are always going to be bands who suddenly appear on the radar screen, only to fade into obscurity just as quickly.*

on the rampage Causing great destruction, disruption, or chaos; behaving very violently or aggressively. *Many ancient artifacts were destroyed while enemy forces were on the rampage in the holy city. Our teacher went on the rampage this morning, screaming at the kids for their misbehavior.*

on the razor's edge To the point of doing something risky or dangerous. *Please, you just like him because he's the bad boy who dances on the razor's edge with his motorcycle. I like to live on the razor's edge sometimes and go skydiving.*

on the shady side of slang Older than; more than. *I'm much more concerned about my health now that I'm on the shady side of 60. You're on the shady side of 20, which means you need to start acting more responsibly.*

on the sick list Ill or unwell; indisposed due to poor health. *Jim has been on the sick list for over a month now. If he doesn't get better soon, we're going to have to replace him!*

on the spur of the moment Very suddenly, impulsively, and/or without preparation beforehand; in an impromptu or capricious manner. *You've got to stop making decisions about your business on the spur of the moment like this, or you'll end up running it into the ground! It's totally out my character to take a trip on the spur of the moment, but I just needed to get out of the city for a while.*

on the square 1. Candidly honest or transparent; fair and straightforward; correct or in agreement. *I know everyone distrusts car mechanics, but I feel like the guy I go to has always been on the square with me.* 2. Literally, at or forming right angles (as or of a square). *Make sure the foundation is laid out on the square before you pour the concrete.*

on the string Awaiting a decision. *They told me they would call last week! How long am I going to be on the string?*



on the table See [be on the table](#).

on the toss of a coin See [on a/the toss of a/the coin](#).

on the up Making progress; increasingly successful. *Your career is definitely on the up now that you've gotten that big promotion. As a team, we're certainly on the up—we've already won more games this year than we did all of last year.*

on the upside Considering the positive, beneficial, advantageous, etc., aspects of a situation, especially one that is or would be otherwise negative, detrimental, or disadvantageous. *My wife went into labor while we were still away in Europe. The whole ordeal was really stressful, but on the upside, our son now has EU citizenship!*

on the upswing Showing or experiencing a noticeable or conspicuous increase, improvement, or expansion. *The last few years were hard on our company, but we're finally starting to get back on the upswing. The small country has been one of the few economies in the region to be on the upswing since the recession.*

on the wrong side of history A phrase usually used to describe outdated political decisions or practices. *Someone needs to tell the president that his sexist statements put him on the wrong side of history. You are on the wrong side of history if you think injustice will continue unchallenged in your country.*

on the wrong side of (someone) Displeasing to someone; provoking someone's anger, contempt, or dismissal. *The best way to get through this class is to say nothing unless called upon, and to make sure you don't get on the wrong side of the teacher! I thought it was all in good fun, but I might have gotten on the wrong side of her with my sarcastic comments.*

on to her See [be on to \(someone\)](#).

on tod See [on \(one's\) tod](#).

on welfare In receipt of assistance, financial or otherwise, from publicly or privately funded agencies (usually run by the government) due to a certain level of hardship, poverty, or need. *It was really disheartening having to go on welfare these past six months, but it was the only thing that kept our family afloat after I lost my job. Some people are very critical of those who have been on welfare for extended periods of time.*

on wheels **1.** Literally, on or via a vehicle with wheels, such as an automobile, bicycle, or motorcycle. *Our family is getting ready to do our move on wheels across the country. Neither of us had seen much of the countryside, so we decided to have our next date on wheels.* **2.** Very smoothly; without difficulty, problems, or hindrances. *Dinner service was running on wheels until an entire sauce pot fell off the stove.* **3.** Used as an intensifier of something as being difficult, unruly, unpleasant, disliked, etc. *There's this one guy in our department who is a real jerk on wheels. It's like he enjoys making other people upset!*

on wrong side See [on \(someone's\) wrong side](#).

on your beam ends See [on \(one's\) beam-ends](#).

on your behalf See [on \(someone's\) behalf](#).

on your behalf See [on \(someone's\) behalf](#).

on your best behavior See [on \(one's\) best behavior](#).

on your best behaviour See [be on \(one's\) best behavior](#).

on your bill See [on \(one's\) bill](#).

on your coattails See [on \(one's\) coattails](#).

on your good behavior See [on \(one's\) good behavior](#).

on your honor See [on \(one's\) honor](#).

on your honour See [on \(one's\) honour](#).

on your knees See [on \(one's/its\) knees](#).

on your lonesome See [on \(one's\) lonesome](#).

on your own See [on \(one's\) own](#).

on your own initiative See [on \(one's\) own initiative](#).

on your own volition See [on \(one's\) own volition](#).

on your part See [on \(someone's\) part](#).

on your pat See [on \(one's\) pat](#).

on your Pat Malone See [on \(one's\) Pat Malone](#).

on your person See [on \(one's\) person](#).



on your plate See [on \(one's\) plate](#).

once and again Only a few times. A: *"Have you ever been to Chinatown in New York?"* B: *"Once and again; not enough to really get to know the place."*

once hell freezes over Never; at no time. *Sure, Bob, you can be the head of this company—once hell freezes over!*

once or twice Only a few times. A: *"Have you ever been to Chinatown in New York?"* B: *"Once or twice; not enough to really get to know the place."*

once the dust has settled When things have become more calm or stable; when the consequences (of something) have become known or manageable. *I know things have been really hectic during this project, so let's all take a bit of a break and return to it once the dust settles a bit. Lots of people opposed the gay marriage legislation, but once the dust has settled, I hope they'll see that there was no reason to be afraid of it.*

once (the) word gets out As soon as people start finding out (about this); as soon as information (about this) begins to spread. *Once the word gets out that we're paying top dollar for skilled programmers, we'll be up to our ears in job applications. This scandal is going to ruin me once word gets out!*

once you go black, you never go back rude slang Sexual activity with a black person is so enjoyable that that it makes one only want black sexual partners in the future.

one after another Consecutively and in quick succession, with one person or thing rapidly following another in order (and usually indicating a large amount altogether). (Often formulated as "one (noun) after another.") *The children walked silently, one after another, into the schoolhouse to begin their lesson. When I was cooped up in the house after my surgery, I started reading one book after another.*

one after the other See [one \(thing\) after the other](#).

one age with See [be one age with \(someone\)](#).

one age with (someone) dated Of the same or roughly equivalent age as someone else. Primarily heard in Ireland. *I had absolutely no idea that Mrs Shelby was one age with her husband; she looks so much younger!*

one another Each the same in action toward the other person(s),

animal(s), or thing(s) in a given group of two or more. *You can just tell when you're around them that Joe and Sarah love one another very much. There are these birds in our back yard that are always fighting with one another in the morning. It's really annoying!*

one at a time In individual succession, with each person or thing following another in order. *The children walked silently one at a time into the schoolhouse to begin their lesson. Ladies and gentlemen, please exit the theater one at a time!*

one bad apple spoils the (whole) barrel It only takes one person, thing, element, etc., to ruin the entire group, situation, project, etc. Refers to the fact that a rotting apple can cause other apples in close proximity to begin to rot as well. A: *"It used to be considered the top research facility in the region, but after one of its researchers was discovered to have plagiarized a number of his papers, the whole department's reputation has been dragged through the mud."* B: *"Well, just one bad apple spoils the barrel." I really loved my job, but there was this one jerk there who made life miserable for everyone. One bad apple spoils the whole barrel, unfortunately.*

one bad apple spoils the (whole) bunch It only takes one person, thing, element, etc., to ruin the entire group, situation, project, etc. Refers to the fact that a rotting apple can cause other apples in close proximity to begin to rot as well. A: *"It used to be considered the top research facility in the region, but after one of its researchers was discovered to have plagiarized a number of his papers, the whole department's reputation has been dragged through the mud."* B: *"Well, just one bad apple spoils the bunch." I really loved my job, but there was this one jerk there who made life miserable for everyone. One bad apple spoils the whole bunch, unfortunately.*

one bad apple spoils the (whole) bushel It only takes one person, thing, element, etc., to ruin the entire group, situation, project, etc. Refers to the fact that a rotting apple can cause other apples in close proximity to begin to rot as well. A: *"It used to be considered the top research facility in the region, but after one of its researchers was discovered to have plagiarized a number of his papers, the whole department's reputation has been dragged through the mud."* B: *"Well, just one bad apple spoils the bushel." I really loved my job, but there was this one jerk there who*

made life miserable for everyone. One bad apple spoils the whole bushel, unfortunately.

one-banana problem A problem, project, or task that requires little to no effort, expertise, or intelligence to solve or complete. Supposedly from the notion that a trained monkey could do what is required. A: *"We have to add in some code so that users are able to remain logged into the website, even if they visit other pages."* B: *"No worries, that's a one-banana problem."*

one brick short of a (full) load A pejorative phrase meaning not very intelligent or of questionable mental capacity. This expression can appear in many different forms and variations (e.g., "a few sandwiches short of a picnic," "one card shy of a full deck," etc.). *He says he's going to start a business selling bees as pets—I think he may be one brick short of a load. The new manager is nice enough, but he's one brick short of a full load, if you ask me.*

one brick shy of a (full) load A pejorative phrase meaning not very intelligent or of questionable mental capacity. It can appear in many different forms and variations (for example: a few sandwiches shy of a picnic, one card shy of a full deck, etc.). *He says he's going to start a business selling bees as pets—I think he may be one brick shy of a load. The new manager is nice enough, but he's one brick shy of a full load, if you ask me.*

one by one In individual succession, with each person or thing following another in order. *The children walked silently, one by one, into the schoolhouse to begin their lesson. The usher asked the theater patrons to exit the theater one by one.*

one can't beat that See [\(one\) can't beat that](#).

one can't believe one's ears See [\(one\) can't believe \(one's\) ears](#).

one card shy of a (full) deck A pejorative phrase meaning not very intelligent or of questionable mental capacity. This expression can appear in many different forms and variations (e.g., "a few sandwiches short of a picnic," "one brick short of a load," etc.). *He says he's going to start a business selling bees as pets—I think he may be one card shy of a full deck. The new manager is nice enough, but he's one card shy of a deck, if you ask me.*

one-day wonder A person or thing that generates interest for only a



short amount of time. *The band's biggest fear was becoming a one-day wonder, soon to be forgotten when the next big sound hit the airwaves.*

one does not wash one's dirty linen in public See [\(one\) does not wash \(one's\) dirty linen in public](#).

one figures See [\(one\) figures \(that\)](#).

one flesh Joined together with another person in marriage. Taken from the biblical verse regarding marriage, "And the two shall become one flesh." It can also refer to sexual intercourse in general, which according to Judeo-Christian beliefs should occur only within marriage. *I am blessed to have been one flesh with my wife for nearly 30 years. Many people choose to wait until they are married to become one flesh with someone.*

one for the Gipper An action taken in honor of someone else. The phrase refers to celebrated Notre Dame football player George Gipp ("the Gipper"). Several years after Gipp's death at age 25, Notre Dame coach Knute Rockne urged his team to "win one for the Gipper." *I heard your staff really worked hard to meet the last sales goal before you retired—one for the Gipper, I suppose.*

one giant leap for mankind See [one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind](#).

(one had) better be going Said when one is about to or needs to leave. *Well, we had better be going. It was lovely to see you, as always. Better be going before I miss my train!*

(one had) better get moving **1.** Said when one is about to or needs to leave. *Well, we'd better be going. It was lovely to see you, as always. Better get moving before I miss my train!* **2.** Said as an imperative to make (more rapid) progress on something, such as a project. *You had better get moving if you're going to finish all of these cupcakes before the party. I better get moving on wrapping these presents. There are dozens of them!*

(one had) better get on (one's) horse Said when one is about to or needs to leave. *Well, I had better get on my horse. It was lovely to see you, as always. Better get on my horse before I miss my train!*

one half of the world does not know how the other half lives People cannot fully understand the lives of others, especially when their lifestyles are very different. *I don't understand how people are just*

oblivious to the growing homeless population in our city. Truly, one half of the world does not know how the other half lives.

one hand washes the other (and both wash the face) All parties involved will benefit from helping each other and/or working together toward the same goal. *Look, if you feature our company's logo during your campaign, we get a major boost in advertising visibility, and you get a bump in your campaign funding—one hand washes the other! The criminal organization has several politicians and most of the police force in its pocket, with everyone seeing a profit from illegal activities. One hand washes the other, and both are washing the face!*

one heck of a See [heck of a](#).

one heck of a (something or someone) **1.** An exceptionally good, exciting, or interesting thing or person. *Marty sure is one heck of a guy, always willing to lend his friends a hand! Two cars for the price of one? That's one heck of a deal!* **2.** An exceptionally bad or difficult thing, activity, or person. *This is one heck of a math assignment—I can't understand the first thing about it! Boy, that is one heck of a haircut. You're going to go out in public like that?*

one hell of a See [hell of a](#).

one hell of a mess See [hell of a mess](#).

one hell of a (something or someone) **1.** An exceptionally good, exciting, or interesting thing or person. *Marty sure is one hell of a guy, always willing to lend his friends a hand! Two cars for the price of one? That's one hell of a deal!* **2.** An exceptionally bad or difficult thing, activity, or person. *This is one hell of a math assignment—I can't understand the first thing about it! Boy, that is one hell of a haircut. You're going to go out in public like that?*

one hell of a time See [hell of a time](#).

one-hit wonder A musician or band that only has one successful song during their music career. *I'm surprised that band was a one-hit wonder. I enjoyed several songs on their album, but only the one big single ever got radio play.*

one-horse race A competition in which one participant is superior to the others and thus more likely to win. *After interviewing all of the job*

candidates, it's clearly a one-horse race. Nobody can beat Kim's experience and qualifications.

one-horse town A very small and unremarkable town that is typically regarded as dull or boring. *I can't wait to graduate high school and get out of this boring, one-horse town!*

one hour's sleep before midnight is worth two after Sleep before midnight is more rejuvenating than sleep after midnight. The phrase encourages going to sleep at an early hour. *No matter how often I tell my son that one hour's sleep before midnight is worth two after, he still stays up too late playing video games. I've really noticed a difference in the quality of my sleep since I started going to bed earlier. It must be true that one hour's sleep before midnight is worth two after!*

one hundred and ten percent See [a hundred and ten percent](#).

one-hundred-and-ten proof See [110 proof](#).

one in the eye for A disappointment or misfortune for someone. Typically used to describe how one is negatively impacted by someone else's actions. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *Jenny's success at her new company is one in the eye for her old boss. I'm your mother—of course your bad grades are one in the eye for me!*

one-man band A company or organization where most or all of the work is handled by one person. *Most small businesses start out as a one-man band with the owner doing everything himself until he can afford to hire help.*

one-night stand **1.** A sexual encounter that only happens one time. *After a night of drinking, Maria had a one-night stand with Mark but regretted it the next morning.* **2.** A single performance. *My favorite comedian is doing a one-night stand in the city next weekend.*

one-note Lacking in variety; tedious or boring. *How can you read those one-note books? They're so dull that they put me to sleep! When I need a new perfume, I look for a complex fragrance, not something that's just one-note.*

one of those things An unexpected or random occurrence. This phrase is often used when one wants to dismiss something without further discussion or concern. A: *"I thought you weren't coming!"* B: *"Oh, you know, my schedule cleared up at the last minute—it was just one of those things."* *Getting sick is just one of those things, mom. Don't worry about it!*

one-off An isolated occurrence; something that happens just once. *Oh, that class was a one-off—my interest in French was dead by the time the semester ended. I swear, I don't like him—our kiss was just a one-off! Their performance was just a one-off—they won't be touring.*

one over (the) eight **1.** adjective Thoroughly inebriated. Primarily heard in UK. *I think someone should drive Jerry home, he's one over the eight. I guess I was making something of a show of myself, but I was having too much fun to realise that I was one over eight.* **2.** noun The final alcoholic drink that pushes a person from mild or safe intoxication to being very drunk. Primarily heard in UK. *I was composed and in control of myself for most of the evening, but somewhere around midnight, I had one over the eight and started making a show of myself. It seems like Jenny makes a point of having one over eight every time she goes out on the weekend.*

one puts one's pants on one leg at a time See [\(one\) puts \(one's\) pants on one leg at a time](#).

one puts one's trousers on one leg at a time See [puts \(one's\) trousers on one leg at a time \(just like everybody else\)](#).

one sandwich short of a picnic A pejorative phrase meaning not very intelligent or of questionable mental capacity. It can appear in many different forms and variations (for example: one card short of a full deck, one brick shy of a full load, etc.). *He says he's going to start a business selling bees as pets—I think he may be one sandwich short of a picnic. The new manager is nice enough, but he's one sandwich short of a picnic, if you ask me.*

one sandwich shy of a picnic A pejorative phrase meaning not very intelligent or of questionable mental capacity. This expression can appear in many different forms and variations (e.g., several bricks short of a load, "one card shy of a full deck," etc.). *He says he's going to start a business selling bees as pets—I think he may be one sandwich shy of a picnic. The new manager is nice enough, but he's one sandwich shy of a picnic, if you ask me.*

one saved the day See [you saved the day](#).

one sharp cookie See [sharp cookie](#).

one sick puppy See [a/one sick puppy](#).

one side Move aside! Get out of the way! (Short for "move to one side.")

One side, little man! I'm in a rush, and you're getting in my way!

one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind A phrase typically said in reference to a breakthrough or advancement of some kind. Astronaut Neil Armstrong famously said the phrase in 1969 when he became the first person to set foot on the moon. *I think the self-driving car will be one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind. When we find a cure for this illness, it will be one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind.*

one-star Lacking in quality; inadequate. *I couldn't spend another minute in that one-star hotel—it was positively filthy!*

one step at a time Slowly, carefully, and deliberately; without being careless or in a rush. *It is entirely possible for this project to succeed—we just need to proceed one step at a time. Major life changes like this can fluster anyone, so just take everything one step at a time.*

one step forward and two steps back With or marked by a small amount progress that is then eradicated by a larger amount of setbacks, problems, or difficulties. *So many administrative hurdles have been thrown up along the way that this whole project has been one step forward and two steps back ever since we began!*

one step forward, two steps back Marked by a small amount progress that is then eradicated by a large amount of setbacks, problems, or difficulties. *So many administrative hurdles have been thrown up along the way that this whole project has been one step forward and two steps back ever since we began!*

one swallow does not a spring make One piece of evidence does not mean that something is definitely going to happen. *I know you're excited about your exam grades, but you haven't gotten your report card yet, and one swallow does not a spring make.*

one swallow does not make a spring One piece of evidence does not mean that something is definitely going to happen. *I know you're excited about your exam grades, but you haven't gotten your report card yet, and one swallow does not make a spring.*

one (thing) after the other Consecutively and in quick succession, with one person or thing rapidly following another in order (and usually

indicating a large amount altogether). Often formulated as "one (noun) after the other." *The children walked silently, one after the other, into the schoolhouse to begin their lesson. When I was cooped up in the house after my surgery, I started reading one book after the other.*

a one-trick pony A person, group, or thing that is known for or limited to only one unique or noteworthy skill, talent, ability, quality, area of success, etc. *The app developers took the world by storm with an incredibly addictive game for smartphones, but they've really been seen as just a one-trick pony ever since that breakthrough success. As most readers suspected, the famed fantasy writer turned out to be a bit of a one-trick pony, genre-wise, with his debut novel in literary fiction being universally panned by critics.*

one-two punch **1.** In boxing, two quick hits to one's opponent in rapid succession. *The boxer's one-two punch was feared by his opponents in the ring.* **2.** Two negative events that happen at the same time or in rapid succession. *My electricity being shut off the same day I lost my job was a terrible one-two punch.*

one-up (someone) To make a point of outdoing, outperforming, outclassing, etc., someone. *I hate telling stories around Jack because he always tries to one-up you with some fabulous anecdote of his own.*

a one way street See [be a one-way street](#).

a one-way street A situation, agreement, or relationship in which only one side or party is benefitting or has any power, influence, or control. *I don't know why you think you always get to have your way; this relationship isn't a one-way street, after all! I'm starting to think that this partnership with the government is a one-way street. They keep putting demands on us, but they've given us very little support in return.*

a one-way street A cooperative situation, relationship, or agreement in which only one side is benefitting from or dictating the terms of the interaction. *You can't always decide what we're going to do next, Mary. This relationship is not just a one-way street, you know. I always feel like it's a one-way street when I'm dealing with these big firms. They never let you participate in the meetings.*

a one-way ticket to (somewhere or something) A specific, usually negative, result of an action, event, or situation. *If he doesn't restructure his company soon, he's buying a one-way ticket to bankruptcy.*

Getting home late will be a one-way ticket to being grounded.

one will rue the day See [rue the day \(that something happened\)](#).

(one's/the) best bet The action or idea that is most likely to be successful. *At this hour, taking the highway is your best bet if you want to get there on time. This method of testing is the best bet for getting an uncontaminated result.*

onesie-twosie Individually; one at a time; in small batches or amounts at a time. *You'll save yourself a heap of time if you just create a template for printing standard letters, rather than drafting them onesie-twosie from scratch.*

only daughter One's only female child. *I'm so sad to send my only daughter off to college! Sure, my dad showed my sister some favoritism—she's his only daughter, after all.*

only fools and horses work One should find an easy way to make money. A: *"Have you considered getting a job?"* B: *"Oh please, only fools and horses work. Once I sell this invention of mine, I'll make millions!"*

only Nixon could go to China A phrase used to highlight a political leader's unique ability to accomplish something particularly daunting or taboo. It refers to US President Richard Nixon's landmark 1972 visit to Communist China, which established diplomatic relations between the two nations. *With all of your connections, I think you'll be the first mayor to get a train station built in our town—only Nixon could go to China, right?*

only son One's only male child. *I'm so sad to send my only son off to college! Of course my mom showed my brother some favoritism—he's her only son, after all.*

only the good die young A phrase typically used as a source of comfort after someone has died at a young age. *I know that only the good die young, but I'm still heartbroken to have lost my best friend—she was just 20 years old and had her whole life ahead of her! He was just the kindest person, and only the good die young.*

ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny The now-discredited scientific theory that an organism's embryonic development, or ontogeny, follows the evolutionary stages of its species, or phylogeny. *We were able to disprove Haeckel's theory that ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny by closely studying*

embryonic development.

onward and upward **1.** Becoming increasingly successful; continuing to advance or make progress. *After the immense success of his first book, it was all onward and upward for John's writing career.* **2.** Improving to a brighter, happier future, especially after some misfortune or unpleasant incident. *I know you're really disappointed with your result on the midterm, but hey, it's onward and upward from here!*

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OOTD An abbreviation for "outfit of the day." It typically accompanies a picture of one's outfit on social media. *Loving this OOTD! These leggings are so comfy. A perfect dress for today's beautiful weather! #OOTD*

open and aboveboard Fully visible to public scrutiny; completely and openly honest or legitimate. *Though some regulators have expressed concern over the merger of the two multinationals, everything about the deal has been open and aboveboard.*

an open book **1.** Something that is easy to understand or decipher. *These legal contracts are anything but an open book.* **2.** One who acts (or purports to act) honestly, with no secrets. *Ask me anything, I'm an open book. Adam says he's an open book, but I've seen him sneaking out of his house late at night.*

(open) confession is good for the soul The act of confessing one's misdeeds alleviates stress and guilt. *You'll feel better if you just tell mom that you broke the vase. Open confession is good for the soul, after all.*

open day A specified day in which an organization, especially a school, university, or business, is open for visitation, inspection, or evaluation by members of the public. Primarily heard in UK. *I wouldn't mind the open day at school so much if we didn't have to act like trained seals for the prospective parents.*

open her mouth See [not open \(one's\) mouth](#).



open house **1.** A condition, situation, or event in which a home is open and welcome to visitors at any time. *We like to have an open house, so please just drop by whenever you like. It really threw the neighborhood off-kilter the way the Jeffersons kept open house, with people arriving and departing at all hours.* **2.** A time or state in which a house, apartment, or other residential building that is up for sale may be viewed by prospective buyers. *We've been looking for weeks for the right house to buy, but there's an open house this Saturday for one that looks really promising.* **3.** A specified day in which an organization, especially a school, university, or business, is open for visitation, inspection, or evaluation by members of the public. Primarily heard in US. *I wouldn't mind the open house at school so much if we didn't have to act like trained seals for the prospective parents.*

an open invitation **1.** An invitation to do something at any time or whenever someone is inclined. *Just because I let your insufferable friend Paul to come over that one time doesn't mean he has an open invitation.* **2.** Something that provides an ostensible reason or excuse for someone to do something immoral or illegal. *A lot of people fear that legalizing marijuana will create an open invitation for people to try, buy, or sell any drug they can think of.*

an open marriage A marriage between two people who do not object to each other continuing to have other sexual or romantic partners. *A: "Lila has a new boyfriend? I thought she was married to Chad." B: "Oh, they have an open marriage." Don't worry, I still date other people—my wife and I have an open marriage.*

open (one's) big mouth To say something that is meant to be a secret; to say something in an indiscreet, noisy, or boorish manner. *Why did you have to open your big mouth about my crush on Tommy? Why couldn't you just keep it between us? We would have gotten away with the plan if she hadn't opened her big mouth!*

open (one's) legs vulgar To have or be receptive to having sex with someone. Most often said of a woman. *My mother told me not to be opening my legs or I wouldn't find a husband, but I think she's terribly old fashioned. As long as they use protection, it shouldn't matter how often anyone opens their legs.*

open (one's) mouth To say something, especially that which is

indiscreet, boorish, or meant to be a secret. *Why did you have to open your mouth about my crush on Tommy? Why couldn't you just keep it between us? You've got to make sure that he never opens his mouth about what went on here today.*

open sesame **1.** A phrase commonly (and thus sometimes humorously) used as a password, especially to gain entrance to something. In *The Arabian Nights*, "open sesame" is a magical phrase used to open a robbers' den. A: "What's the password?" B: "Um... open sesame?" *If those kids are still blocking the door, tell them the password is "open sesame."* **2.** By extension, something that helps one to achieve a goal or access an opportunity. In this usage, the phrase is preceded by an article (for instance, "an open sesame"). *Good grades in high school will be an open sesame to any college you choose.*

open the door for **1.** Literally, to open a door for another person. *Open the door for me, will you? I have my hands full right now. Now that I'm on crutches, I really appreciate it when people open the door for me.* **2.** To create an opportunity for someone or something. *Female professors like you really opened the door for future generations of women scholars. Recent advancements in technology really opened the door for my latest invention to gain widespread acceptance.*

open the kimono To be transparently open about one's plans, dealings, or intentions. *I assure you that our company has opened the kimono about every aspect of our tax obligations to the state.*

open (up) a can of whoop ass (on someone) To commit, engage in, or threaten physical violence (against someone). Sometimes said in a jocular or pseudo-serious manner. *If that punk doesn't shut up soon, I'm gonna have to go over there and open up a can of whoop ass! My old man was the toughest guy in town when he was alive. He could open a can of whoop ass on anyone!*

open (up) (one's) kimono To be transparently open about one's plans, dealings, or intentions. *I assure you that our company has opened our kimono about every aspect of our tax obligations to the state.*

the opening of an envelope Any event, celebration, or ceremony, no matter how trivial or unremarkable, that one attends purely for the sake of visibility. Often said in relation to celebrities or media personalities who

make a point of attending anything that will give them more public exposure. *In a bid to cultivate a media buzz around herself, the Internet sensation has been to the openings of films, book launches, and celebrity galas. With the way she carries on, she'd even go to the opening of an envelope!*

opportunity knocks A major opportunity to find success presents itself or becomes available. *You have to be ready to act if opportunity knocks, or you might end up regretting it forever. It was hard leaving my parents and all my friends from high school, but when opportunity knocked to attend school overseas, I knew I had to seize the chance.*

opportunity knocks at every man's door Chances for success present themselves to everyone. *Don't be jealous of your sister—opportunity knocks at every man's door, and it will come along for you soon enough.*

opposites attract Unlike people tend to be drawn to each other. A: *"I have no idea why Ben and Julia are together when they have such different interests."* B: *"Well, opposites attract, right?" I know firsthand that opposites attract because my wife and I are very different people and have a very happy marriage!*

or get off the pot See [\(do something\) or get off the pot](#).

or something (like that) Or else something similar to or like what has just been said. (Used to express that what's been said is just a possible example, or else the speaker is not exactly sure of it.) A: *"What do you want to do this evening?"* B: *"We could go out for dinner or something, if you like."* *I'm not sure what John's husband does for a living; I think he's a writer or something like that.*

ordeal by fire An outdated form of trial in which an accused person was physically subjected to fire. The belief was that God would save those who were truly innocent. *The accused witches have been sentenced to ordeal by fire so that we may know whether they are guilty of these charges.*

the order of the day Something that is a priority in a certain situation or at a given time. *If you're taking the kids to the beach, then sunscreen is the order of the day. While you're in college, studying is the order of the day, not socializing!*

orders are orders This thing or things must be done because a person of authority has commanded it, even if it or they are unpleasant to do. *Look, I*

don't like having to decide who's going to lose their job, but orders are orders, and we have to let someone go.

Oreo cookie offensive slang A derogatory term for a black person whose behavior is regarded as more stereotypically white than black. The term derives from the fact that Oreo cookies are black on the outside and white on the inside. Primarily heard in US.

original character The initial and/or intended meaning or state of something, especially if it has changed over time. *Please be sure to keep the original character of the statement you are paraphrasing. I have to translate this story, and I have no idea if I'm capturing its original character. The renovations were done in keeping with the original character of the building.*

other fish in the sea See [there are other \(good\) fish in the sea](#).

(one's) other half One's spouse, romantic partner, or boyfriend/girlfriend. *I'd love to come out to the bars with you after work, but I'd better check in with my other half to make sure we don't have any plans for this evening. The work retreat is meant to be for couples, so be sure to bring your other half!*

the other side Existence after death; the world of the afterlife. *I miss my wife terribly, but I keep the faith that I will see her on the other side some day. My mom has always been a sucker for con artists who claim they can communicate with the other side.*

out-and-out (used before a noun) Complete; utter; absolute; thoroughgoing. *Their lead singer is an out-and-out genius when it comes to writing music! That's an out-and-out lie! I demand you take that back!*

out back Outside at the back of a given house or building. *John's coming to meet us out back after we're finished with work. We just bought a brand new picnic table so we can have our meals out back when the weather is nice.*

out for the count Unconscious or in a deep, insensible sleep. Likened to a boxer who has been knocked out. *I didn't even hear you come in last night—I was so tired that I was out for the count as soon as my head hit the pillow. On his 21st birthday, Mike's friends gave him so much to drink that he was out for the count by 10 PM. The rowdy customer was out for the count when the bouncer punched him in the head.*

out-Herod Herod To be excessively cruel or tyrannical. Herod was the

King of Judea who according to the New Testament ordered the deaths of all male babies in an attempt to kill Jesus. *That dictator could out-Herod Herod with his fits of violence.*

out of all scotch and notch Immeasurable; limitless. "Scotches" and "notches" are boundaries drawn in the game of hopscotch. *My love for my husband is truly out of all scotch and notch.*

out of central casting See [\(straight\) out of central casting](#).

out of condition Not in good physical health; not especially strong, healthy, or fit. *I've gotten pretty out of condition from working behind this desk for 10 years. I'd like to run a marathon this autumn, but I'm a little out of condition.*

out of countenance Uneasy; ashamed. *I'm sorry if I'm quiet—I made a big mistake at work today, and it really put me out of countenance.*

out of court Before trial or without litigation. The phrase is used to describe decisions, especially settlements, that are resolved before a case goes to trial. *I have no desire to draw this out in a long trial, so let's offer to settle out of court.*

out of fix 1. Out of order; not functioning properly or at all. *My dad's favorite hobby was heading out to the shed with his tools to work on some old piece of machinery that's out of fix.* 2. In disarray or disorder; in a state of disarrangement. *The poor woman's house has been out of fix ever since her husband passed away.*

out of her wheelhouse See [out\(side\) \(of\) \(someone's\) wheelhouse](#).

out of house and home Evicted; no longer having someplace to live. *If my wife loses her job like so many of her co-workers, we'll be out of house and home for sure. Over 50 former tenants, now out of house and home, gathered at city hall to protest the closure of the government-funded accommodation.*

out of humour In an irritable, grouchy, or unhappy mood; not feeling well or in good spirits. Primarily heard in UK. *I think something is bugging John because he's been rather out of humour lately. After living in Gibraltar for so long, these awful London winters leave me feeling me out of humour.*

out of it 1. In a sedate, confused, or disoriented condition; feeling or seeming disconnected from reality. *I was really out of it after working that*

16-hour shift on Saturday. I think something is bugging John, because seems really out of it lately. It's like he's walking around in a haze. **2.** Heavily intoxicated by drugs or alcohol, especially to the point of becoming unconscious, nonsensical, or out of control. *You were really out of it at the party last night. You shouldn't drink so much so fast.* **3.** Not aware of or knowledgeable about something; not included or participating in something, especially a particular trend, group, or activity. *My dad is so out of it. Doesn't he know that wearing socks with sandals looks ridiculous? Everyone's been playing this new Japanese card game at school. I'm not interested in it, but not playing still makes me feel a little out of it.*

out of key Not in consonance or accordance with other elements, factors, or styles. A reference to musical tonality. *That shirt looks ridiculous—it's totally out of key with the rest of your wardrobe!*

out of kilter **1.** Out of equilibrium; not straight, level, or aligned properly. *This wall is a little out of kilter. We'll need to account for that during the renovation.* **2.** In a state of confusion or chaos. *The economy has remained out of kilter in many countries across Europe, even as the global economy has started to recover. It seems like everything in my life has gone out of kilter recently.* **3.** Not working correctly or properly; out of order; out of w(h)ack. *It sounds like your car's engine is a bit out of kilter. I'd recommend taking it to a mechanic before you go for any long drives.*

out of (one's) box slang Very intoxicated from drugs or alcohol. Primarily heard in UK. *You were really out of your box last night! How do you feel this morning? A: "Do you remember anything you said to me at the party?" B: "Not at all—I was out of my box last night."*

out of (one's) brain Heavily intoxicated by drugs or alcohol, especially to the point of becoming unconscious, nonsensical, or out of control. Primarily heard in UK. *I think someone might have spiked Jack's drink with some kind of drug, because he's out of his brain all of a sudden. Jane is a lightweight. Only one or two beers gets totally out of her brain. I had to take my brother away from the party because he was out of his brain on LSD.*

out of (one's) face Heavily intoxicated by drugs or alcohol, especially to the point of becoming unconscious, nonsensical, or out of control. *I think someone might have spiked Jack's drink with some kind of drug because he's out of his face all of a sudden. Jane is a lightweight. Only one or two beers*

and she gets totally out of her face. I had to take my brother away from the party because he was out of his face on LSD.

out of (one's) gourd slang Crazy. *After yet another sleepless night, I'm starting to feel like I'm out of my gourd. He's out of his gourd if he thinks this plan is going to work!*

out of (one's) hair No longer pestering or annoying to one; not one's responsibility or burden any longer. *I've gotten the kids out of my hair for a few hours so I can go and get a relaxing massage by myself. Once these auditors from the IRS are out of our hair, we can get back to business as usual.*

out of (one's) head 1. slang Crazy. *He's out of his head if he thinks this plan is going to work! After yet another sleepless night, I'm starting to feel like I'm out of my head.* 2. slang Very intoxicated from drugs or alcohol. *You were really out of your head last night! How do you feel this morning? A: "Do you remember anything you said to me at the party?" B: "Not at all—I was out of my head last night."*

out of (one's) shell Less shy, reserved, or reticent and in a more sociable, outgoing, or enthusiastic state. *Samantha was quite a quiet girl growing up, but she really started coming out of her shell in college. Jack is actually a very funny, engaging guy once he's out of his shell.*

out of (one's) skull Heavily intoxicated by drugs or alcohol, especially to the point of becoming unconscious, nonsensical, or out of control. *I think someone might have spiked Jack's drink with some kind of drug, because he's out of his skull all of a sudden.*

out of (one's) tree slang Crazy. *After yet another sleepless night, I'm starting to feel like I'm out of my tree. He's out of his tree if he thinks this plan is going to work!*

out of plumb Not completely or precisely vertical. *I think we need to call the builder again because that wall is definitely out of plumb.*

out of (something) Having no more of something left or available. *We're out of milk, so you can pick some up at the store on your way home? I'm sorry, but I just checked with the kitchen, and we're out of the chicken dish.*

out of sorts In an irritable, grouchy, or unhappy mood; not feeling well or

in good spirits. *I think something is bugging John, because he's been rather out of sorts lately. After living in Florida for so long, these awful Minnesota winters leave me feeling out of sorts.*

out of square 1. Literally, not at or forming right angles (as or of a square). *Are you blind? The foundation to this house is completely out of square! The house has a couple of door frames out of square, but otherwise, it's a fine example of carpentry.* **2.** By extension, not in agreement or alignment; faulty or not in proper order. *Environmentalists are claiming that the study on climate change, backed largely by the oil industry, is completely out of square with the truth. Everything about this project has been out of square from the beginning—I think it's time we just started the whole thing over.*

out of steam Completely exhausted, fatigued, or without energy or motivation. *I'm all out of steam, I can't walk another step. This project has been going on for weeks now. I'm out of steam at this point.*

out of step 1. Not following or maintaining the proper rhythm (along with someone or something). *My date kept dancing out of step with me throughout our entire prom. It was so embarrassing! You're never going to be a star if you keep singing out of step with the music like that. I'm not really keen on dancing. I'm always out of step!* **2.** Having beliefs, values, or ways of living that differ from those of one's group or society, especially because they are considered outdated. *The candidate is clearly out of step with mainstream America. I barely look at my phone each day, so I've begun to feel out of step with most members of my generation.*

out of the box 1. (hyphenated if used before a noun) Of a product, existing or ready to use upon opening; prefabricated; requiring no assembly, installation, modification, etc., by the user or customer. *The software is robust enough out of the box that everyday users will find it most of what they need already. The new smartphone boasts some really astounding out-of-the-box features for even the most inexperienced users to play around with.* **2.** Outside of or beyond what is considered usual, traditional, or conventional. (A less common shortening of "outside (of) the box.") *I've been trying to think out of the box for my term paper topic because I know the professor hates unoriginal ideas. OK, team, we need some real out-of-the-box ideas if we want this project to succeed.*

out of the chute At the outset; from the very beginning; from the get-go. *The company's accounts hadn't been kept in proper order for years, so the new owner was saddled with tremendous debt right out of the chute.*

out of the clear blue sky Unexpectedly. *She seemed so surprised by the news that it must have come out of the clear blue sky. You need to work hard—opportunities don't just appear out of the clear blue sky.*

out of time (with someone or something) Not following or maintaining the proper rhythm or tempo (along with someone or something). *My date was out of time with the music throughout the entire dance. It was so embarrassing! You're never going to be a star if you keep singing out of time like that.*

out of trim 1. Unprepared, as of ships that are not ready to sail. "To trim," in the nautical sense, means to adjust a ship's balance or sails. *No, we can't leave yet, the boat is out of trim!* 2. In poor condition, usually physically. *I know I need to get back to the gym—I'm really out of trim these days.* A: "I checked on the house a few months ago, why?" B: "It's completely out of trim! Paint is peeling, windows are broken, it's a mess!"

out of your box See [out of \(one's\) box](#).

out of your brain See [out of \(one's\) brain](#).

out on (one's) feet 1. Near to the point of collapse or losing consciousness (as due to exhaustion or injury) while still remaining on one's feet; just short of being asleep or unconscious. *Doctors in training are expected to endure an unbelievable amount of stress and exhaustion. Surely it is counterproductive forcing them to attend each of their patients while they're out on their feet.* 2. All but or as good as defeated; still functioning, but past the point of usefulness or productivity. *The company has managed to remain open, but truth be told, it's really been out on its feet for the last year.*

out on the tiles slang Having a night of fun and/or celebration, often by going to bars and parties. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *Our team won the big game, so we're definitely going out on the tiles tonight! I'm still recovering from spending Saturday night out on the tiles!*

out on the tiles See [be out on the tiles](#).

out the ass vulgar slang In great, extreme, or excessive abundance. *The company's had financial difficulties out the ass lately, but the CEO is*

adamant that it will start making a profit soon. Sorry, I can't come out tonight, I've got homework out the ass.

out the wazoo slang In great, extreme, or excessive abundance. ("Wazoo" is a slang term for the anus.) *The company's had financial difficulties out the wazoo lately, but the CEO is adamant that it will start making a profit soon. Sorry, I can't come out tonight, I've got homework out the wazoo.*

out there (hyphenated if used before a noun) Somewhat unusual, unconventional, crazy, or eccentric. *Our manager is always coming up with some out-there ideas on how to improve productivity. My uncle Jerry is a little out there, but he's a really sweet guy.*

outer core One part of the inside of the Earth (as opposed to the Earth's "inner core"). *All right class, what can you tell me about the Earth's outer core?*

outfit of the day See [OOTD](#).

outpope the Pope **1.** To be or act more stringently adherent to the laws, tenets, and doctrines of the Christian faith (not limited to Catholicism) than is taught or required by the papacy or Christianity as a whole. (Usually used hyperbolically as a negative or mocking criticism of someone as being overly pious.) *I can't believe we're not allowed to eat meat on Fridays while we're staying with Grandma. She could outpope the Pope! The zealous preacher-turned-Senator's campaign is so strictly rooted in Biblical law that many feel he's outpopping the Pope.* **2.** By extension, to be more extreme in one's behavior, attitudes, practices, etc., than that of the prevailing authority or standard of normalcy. *Among the Nordic countries, all well known for their social welfare, Denmark outpopes the Pope in terms of providing care for its people.*

outside chance A slight, remote, or unlikely possibility. *The washing machine is probably busted, but there's an outside chance I might be able to fix what's wrong with it. I don't think Jack would go on a date with me, but on the outside chance that he says yes, I'm going to ask him anyway!*

out(side) (of) (someone's) wheelhouse Against, outside of, or not matching someone's general interests, abilities, or area of familiarity; outside of someone's comfort zone. *It's clear, however, that the political implications of this issue are well outside the author's wheelhouse. Jeff*

generally doesn't date women outside of his wheelhouse. You need to get out of your wheelhouse and live on the wild side for a change!

outside the box Outside of or beyond what is considered usual, traditional, or conventional. *I've been trying to think outside of the box about what I want this term paper to be about. I know the professor hates unoriginal ideas. OK, team, we need some ideas that are really outside the box if we're going to impress the CEO!*

the outside world The people, culture, ideas, or experiences beyond an enclosed, sheltered, or remote place, situation or environment. *Being raised out on the farm meant Jacob had little knowledge of the outside world. Anthropologists came upon an indigenous society that had had no previous contact with the outside world.*

outsmart (one)self To find oneself negatively impacted by the schemes that one undertook for personal gain. *I was so successful in overshadowing my competition that the boss is skeptical that I can work as part of a team. I guess I outsmarted myself!*

outstay (one's) welcome 1. To remain a guest in a place, especially someone's home, for too long, to the point where the host no longer wishes one to stay. *After the cool reception I received at breakfast, it was apparent that I had outstayed my welcome at the cottage of my father's friend. 2.* By extension, to have one's presence become unwanted in a particular environment. *The polls make it clear that this candidate has outstayed her welcome in this primary race. Though wildly popular for a short time, the product simply outstayed its welcome in the market, and can now be found in bargain bins everywhere.*

over hell's half acre See [all over hell's half acre](#).

over shoes, over boots Fully committed to continuing something, especially in a reckless manner. *I know you are set on these travel plans, over shoes, over boots, but I don't think it's a good idea to drive today—a lot of streets are flooded!*

over the board See [all over the board](#).

over the course of In or during the process of. *Over the course of your employment in the company, were you ever aware or suspicious of any illicit financial activity going on? I learned over the course of the meeting that our*

department was being downsized by over 50 percent.

over the hills and far away To or at some distant, remote point or location. *Rather than focusing on the here and now, John's ideas for the future are always over the hills and far away. Each day, the men all go over the hills and far away to find work, meaning us women must raise the children and mind the homes on our own.*

over the map See [all over the map](#).

over the transom (hyphenated if used before a noun) Without prior agreement, consent, or arrangement; unsolicited or uninvited. Said especially of written works submitted for publication or consideration. *My biggest task as an intern was sorting through and usually disposing of amateur works that came over the transom. I could tell the poor kid needed a job, but all I could do was stick his application in with all the other over-the-transom applications.*

over with See [all over with](#).

overshoot the mark To pass the intended target, typically due to poor judgment. A: "Did I overshoot the mark?" B: "Yeah, I would back up so that your car isn't sticking out of the parking space!" *I think we overshot the mark with our estimate.*

overstay (one's) welcome **1.** To remain a guest in a place, especially someone's home, for too long, to the point where the host no longer wishes one to stay. *After the cool reception I received at breakfast, it was apparent that I had overstayed my welcome at the cottage of my father's friend.* **2.** By extension, to do something that makes one no longer welcome in or at a place. *Things were going fine at the dinner meeting until my coworker made a rather off-color joke, at which point it seemed that we'd overstayed our welcome.*

overstep (one's)/its mark To go further or do more than one should or is permitted to do. *I really feel like you overstepped your mark when you started criticizing John's ability as a parent. The city council has overstepped its mark in imposing this steep new income tax on its residents.*

overstep the bounds (of something) To go further or do more than one should or is permitted. *I really feel like you overstepped the bounds when you started criticizing John's ability as a parent. The local city council*

has overstepped the bounds of its authority in imposing this steep new income tax on its residents.

(one's) own flesh and blood One's family member(s). *You're my own flesh and blood—how could you steal my story idea? She's our own flesh and blood, so let's all try to get along with her while she's in town.*

an own goal **1.** In sports, a goal that a player accidentally scores for the opposing team. *I can't believe we lost the championship because of an own goal. I was trying to get the puck out of our zone, but I scored an own goal—how mortifying!* **2.** An action pursued because it seems beneficial but that ultimately has a detrimental effect. *Sheila's speech was supposed to win her more supporters, but it became an own goal once she started ranting off-topic. The law seemed promising, but it has generated such strong opposition that it's become an own goal for the president.*

ox-in-the-ditch Of or relating to a situation that is dire and requires urgent and undivided attention to resolve it. Taken from the Bible (Luke 14), in which Jesus demonstrates to the Pharisees that some emergencies must be dealt with immediately, even if it means breaking the Sabbath to do so. *I was going to miss the biggest meeting of the year, but my daughter's sickness was an ox-in-the-ditch situation.*

the ox is in the ditch The situation is dire and requires urgent and undivided attention to resolve it. Taken from the Bible (Luke 14), in which Jesus demonstrates to the Pharisees that some emergencies must be dealt with immediately, even if it means breaking the sabbath to do so. *I was always taught to keep Sunday as a holy day, but you know as well as I do that if the ox is in the ditch, then you need to do what you can to make things right, no matter what day of the week it is! With our engine shot, stranded out on this desert highway, it seemed pretty clear to me that the ox was in the ditch.*



P

pack fudge vulgar slang To have anal sex.

pack heat To have one or more firearms, especially handguns, currently on one's person. *Everyone in that gang packs heat, so I'd steer clear of them if I were you! I make sure I'm always packing heat when I go through this part of town.*

pack of lies A number of false statements made to deliberately hide the truth. *After the human resources manager performed a background check on the new applicant, she realized his resume was a pack of lies. I didn't do anything they said I did. It's all a pack of lies!*

pack on the pounds To put on weight quickly, especially a large or excessive amount. *Wow, Jim really packed on the pounds on while he was on his sabbatical. I'm trying to pack on the pounds so I can make it on the football team this fall!*

pack rat A person who collects and hoards worthless items. Primarily heard in US. *My old roommate was such a pack rat that, after six months, I could barely walk through the living room without tripping over his collection of junk.*

pack (someone or something) (in) like sardines To fit many people or things very tightly or snugly into a small space. *We didn't want to take more than one car, so Jeff packed us like sardines in his little sedan for the four-hour drive to Moab. Having a concert in our friends café was such a good idea! Sure, we had to pack people in like sardines, but everyone had a great time. I wish you would just let us buy you a bigger backpack! It makes my own back hurt watching you pack those books like sardines into your little shoulder bag.*

packed (in) like sardines Very tightly or snugly packed together, especially in a small space. *We didn't want to take more than one car, so we had to drive for about four hours packed like sardines in Jeff's little sedan. Having a concert in our friends café was such a good idea! Sure, we were packed in like sardines, but everyone had a great time.*

packed to the gills Completely full; teeming; having no room to spare. *I've got so many meetings and deadlines these days that my schedule is packed to the gills! Her mind was packed to the gills with ideas for her new book. I felt packed to the gills after my grandmother's Thanksgiving meal.*

packed to the rafters Completely full; teeming; having no room to spare. *I've got so many meetings and deadlines these days that my schedule is packed to the rafters! Her mind was packed to the rafters with ideas for her new book. I felt packed to the rafters after my grandmother's Thanksgiving meal.*

pad (one's)/the accounts To make one's financial accounts appear more successful, stable, or secure than they really are, as by fraudulently concealing losses or by reporting false profits. *Once the company's fraud came to light, it was quickly discovered that they had padded their accounts for years. Mark had taken to padding his accounts in the company to hide the losses from his husband's excessive spending habits.*

pad (one's)/the expense account To make unnecessary or fraudulent charges to one's company expense accounts for one's personal use. *Have you been padding your expense account, Johnson? You're going to have to explain some of these mysterious out-of-state charges.*

padded account A financial account that has been made to appear more successful, stable, or secure, as by fraudulently concealing losses or by reporting false profits. *Once the company's fraud came to light, it was quickly discovered that Tom had been keeping padded accounts for years.*

paddy wagon slang A large police van—or any police vehicle—used to transport criminals or suspects to jail. Sometimes considered offensive due to possibly having originated in the US with the use of a slang term ("paddy") for an Irishman, due to either the prevalence of Irish police officers or frequent arrests of Irish immigrants. However, the origin is debated. *Nearly two dozen looters were thrown into paddy wagons by police forces trying to quell the riots. After Jeff got drunk and started assaulting a bouncer, he ended his night in the back of a paddy wagon.*

paddywagon slang A large police van—or any police vehicle—used to transport criminals or suspects to prison. (Possibly offensive, as paddy is a slang pejorative for an Irish person.) *Nearly two dozen looters were thrown into paddy wagons by police forces trying to quell the riots. After Jeff got*

drunk and started assaulting a bouncer, he ended his night in the back of a paddywagon.

paid-up Certified for inclusion; having paid the necessary amount in full. *I never knew until he was on his deathbed that my father was a paid-up Freemason. You'll have to be a paid-up member of the union before we can give you any regular shifts on the docks.*

paid-up member (of something) A certified member of a particular group or organization; someone who has paid the dues necessary to be part of a group. *I never knew until he was on his deathbed that my father was a paid-up member of the Freemasons. I'm afraid only paid-up members of the union can be given any regular shifts on the docks.*

pain and suffering A legal term for the physical and emotional trauma endured by the complainant in a case. Primarily heard in US. *We are in court today because of the pain and suffering that Mr. Smith's reckless driving has caused my client.*

pain in the arse An especially irritating, aggravating, or obnoxious person, thing, or situation. Primarily heard in UK. *You know, Jack, you may be my friend, but you can be a real pain in the arse sometimes! This calculus homework is a real pain in the arse. It's not that I don't understand it, it's just so tedious!*

pain-in-the-arse (used before a noun) Very irritating, aggravating, or obnoxious. Primarily heard in UK. *I've still got a few pain-in-the-arse jobs to do around the farm before I can call it quits for the day. We're having Mary over for dinner tomorrow night. I just hope her pain-in-the-arse husband doesn't come along as well.*

pain-in-the-ass (used before a noun) Very irritating, aggravating, or obnoxious. Primarily heard in US. *I've still got a few pain-in-the-ass jobs to do around the farm before I can call it quits for the day. We're having Mary over for dinner tomorrow night. I just hope her pain-in-the-ass husband doesn't come along as well.*

pain in the ass rude slang A person or thing that is extremely annoying or inconvenient. *I know I need to renew my license, but dealing with the lines at the DMV is such a pain in the ass.*

pain in the butt slang A person or thing that is extremely annoying or

inconvenient. *My nephew can be such a pain in the butt when he's bored and wants me to entertain him.*

pain in the butt An especially irritating, aggravating, or obnoxious person, thing, or situation. *You know, Jack, you may be my friend, but you can be a real pain in the butt sometimes! This calculus homework is a real pain in the butt. It's not that I don't understand it, it's just so tedious!*

pain-in-the-butt (used before a noun) Very irritating, aggravating, or obnoxious. *I've still got a few pain-in-the-butt jobs to do around the ranch before I can call it quits for the day. We're having Mary over for dinner tomorrow night. I just hope her pain-in-the-butt husband doesn't come along as well.*

pain-in-the-neck (used before a noun) Very irritating, aggravating, or obnoxious. *I've still got a few pain-in-the-neck jobs to do around the farm before I can call it quits for the day. We're having Mary over for dinner tomorrow night. I just hope her pain-in-the-neck husband doesn't come along as well.*

pain in the neck A person or thing that is extremely annoying or inconvenient. *Getting boxes in and out of the attic is a real pain in the neck.*

pain-in-the-rear (used before a noun) Very irritating, aggravating, or obnoxious. *I've still got a few pain-in-the-rear jobs to do around the ranch before I can call it quits for the day. We're having Mary over for dinner tomorrow night. I just hope her pain-in-the-rear husband doesn't come along as well.*

pain in the rear An especially irritating, aggravating, or obnoxious person, thing, or situation. *You know, Jack, you may be my friend, but you can be a real pain in the rear sometimes! This calculus homework is a real pain in the rear. It's not that I don't understand it, it's just so tedious!*

paint a black picture (of someone or something) To describe or portray someone, something, or some event as being extremely bad, hopeless, or unpleasant. *You always paint a black picture of him, but he's a decent guy if you get to know him. I was really worried before starting the course because everyone I talked to had been painting such a black picture.*

paint (something) with a broad brush To describe or

characterize something in very general, vague, or broad terms, ignoring or neglecting to include specific details. *When asked about how she would stabilize the economy, the candidate painted her plan with a broad brush, resorting to vague claims about creating jobs and getting people back to work.*

paint the lily To add embellishment to something that is already beautiful or outstanding. The phrase comes from Shakespeare's *King John*: "To gild refined gold, to paint the lily ... is wasteful and ridiculous excess." *My wife is so gorgeous that putting her in a fancy gown would just be painting the lily. Why add a filter to your photo of the rainbow? No need to paint the lily.*

painted cat A prostitute. This phrase likely combines another term for a prostitute, "painted woman," with "cathouse"—a term for brothel. A: "You know, I heard that Mary is a painted cat. It would explain where all her money comes from." B: "Mary is not a prostitute!"

palace politics The relationships, interactions, designs, and inner workings of the top members of a political organization (not necessarily of a monarchy or empire). Used especially in relation to internal rivalry, plotting, double crossing, etc. *The country has faced its fair share of problems since shaking off the dictatorship, not the least of which being the intense palace politics of the newly formed government.*

panda car A police car. Primarily heard in UK. *Slow down, there's a panda car up ahead!*

the pants off (of) slang Thoroughly or completely; to a huge or great degree. *This young team is beating the pants off the veteran squad.*

paper chase A task that involves completing and/or going through a lot of paperwork. *After getting married and buying a house, doing my taxes has become a real paper chase.*

paper thin 1. (hyphenated if used prenominal) Literally, having a thickness comparable to paper; exceptionally thin. *This blade is so sharp that it can cut through a tin can with a paper-thin incision. Young lady, you are not going on a date wearing a dress as paper thin as that!* 2. By extension, quite meager, inadequate, or feeble. *John is always offering some paper-thin excuse as to why he's late. The promises the new president made in her campaign were exceptional, but so far her results have been paper thin.*

paper tiger A nation or organization that gives the impression that it is threatening or powerful when, in reality, is not. *Many people see North Korea as nothing more than a paper tiger, despite its threats against other countries. The new management team tries to command respect through lots of blustery speeches, but all of us workers just see it as a paper tiger.*

paper trail Physical or digital documentation of a person's activities. *The con artist wrote fraudulent checks all over the state, leaving a paper trail for police to follow. Frank swore that he wasn't using the company's computer for illegal activities, but the digital paper trail he left proved otherwise.*

parade of horrors A series of many misdeeds or misfortunes. A: *"Why did you leave your job?"* B: *"I can't even begin to talk about the parade of horrors that happened to me while I was working there."* *The recent news cycle has just been a parade of horrors, with one tragedy after the next.*

parentally challenged Born to unwed parents. (Pseudo-politically correct slang used for humorous effect.) A: *"Is it true that Sean is parentally challenged?"* B: *"No, I'm pretty sure his parents were married before he was born."*

park that thought imperative Do not forget what you were saying, because I need to change the subject. *Sorry, Mark, park that thought for a minute. I need to take this phone call.*

park the bus In football (soccer), to employ all (or nearly all) of a team's active players in defending its own side of the pitch. *Protecting a narrow one-point lead, it looks like the home team has parked the bus for the remaining minutes of the match.*

parrot (someone's) words To repeat verbatim what someone else has said or is saying. *When you're teaching students a new language, it does them little good to just have them parrot your words—they have to understand the mechanics of the language itself. The three boys encircled the fourth, parroting his words of protest in mocking tones.*

parson's nose The fatty tail of a cooked fowl, especially a chicken. *When we were kids, it was always a special treat to be given the parson's nose off the Sunday roast chicken.*

part to play An action that is required to accomplish something. *When it comes to cybersecurity, we all have a part to play in keeping our computers*

and networks secure.

parting shot A final, usually critical remark made specifically to have an impact on the listener(s). *He couldn't resist getting a parting shot in at the hiring manager as he stormed out of her office.*

party and play A sexual subculture typified by recreational drug use (especially methamphetamine) and sexual intercourse or activity between two or more people. Used especially (but not solely) in reference to sexual activity between gay men or men who have sex with men. *I was really into the party and play scene during college, but after one guy I knew contracted HIV, I realized it was time to leave that lifestyle behind.*

party animal A person who spends a lot of time or is most preoccupied with partying and revelry. *He's too much of a party animal for me. I'm looking for someone who's more responsible.*

party crasher One who attends a party without having been invited. *I don't mind party crashers coming to my parties, so long as they behave themselves.*

party foul A jocular term for behavior that is inappropriate, irritating, or unacceptable at a party or other social event. *Stop it! Taking handfuls of hors d'oeuvres is definitely a party foul. I can't believe I just spilled wine on the carpet—total party foul!*

party pooper A person who dislikes or refuses to participate in social events, often with the result of detracting from others' enjoyment of such events. *Amy is such a party pooper. She thinks our company's social functions are stupid and just stands around pouting the whole time. Don't be a party pooper, come and talk to the rest of us!*

pass a bum check To submit a money order as payment when the account being drawn upon does not or will not have adequate funds for the order to clear. Primarily heard in US. *My ex-husband was so addicted to shopping that, by the end of our marriage, he had started passing bum checks just to keep making purchases. Being in debt has always scared the hell out of me, so I've made sure to never pass a bum check in my life.*

pass on to the Great Beyond euphemism To die. *It's such a shame that Tom has passed on to the Great Beyond. When is his funeral?*

pass (something) with flying colours To win, achieve, or

accomplish something exceptionally well or very successfully. Said especially of a test, examination, or training of some kind. Primarily heard in UK. *Samantha was rather nervous taking her final exam, but she passed with flying colours! Your brother passed his apprenticeship with flying colours. He'll be a master builder in no time!*

pass the red face test See [red-face test](#).

pass the Rubicon To commit to a particular plan or course of action. The phrase refers to how Julius Caesar crossed the Rubicon river and became embroiled in civil war in 49 BCE. *Look, if you cheat on this test, you are passing the Rubicon, man. You can't take that back. I think I passed the Rubicon when I took this management position. It would be a huge pay cut to go back to my old job, and my boss would be furious.*

pass under the yoke To be humiliated in defeat. The phrase derives from the ancient practice of humiliating troops by having them walk under a yoke that was symbolic of the victorious army. *Many enemy soldiers passed under the yoke of the Roman army. Having to attend my rival's medal ceremony is like passing under the yoke.*

a passing fancy Something that captures one's interest or enthusiasm for only a brief period of time. *Jim was really into learning about horticulture for a while, but it turned out to be only a passing fancy. I played a few sports during college, but they were all just passing fancies.*

past cure Incurable or hopeless, especially of an illness that has a grim prognosis. *We need to go see your grandmother tonight—the doctors believe that her condition is past cure.*

pat on the back Praise given to a person for an achievement or a job well done. *Treating his daughter to ice cream was Joe's way of giving her a pat on the back after she won first place in the science fair. The only reason she stays late at work is to receive a pat on the back from her boss.*

the patience of Job An immense and unyielding degree of patience and conviction, especially in the face of problems or difficulty. A reference to the biblical figure Job, whose absolute faith in God remained unshaken despite the numerous afflictions set upon himself, his family, and his estate by Satan. *This field of work requires the patience of Job, so if you're looking for immediate results, you're in the wrong profession. My sister is amazing. She has five unruly children, but she has the patience of Job with every single*

one of them.

patient as Griselda Extremely calm, composed, and dutiful. Griselda is a character in folklore who quietly endures many tests to prove her virtue to her husband. *There are a lot of opinionated people in this office, so the next person we hire will need to be as patient as Griselda. My mother raised 10 kids—she is truly as patient as Griselda!*

patient dumping The premature discharge of patients, especially homeless patients or those with psychological disabilities, onto the streets by hospital workers or care providers, due to the high cost of providing care or shelter for them. *A local hospital is being investigated for a continual practice of patient dumping, with many who suffer from chronic addiction and health issues being thrust straight back onto Skid Row.*

patient of Able to stay composed when faced with (something unpleasant). *My mother is very patient of chaos—I guess she developed that skill while raising five kids. Meditation has helped me to become more patient of everyday annoyances.*

patronize me See [don't patronize me](#).

Paul Pry A nosy, meddlesome person. The phrase refers to the title character of a 19th-century play by John Poole. *Come on, Paul Pry, stop asking so many questions about my personal life!*

pay dirt Something very, particularly, or abundantly valuable or useful, especially that which has been discovered after a long or arduous search. Used especially in the phrase "hit/strike pay dirt." *I was combing through books in the library for hours trying to find material for my thesis, when finally I hit pay dirt with an old collection of literary criticisms from the 1970s. I loved to search through my grandfather's attic when I was a kid, convinced that someday I would strike pay dirt.*

pay (one) back in kind To avenge past misdeeds with similar actions. *Greg got me in trouble with the boss, and I will pay him back in kind. You need to pay her back in kind for all the bad things she's done to you!*

pay (one's) last respects To show or express one's respect for someone who has died, especially by attending their funeral, wake, memorial service, etc. *Anyone who wishes to pay their last respects to my husband is welcome to do so at the viewing this Saturday, from 10 AM to 4 PM.*

pay (one's) respects **1.** To offer (someone) a proper or formal expression of greeting, welcome, esteem, or well wishes. *I think we should go over and pay our respects to the new neighbors and make them feel welcome to the area!* **2.** To offer or express one's condolences or sympathy, particularly to someone's family following their death. *I'm heading to Janet's house after her father's funeral on Sunday to pay my respects to her and her family.*

pay packet **1.** Literally, an envelope or small parcel containing an employee's earnings. Primarily heard in UK. *Back when I started working here, before online banking and direct debit, everyone got their pay packet put in their hand at the end of each week.* **2.** By extension, a person's salary or rate of pay from an employer. Primarily heard in UK. *The public outcry has been immense over revelations of the charity CEO's outrageous annual pay packet.*

pay (someone) on the nail To pay (someone) immediately, on the spot, or without delay. Primarily heard in UK. *I could put the bill on my credit card, but if it's all right with you, I'd rather we divvy it up here and pay on the nail. My lodger is a bit of a noisy fellow, but so long as he keeps paying me his rent on the nail, I don't mind.*

pay (someone) peanuts To pay (someone) a very paltry or miniscule amount; to pay the absolute minimum amount necessary. *I had a few jobs during college getting paid peanuts, but it was the only work I could find that fit in with my studies. You're never going to be able to hire an effective manager if you're only willing to pay peanuts.*

pay the bills Literally, to pay for one's expenses (such as rent, utilities, etc.). *I'm so broke this month that I can hardly pay the bills. Being an actor won't necessarily pay the bills, honey, so I think you should study something else in college.*

pay the consequences To face, accept, or suffer repercussions for one's actions or words, especially that which would be expected to incur punishment. (A less common version of "suffer the consequences.") *After three nights of heavy drinking, I'm really going to be paying the consequences come Monday morning! With the judge handing down the maximum possible sentence, this monster will be paying the consequences for his crimes for the rest of his life.*

pay the fiddler To face, accept, or suffer repercussions for one's actions or words, especially that would be expected to incur punishment. (A less common version of "pay the piper.") *After three nights of heavy drinking, I'm really going to be paying the fiddler come Monday morning! With the judge handing down the maximum possible sentence, this monster will be paying the fiddler for the rest of his life.*

pay the freight To bear the cost(s) (of something); to pay or compensate payment (for something). *Every year, it's the government (and ultimately, the taxpayer) who has to pay the freight for over a million incarcerated prisoners. Don't worry, even if a few containers get "lost" during transit, it's the shipping company's insurance that pays the freight.*

pay too dearly for (one's) whistle To spend a lot of money or effort on something that is ultimately disappointing or unfulfilling. The phrase refers to a story by Benjamin Franklin about a boy who wanted a whistle so much that he overpaid for it and soon lost interest in it. *I worked night and day to get this position, but now I have very few friends—I guess I paid too dearly for my whistle.*

pay with the roll of the drum To avoid paying a debt. *If you keep paying with the roll of the drum, you will soon owe me hundreds of dollars!*

P.D.A. See [public display of affection](#).

pea in the shoe A minor annoyance. *I try to be patient, but I find waiting in line to be such a pea in the shoe. A: "Can you please tell the neighbors to stay off our lawn?" B: "Oh come on, that's just a pea in the shoe. Let it go."*

peace offering An item or gesture extended to another person to express remorse or forgiveness. *After they had their first big argument, Mark brought Monica a box of her favorite chocolate as a peace offering.*

peaches and cream 1. (hyphenated if used before a noun) Of skin (especially on the face), very fair, clear, and soft, especially with a rosy hue. *I've heard that women in older times actually bathed with milk to maintain a peaches-and-cream complexion.* 2. Of a situation, transpiring, progressing, or unfolding exceptionally easily or well. *Our company had a bit of a rocky start, but everything's been peaches and cream for the last few months.*

pearl-clutch To react in a scandalized or mortified manner to once-salacious but now relatively common things, events, situations, etc. *Parents*

should try not to *pearl-clutch* every time their teenagers come out of their room dressed outrageously—it only makes them want to push the envelope even further. My mother would always *pearl-clutch* whenever I began telling her about a new boyfriend, so eventually I stopped filling her in altogether.

pearl-clutching **1.** adjective Scandalized or mortified about some event, situation, thing, etc., that was once salacious but is now relatively common; morally conservative, stuffy, prudish, or unfashionable. *Those pearl-clutching old prudes gave me dirty looks as I walked past in my cut-off jeans, but I don't give a hoot what they think about me.* **2.** noun The practice or habit of reacting in a scandalized or mortified manner to once-salacious but now relatively common things, events, situations, etc. *I have to say that I am sick and tired of all the pearl-clutching going on amongst parents. Look, our kids are growing up in a different social environment than when we were in school, and it's high time we learned to deal with that!*

pearl necklace vulgar slang A term for the spots of semen left on a woman's neck and chest after a man ejaculates between her breasts.

pearl of wisdom A piece of valuable advice. The phrase is sometimes used sarcastically. *The old woman shared her pearls of wisdom with the struggling teen, in the hopes of making him feel better. Thanks for the pearl of wisdom, buddy, but your suggestion is ridiculous.*

pearly slang A person's tooth (usually pluralized). *Be sure to brush your pearlies twice a day, or you might end up getting a cavity!*

pearly whites A person's set of teeth. *Be sure to brush your pearly whites twice a day, or you might end up getting a cavity!*

pecking order The hierarchy within a group or organization. *There's definitely a pecking order in this company, and you're not going to do well if you don't know your place.*

pee in (someone's) Cheerios rude slang To really upset, irritate, or disappoint someone. *Sorry to pee in your Cheerios, but you won't get any credits for the class unless you attend every single lecture. A: "Watch out, the boss is in a foul mood today." B: "Wow, I wonder who peed in his Cheerios?"*

pee in (someone's) Corn Flakes rude slang To really upset, irritate, or disappoint someone. *Sorry to pee in your Corn Flakes, but you won't get any credits for the class unless you attend every single lecture. A:*

"Watch out, the boss is in a foul mood today." B: "Wow, I wonder who peed in his Corn Flakes?"

pee like a racehorse rude slang To excrete an excessive amount of urine; to urinate for a long time. *This is why I don't drink lots of beer: only a couple of pints and I'm already peeing like a racehorse. Can we pull over soon? I need to pee like a racehorse!*

pee (one's) pants **1.** Literally, to urinate while still wearing one's clothing. *I need you to pull over the car right now, or else I'm going to pee my pants!* **2.** To laugh in a hysterical or uncontrollable manner (i.e., to the point where one might actually urinate in one's pants). *Wow, that standup comedy was great! She had the audience peeing their pants!* **3.** To be absolutely petrified with terror; to be scared out of one's wits. *I was peeing my pants when that huge burly guy started threatening me and my girlfriend.*

peed off Angry. A euphemism for "pissed off." *I don't really want to talk about it in front of the kids, but I got a speeding ticket today, and I'm so peed off!*

peeping Tom A man who secretly observes women undressing or engaging in sexual intercourse. *Unless you want to be a target for peeping Toms, you better get curtains for your bedroom windows soon.*

peg it To leave or depart very quickly or suddenly. *You'd better peg it, or you're going to be late for school! After a really long day at the office, I pegged it out of there as soon as the clock struck 5!*

a peg too low Dejected; in low spirits. It originally referred to pegs that were inserted into draughts to measure how much alcohol had been consumed. If the peg was low, there wasn't much alcohol left to drink. *I'm a peg too low right now, so I appreciate you coming by to cheer me up.*

pen pusher One who has a boring, meaningless office job. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *Gary was tired of being a pen pusher, so he decided to quit and start his own business.*

penalty box In ice hockey, the area that a penalized player must stay in for the duration of the penalty. *How are we going to tie this game with our best player in the penalty box?*

penchant for A strong preference for something. *She had a penchant for fine wine and expensive restaurants.*

pencil neck **1.** A particularly weak, meek, or unimpressive person; a wimp. *No little pencil neck like you is going to give me orders, pal!* **2.** A person who is very inclined toward academic or intellectual pursuits. *I always made sure to make friends with the pencil necks in my math classes so they would help me out with the homework.*

pencil-necked **1.** Particularly weak, meek, or unimpressive; wimpy. *No pencil-necked twerp like you is going to give me orders, pal!* **2.** Very inclined toward academic or intellectual pursuits. *I always made sure to make friends with the pencil-necked geeks in my math classes so they would help me out with the homework.*

pencil pusher One who has a boring, meaningless office job. Primarily heard in US. *I refuse to be a pencil pusher the rest of my life. I have big dreams and goals!*

pencil whip **1.** To complete a form or record, especially a checklist, without doing the work required or by providing falsified or incomplete information. *It has come to light that the safety supervisor aboard the oil rig had been pencil whipping his observational reports for several weeks leading up to the disaster.* **2.** To approve such a form without actually verifying that the contents are accurate or properly completed. *We're supposed to fill out a detailed checklist after each shift, but I know my boss just pencil whips them.*

penguin suit slang A man's formal evening wear, i.e., a tuxedo. *I need to find somewhere I can rent a penguin suit for my brother's wedding this summer.*

penny dreadful A cheap paperback novel, typically characterized by melodrama, violence, and adventure. Primarily heard in UK. *Why waste your time reading penny dreadfuls when you could be reading fine literature?*

penny for your thoughts A phrase said when one is trying to find out what another person is thinking. *You've been awfully quiet tonight, honey —a penny for your thoughts?*

penny pincher Someone who is extremely frugal, niggardly, or miserly with their money; someone who is very unwilling or reluctant to spend. *My ex-husband was such a penny pincher that, on the rare occasion we would go out to eat, he wouldn't even leave a tip! It was when I was completely broke in college that I became something of a penny pincher.*

a penny saved is a penny earned Every small amount helps to build one's savings (i.e. by saving a penny, you have one more penny). *I'm trying not to spend much money right now because, you know what they say, a penny saved is a penny earned.*

a penny saved is a penny gained Every small amount helps to build one's savings (i.e. by saving a penny, you have one more penny). *I'm trying not to spend much money right now because, you know what they say, a penny saved is a penny gained .*

a people person Someone who is particularly gregarious, affable, or outgoing; someone with great interpersonal communication skills. *The new manager is a real people person, there's no doubting that; I just hope his management skills are up to snuff as well. My late grandfather was such a people person. Whenever he was in the room, everyone was all smiles.*

people power A political power, pressure, or force that comes from the collective will of a society's population. *It is down to such indomitable people power that the military junta was ousted from the government so soon after taking control. The senator may have made some enemies in congress, but after such an impressive display in Washington, he now undoubtedly has people power on his side.*

people's republic A republic that is governed by a national Communist party. *With the way the Communist party has been gaining power, I think we'll be living in a people's republic soon enough.*

pep talk A speech given to encourage others. *The team was looking lethargic, but the coach gave them a pep talk at half time, and they came out with a lot of energy. I gave Michelle a pep talk because I knew she was nervous about starting her new job.*

perfect storm A chance or rare combination of individual elements, circumstances, or events that together form a disastrous, catastrophic, or extremely unpleasant problem or difficulty. *The incumbent mayor's re-election campaign is getting underway amidst a perfect storm of allegations and news stories about corruption, tax evasion, and racketeering within the city's government. The oil crisis has set off a perfect storm in the Middle East, where foreign leaders have depended on its economic stability to keep their warring countries from absolute chaos and anarchy.*

perk up (one's/someone's) ears **1.** Of oneself, to become more or particularly alert, intrigued, or enthusiastic. *I perked up my ears when I heard that my favorite author had a new book coming out.* **2.** Of someone else, to cause him or her to become so. *I bet I know something that will perk up your ears: Rob is single again!*

perp walk **1.** noun The forced walking of an arrested suspect or alleged criminal through a public space so as to allow him or her to be photographed or recorded on video. ("Perp" being short for perpetrator.) *The photographers crowded the courtroom steps, eager to get a shot of the billionaire con artist as he began his perp walk.* **2.** verb (sometimes hyphenated) To force an arrested suspect to perform such a public walk. *Police officers perp walked the actor through the crowd after he was arrested for allegedly beating up a reporter.*

a person after (one's) own An expression of admiration for someone who is similar in a certain interest, belief, manner, or characteristic, which is then used to complete the phrase. Derived from the expression "a man after my own heart." *I love the way he cooks, he's a man after my own taste buds! She loves to read James Joyce. A woman after my own mind.*

person of size Politically correct term for an obese or very overweight person. *It has been airlines' policy for a number of years to make persons of size purchase two seats on every flight they take.*

pester (someone) for (something) To continually annoy someone with requests for something. *I wish you would stop pestering me about that new bicycle; your birthday will be here soon enough!*

Peter Pan syndrome A psychological state or condition in which a grown person cannot or refuses to act like an adult; a stubborn and persistent immaturity found in an adult person. *I seem cursed to only find men who have some damned Peter Pan syndrome. I'm tired of going out with guys who act like children!*

phone tag A series of telephone calls made between two people in which each time one party calls, the other is not available to answer. *Hi Mary, just leaving you another message. We've had a bit of phone tag today, huh? Just give me a call back whenever you get this, thanks!*

pick a bone with (someone) To fight, quarrel, or squabble with



someone, usually over a specific point. *When you get in any discussions on the Internet, you'll always encounter people who pick a bone with you purely for their own twisted entertainment. This meal is awful! Where's the manager? I'm going to go pick a bone with her!*

pick away at (something) To focus on, scrutinize, or dwell upon every small or minor fault, problem, or failing of or about something. *I wish the principal wouldn't pick away at the teachers like that. They're all trying to be the best teachers they can!*

pick-me-up Something used to improve a person's mood or level of energy. *After a long week, I needed a pick-me-up, so I stopped by the salon to get a pedicure. I was so drowsy on the way to work, so I stopped by the coffee shop for a little pick-me-up.*

pick of the bunch The best or most ideal option in a group. *Matt is the pick of the bunch, so we need to make sure he ends up on our team. I know you think that puppy is too small, but to me he's just the pick of the bunch!*

pick (one's) battle(s) To choose not to participate in minor, unimportant, or overly difficult arguments, contests, or confrontations, saving one's strength instead for those that will be of greater importance or where one has a greater chance of success. *As a parent, you learn to pick your battles with your kids so you don't run yourself ragged with nagging them. The best politicians pick their battles wisely: if one becomes too embroiled in petty debates, one never gets anything done.*

pick (one's) nose **1.** Literally, to remove nasal mucus (i.e., "boogers") with one's finger. *Tommy! Quit picking your nose, that's a filthy habit!* **2.** By extension, to dawdle, fool around, or waste time idly. *No wonder we're losing so much money—half our staff just stands around picking their noses for most of the day!*

pick six In American football, an interception of a pass that is then returned by the defensive player for a touchdown. "Pick" is a slang term for an interception, and a touchdown is six points. *I can't believe the best quarterback in the league just threw a pick six!*

pick (someone or something) out of a hat To select someone or something entirely at random. *I don't understand why our company is being targeted. It's as if the IRS picked us out of a hat to scrutinize! It doesn't really matter who gets promoted to assistant manager—just pick a name out*

of a hat for all I care!

pick (something) up where (one) left off To resume or start (something) again from the last point where one had previously stopped. *If it's OK with you, I'd like to go out on a date and try to pick up where we left off! OK, now that the rain's stopped, let's pick this game up where we left off!*

pick up the gauntlet To accept or attempt a challenge or invitation, as to fight, argue, or compete. *When it comes to civil rights issues, Mary is always eager to pick up the gauntlet. When the heavyweight champion boasted that nobody could beat him, no one expected this newcomer to pick up the gauntlet.*

pick up the hint To understand, comprehend, or take notice of an indirect suggestion, implication, or insinuation. *Halfway through the lecture, I picked up the hint my students were planning some kind of practical joke at the end of class. When are you going to pick up the hint that Sally doesn't want to date you anymore?*

pick up what (one) is putting down slang To understand what someone is saying, especially when something is insinuated, rather than stated directly. A: *"I'm going to say that I'm busy on Sunday, and I think you should too."* B: *"I'm picking up what you're putting down—I don't want to go to this family reunion either!" If I see you around here again, there's going to be trouble. Are you picking up what I'm putting down?*

the picture of (something) The ideal example of something (which is listed after "of"). *Yes, Jill was in the hospital a few months ago, but she's the picture of health now. We went running together just the other day.*

a picture paints a thousand words A picture can express something more clearly or succinctly than words can. *I know I'm doing a bad job of capturing the scene by describing it, so look here—a picture paints a thousand words, doesn't it?*

pie-eating grin A smug, self-satisfied, or overly pleased smile, especially one that (intentionally or unintentionally) irritates others. *She's been walking around with that pie-eating grin on her face ever since she found out she got into Harvard.*

the pièce de résistance 1. The most outstanding, remarkable, or prized achievement, accomplishment, aspect, event, etc., in a given series or

group. *Mr. Reynolds has an impressive gallery, but I'm told that his latest sculpture will be the pièce de résistance.* **2.** The principal or featured dish in a meal; the entrée. *And now for the pièce de résistance: paupiettes of black sole, served with asparagus spears and a rich consommé.*

a piece of ass **1.** vulgar slang Someone to have sexual intercourse with or engage in sexual activity with; a potential sexual partner. (Potentially pejorative or objectionable; usually said of a woman.) *There's a fine-looking piece of ass down at the end of the bar. I'm going to go over and talk to her, see if I can't make something happen.* **2.** vulgar slang By extension, sexual intercourse or activity in general. (Potentially pejorative or objectionable; usually said of a woman.) *God, I haven't had a piece of ass in weeks! I must be off my game or something.*

piece of cake A very easy task or accomplishment. *I thought I was going to fail the test, but it turned out to be a piece of cake!*

piece of crap rude Someone or something that is totally or utterly worthless, contemptible, or of very poor quality. *This old car my grandfather gave me is nothing but a piece of crap! You piece of crap! You take that back or I'll smash your face in!*

piece of garbage Someone or something that is totally or utterly worthless, contemptible, or of very poor quality. *This old car my grandfather gave me is nothing but a piece of garbage! You piece of garbage! You take that back or I'll smash your face in!*

piece of shit vulgar, offensive Someone or something that is totally or utterly worthless, contemptible, or of very poor quality. *This old car my grandfather gave me is nothing but a piece of shit! You piece of shit! You take that back or I'll smash your face in!*

piece of snatch **1.** vulgar slang Someone with whom to have sexual intercourse or engage in sexual activity; a potential sexual partner. (Potentially pejorative or objectionable; usually said of a woman.) *There's a fine-looking piece of snatch down at the end of the bar. I'm going to go over and talk to her, see if I can't make something happen.* **2.** vulgar slang By extension, sexual intercourse or activity in general. (Potentially pejorative or objectionable; usually said of a woman.) *God, I haven't had a piece of snatch in weeks! I must be off my game or something.*

piece of tail **1.** slang Someone with whom to have sexual intercourse or

engage in sexual activity; a potential sexual partner. (Potentially pejorative or objectionable; usually said of a woman.) *There's a fine-looking piece of tail down at the end of the bar. I'm going to go over and talk to her, see if I can't make something happen.* **2.** slang By extension, sexual intercourse or activity in general. (Potentially pejorative or objectionable; usually said of a woman.) *God, I haven't had a piece of tail in weeks! I must be off my game or something.*

piece of the action A part of the profits or success from an activity. *Once Sarah heard that Mel was starting a new software company, she decided she wanted a piece of the action and asked to be his business partner.*

piece of the pie A share or part of something. *The business owner wanted all of his employees to have a piece of the pie, so he gave them all stock in the company as a holiday bonus.*

a piece of work A remarkably difficult, malicious, unpleasant, or objectionable person. *Boy, our new boss is a real piece of work. Remind me to stay out of her way! I hear Amy's boyfriend is a piece of work.*

pied-à-terre A person's second home, usually located in a large city. *The actor's primary residence was in California, but he had a pied-à-terre in New York City too.*

Pierian Spring In Greek mythology, a fountain prized by the Muses that was believed to convey inspiration to those who drank from it. *Ugh, this poem I'm writing is just terrible—I need a drink from the Pierian Spring.*

piffy on a rock bun Conspicuous but ignored or left out, especially from a group or activity. (A "rock bun" or "rock cake" is a type of hard cake with currants; what "piffy" refers to is unknown.) Primarily heard in UK. *I was excited to go with my wife to her awards ceremony, but I didn't know anyone there and ended up sitting like piffy on a rock bun. After Tommy hit one of the other boys in his class, he was left like piffy on a rock bun during playtime.*

pig in a poke Something that is purchased without having been thoroughly inspected, often with negative consequences. A "poke" is a bag. *Purchasing a home without inspecting it first is like buying a pig in a poke.*

pigs can fly There is no chance of that ever happening. (Used to show

skepticism or cynicism over someone's hypothetical remark.) *Bob: "If we could just get Democrats and Republicans to agree on a tax reform bill, we could bring the deficit down in no time." Dave: "Yeah, and pigs can fly!"*

pigs have wings See [when pigs have wings](#).

pile on the pounds To put on weight quickly, especially a large or excessive amount. *Wow, Jim really piled on the pounds on while he was on his sabbatical. I'm trying to pile on the pounds so I can make it on the football team this fall!*

pile Pelion on Ossa 1. To further complicate something that is already tedious or challenging. Ossa and Pelion are two mountains in Greece. *A: "I told Becky you would pick her up." B: "I already have so much to do today—quit piling Pelion on Ossa!" Just when I thought I was almost done sorting these files, my boss piled Pelion on Ossa and brought me another box of them.* **2.** To do something that seems futile. *I know that I'm just piling Pelion on Ossa by telling you to stay away from that boy, but I'm your father, and I don't want to see you get hurt. That couch will never fit up the steps—tell them to stop piling Pelion on Ossa!*

pill-in-the-pocket (used before a noun) Having prescription medication on hand so as to treat an illness as soon as one or more symptoms present themselves. (Sometimes not hyphenated and put in quotation marks instead.) *Doctors are hopeful that a pill-in-the-pocket approach might be effective in managing this patient's paroxysmal atrial fibrillation, if he takes one dose of the trial drug at the onset of palpitations. While it removes the necessity for patients to remember their pill every day, "pill in the pocket" systems of treatment are limited by the fact that patients must have their medication with them at all times.*

pill mill A pain management clinic that inappropriately, irresponsibly, or illegally dispenses pain medications, especially to those without a prescription or in very large quantities. *Three suspected pill mills were shut down by federal authorities today after investigators discovered a paper trail of fraudulent prescriptions written by doctors from overseas.*

pillar of strength A supportive or emotionally strong person. *My aunt has been a pillar of strength for me, helping me through many difficult moments in my life.*

pillars to the temple euphemism A woman's legs. Primarily heard in

UK. *I'm always attracted to women with great legs, and Sara's pillars to the temple are just phenomenal.*

pin (one's) heart on (one's) sleeve To openly display or make known one's emotions or sentiments. *I knew Josh had a crush on me because he always pins his heart on his sleeve. Growing up with a father who never showed any emotion, I made a point of always pinning my heart on my sleeve.*

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pinch and scrape To spend as little money as possible; to be very frugal or tight, especially with the aim of saving up for something bigger. *Ever since we had our second child, we've had to pinch and scrape to make sure they both get what they want for Christmas.*

pinch (one) off vulgar slang To defecate, especially quickly. *Give me a minute, I just need to go pinch one off and then I'll be ready to leave.*

the pink dollar The collective spending or purchasing power of the homosexual community. Primarily heard in US. *As gay couples become less marginalized, the pink dollar is an increasingly important and influential aspect of local economies. The thriving night club scene in this area of town is fueled in large part by the pink dollar.*

pink money The collective spending or purchasing power of the homosexual community. *As gay couples become less marginalized, the power of pink money is an increasingly important and influential aspect of local economies. The thriving night club scene in this area of town is fueled in large part by pink money.*

the pink pound The collective spending or purchasing power of the homosexual community. Primarily heard in UK. *As gay couples become less marginalized, the pink dollar becomes an increasingly important and influential aspect of local economies. The thriving night club scene in this area of town is fueled in large part by the pink pound.*

pink slime A slang term for low-quality beef trimmings that are used as a filler in some meat products. *Our organization believes that pink slime*

should no longer be used in any meat preparation in this country.

pink slip A notice of termination from an employer. *He was in total disbelief when he received a pink slip from his boss today, as he had worked at the company for over a decade.*

pip (someone) at the post To defeat or succeed over someone by a very narrow margin or at the final, crucial moment, especially in a race, competition, or athletic event. Primarily heard in UK, Australia, Ireland. *The favoured runner held the lead for the majority of the race, but a relatively unknown competitor pipped him at the post in the final 100 metres. It appears the young candidate is set to pip his competitor at the post for his seat in parliament, which would make him the youngest candidate from this constituency to do so in nearly 60 years.*

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pipe dream A dream or idea that is impossible to accomplish. *Many say that achieving world peace is a pipe dream because human beings are so flawed in their logic and emotions.*

pipped at the post See [be pipped at the post](#).

pipped to the post See [be pipped to the post](#).

piss about slang To waste time, especially in silly or frivolous ways. Primarily heard in UK. *Have you done anything productive, or have you just been pissing about all day? I know you're having a great time pissing about with your friends, but we really need to start working on this project.*

piss and moan To grumble, gripe, or complain excessively and/or in an annoying fashion. *My daughter has reached the age where she pisses and moans about everything we ask her to do. Well, if you spent less time pissing and moaning and more time doing your work, you'd be finished a heck of a lot sooner!*



piss and vinegar An abundance or excessive amount of boisterous, youthful energy, enthusiasm, or rowdiness. *For all their piss and vinegar, the home team just didn't have the skill necessary to beat their cross-town rivals. It took having kids of my own to remember how full of piss and vinegar a child can be at 6 AM.*

piss-artist **1.** rude slang One who falsely claims to have knowledge about a topic. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *That message board is filled with nothing but piss-artists who think they know everything.* **2.** rude slang One who is often drunk. *I advised Jenny not to date that piss-artist because he drinks his money away at the bar every night.*

piss in (someone's) Cheerios rude slang To really upset, irritate, or disappoint someone. *Sorry to piss in your Cheerios, but you won't get any credits for the class unless you attend every single lecture. A: "Watch out, the boss is in a foul mood today." B: "Wow, I wonder who pissed in his Cheerios?"*

piss in (someone's) Corn Flakes rude slang To really upset, irritate, or disappoint someone. *Sorry to piss in your Corn Flakes, but you won't get any credits for the class unless you attend every single lecture. A: "Watch out, the boss is in a foul mood today." B: "Wow, I wonder who pissed in his Corn Flakes?"*

piss like a racehorse rude slang To excrete an excessive amount of urine; to urinate for a long time. *This is why I don't drink lots of beer: only a couple of pints and I'm already pissing like a racehorse. Can we pull over soon? I need to piss like a racehorse!*

piss money up the wall To waste a lot of money; to spend money frivolously. *Our company needs to stop pissing money up the wall on things like company cars and exorbitant bonuses for management if it wants to survive. It made me sick to watch while this administration pissed money up the wall for eight long years.*

piss on ice To live an extravagant lifestyle. Although the practice is rare today, upscale restaurants used to put cakes of ice in their urinals. *Now that I've gotten a raise, I'm pissing on ice, and I love it! Tim is someone who enjoys quiet nights at home—he doesn't need to spend a lot of money and piss on ice to be happy.*



piss on (someone's) bonfire rude slang To really upset, irritate, or disappoint someone. Primarily heard in US. *Sorry to piss on your bonfire, but you won't get any credits for the class unless you attend every single lecture.*
A: "Watch out, the boss is on a foul mood today." B: "Wow, I wonder who pissed on his bonfire?"

piss on (someone's) chips rude slang To really upset, irritate, or disappoint someone. Primarily heard in US. *Sorry to piss on your chips, but you won't get any credits for the class unless you attend every single lecture.*
A: "Watch out, the boss is on a foul mood today." B: "Wow, I wonder who pissed on his chips?"

piss (one's) pants 1. Literally, to urinate while still wearing one's clothing. *I need you to pull over the car right now, or else I'm going to piss my pants!* 2. To laugh in a hysterical or uncontrollable manner (i.e., to the point where one might actually urinate in one's pants). *Wow, that standup comedy was great! She had the audience pissing their pants!* 3. To be absolutely petrified with terror; to be scared out of one's wits. *I was pissing my pants when that huge burly guy started threatening me and my girlfriend.*

piss (oneself) 1. (rude) Literally, to urinate while wearing one's clothing. *I had to go to the bathroom so bad that I I'd nearly pissed myself by the time I made it home.* 2. To laugh hysterically or uncontrollably. *Raj's new boyfriend is hilarious. We were pissing ourselves through the whole lunch! I was pissing myself laughing at that comedy gig last night.*

piss (oneself) laughing To laugh hysterically or uncontrollably. (Usually used in the continuous tense.) *Raj's new boyfriend is hilarious. We were pissing ourselves laughing through the whole lunch!*

piss up slang A party, event, or other function at which a lot of alcohol is consumed. Primarily heard in UK. *I was sick all weekend after going to that piss up on Friday night.*

piss-up A social gathering at which people drink an excessive amount of alcohol. *Bob didn't go to the party because he knew it was going to be nothing but a piss-up.*

piss up a rope 1. To do something totally pointless, fruitless, or futile; to waste one's time doing something that will not or cannot come to pass. *To be perfectly honest, I feel like voting is just pissing up a rope, so I just don't*

bother. My mom and dad spent years pissing up a rope trying to get my brother to take his studies seriously; in the end, he dropped out anyway to pursue a career in music. 2. exclamation Get out of here! Leave me alone! (Used especially in the phrase "Go piss up a rope!") Go piss up a rope, pal! No one wants to hear you talking for the entire course of the film. Terry: "John, do you think you could lend me 50 dollars?" John: "Go piss up a rope, Terry. You still haven't paid me back from the last time I lent you money!"

pissed off Very disgruntled, angry, or outraged. *John was so pissed off when he found out that someone else had been given the promotion instead of him. There's no point in getting pissed off over a bad grade on your exam. Just study harder next time!*

pissing contest A useless or trivial argument, competition, or comparison. *Whenever Jeff and Tim hang out, they always get into this pissing contest about who's the bigger sci-fi fanatic. If you two are quite finished with your little pissing contest, do you think we might get back to work now?*

pissing in the wind See [be pissing in\(to\) the wind](#).

pissing match A useless or trivial argument, competition, or comparison. *Whenever Jeff and Tim hang out, they always get into this pissing match about who's the bigger sci-fi fanatic. If you two are quite finished with your little pissing match, do you think we might get back to work now?*

pit stop 1. A stop during an auto race to repair or refuel the racing vehicle. *With only three laps left, he'll have to decide whether to make a pit stop or try to reach the finish without running out of gas. 2.* A short stop taken during a car trip to eat, rest, and/or refuel. *I knew it was going to be a long drive from New York to Florida, so I planned several pit stops along the way to give myself a break.*

pitch a fit To become very or unreasonably angry or upset; to have an outburst of rage, frustration, or ill temper. *My mom's going to pitch a fit when she sees what happened to the car! I was so embarrassed when Danny started pitching a fit in the grocery store.*

pitch-perfect Reaching or conveying the exactly right note or tone. The phrase refers to music but it is often applied to writing and other things. *After her pitch-perfect rendition, I definitely think we should ask Meredith to join the choir. This is a pitch-perfect parody of Hemingway's writing style, don't*

you think?

pitched battle A volatile fight or argument. *There was a pitched battle between both political parties before the election.*

the pitcher will go to the well once too often A period of good luck will eventually end. *I know that being on a winning streak is very exciting, but just remember that the pitcher will go to the well once too often. I'm sure he will continue to break the law until he gets caught. The pitcher will go to the well once too often.*

pith of the matter The core, central, essential, or most important part(s) or element(s) of some matter at hand. *I'd love to sit and catch up with you, John, but let's get to the right to pith of the matter and start talking business. Your Honor and the jury will find that the pith of the matter is revealed by this single piece of evidence—the murder weapon, with the suspect's finger prints all over it.*

the pits A very unpleasant or unfortunate thing, situation, or circumstance. *I'm sorry to hear about your divorce, Sam—that's the pits! I worked as a telemarketer one summer, and it was the pits.*

pixel peep slang To very carefully inspect, scrutinize, and correct the resolution, clarity, and quality of digital images or photographs. *When I started getting into digital photography, I'll admit that I that I focused a bit too much on pixel peeping for a while. Later on though, I became less obsessive over technical quality and learned to appreciate well-composed photographs.*

pixel peeper slang Someone who is particularly or overly critical of or sensitive to the resolution, clarity, and quality of digital images or photographs. *When I started getting into digital photography, I'll admit that I became quite a pixel peeper for a while. Later on though, I became less obsessive over technical quality and learned to appreciate well-composed photographs in their own right.*

pixel peeping slang The act, habit, or practice of being particularly or overly critical of or sensitive to the resolution, clarity, and quality of digital images or photographs. *When I started getting into digital photography, I'll admit that I that I focused a bit too much on pixel peeping for a while. Later on though, I became less obsessive over technical quality and learned to appreciate well-composed photographs in their own right.*

pizza face derogatory slang Someone with very bad acne or severe scarring therefrom. (Sometimes hyphenated.) *I was a bit of a pizza face in high school, but thankfully, my face cleared up in college. Wow, a pizza-face like you will never get a date to the dance!*

(a/one's) place in the sun An advantageous or favorable position or situation. *Your place in the sun will be assured when you win this match. After being a secondary player on the world stage, the emerging power began to look for its place in the sun.*

place (someone or something) (up) on a pedestal To believe or behave as if someone or something is perfect, extraordinarily wonderful, or better than others. *I know it's easy to be smitten with a romantic partner, but I don't think it's healthy for one to place the other up on a pedestal. Stephen has been placing classic literature on a pedestal ever since college, so he gets really judgmental of other genres he deems to be inferior.*

the place to be 1. A hip, popular spot, such as a club, restaurant, or neighborhood. *Come out to this new club with us, it's the place to be! I remember when half the houses on this street were in disrepair—now, it's the place to be.* 2. An ideal place for something in particular. *My deck is the place to be if you want gorgeous sunset views of the ocean.*

place to call (one's) own One's own home. *After spending a year sleeping on friends' couches to save money, I was ready to have a place to call my own.*

a plague on both your houses I hope that bad things happen to both of you (and your families). The phrase appears in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. *I can't believe the two of you would deceive me like this! A plague on both your houses!*

plain Jane A female who is not considered physically attractive by societal standards. *Betty always felt like she was a plain Jane, so she was very surprised when the most handsome boy in school asked her to be his prom date.*

plain sailing Smooth, uninterrupted, and/or easy progress, movement, or development. *Now that we've gotten that problem figured out, the project should be plain sailing from here on! We've got about a 13-hour road trip ahead of us, but it looks like plain sailing for most of it.*

plant a/the seed of doubt (in someone's mind) To cause someone to have doubts, worries, or concerns (about something); to introduce someone to a doubtful or worrisome idea. *The candidate was doing very well in the polls six months ago, but it seems that this smear campaign has been effective in planting a seed of doubt in the minds of voters. Recent economic turbulence in the Eurozone has planted the seed of doubt about the strength of the economy's recovery. Every time you act suspiciously like that, it plants a seed of doubt in my mind about your fidelity.*

plastic grin A forced, artificial smile; a smile someone wears despite having no feelings of happiness or joy. *John seemed fine at first glance, but before long I could tell that he was wearing a plastic grin and that something was bothering him. Look at his big plastic grin—he's such a con man! I sure hope he doesn't win the election.*

plastic smile A forced, artificial smile; a smile someone wears despite having no feelings of happiness or joy. *John seemed fine at first glance, but before long, I could tell that he was wearing a plastic smile and that something was bothering him. Look at that his big plastic smile—he's such a conman! I sure hope he doesn't win the election.*

play a good knife and fork To eat vigorously. *My, you're playing a good knife and fork tonight—you must be hungry!*

play a losing game To try persistently and with great effort to do or achieve something that is ultimately doomed to fail. *You're playing a losing game if you think you can convince Sarah to go to college. It looks like I'm playing a losing game trying to get a raise from my boss.*

play a part in (something) 1. To have a specific involvement or participation in something; to fulfill a role in some undertaking. *There's no use lying to the committee, Mr. Marshall, as we know for a fact that you played a part in your company's decision to hide its losses from investors. Listen up, Joe. You're going to play a part in this operation, too.* 2. Literally, to portray a certain character in a performance, such as a theater or film production. *I hear that Samantha will be playing a part in the director's newest film!*

play a role in (something) 1. To have a specific involvement or participation in something. *There's no use lying to the committee, Mr. Marshall, as we know for a fact that you played a role in hiding your*

company's losses from its investors. **2.** Literally, to have a job portraying a certain character in a performance. *I hear that Samantha is playing a role in some new film. She's really making her way into the big leagues!*

play a waiting game To postpone or delay a decision or course of action so as to first see what might happen or what one's opponent(s) might do. *The market is so tumultuous at the moment that I think we're better off playing a waiting game, rather than making any hasty decisions. The prosecution is playing a waiting game to see if the defendant will change her mind about taking the plea bargain.*

play (all) the angles To make use or take advantage of every means or opportunity one can find in order to reach or attain one's goal. *Unless you happen to be incredibly lucky, you have to play all the angles when you're an actor looking for work. You're not going to get anywhere in this industry if you aren't willing to play the angles.*

play both ends against the middle To manipulate two opposing sides of an argument, conflict, competition, etc., against one another for one's own benefit or advantage. *My father and my uncle are engaged in a bitter business rivalry. If I can play both ends against the middle, I might be able to secure some sizeable investments for my own company. Janet really dislikes Mary and wants to date her boyfriend Mike, so she's been playing both ends against the middle in order to get them to break up.*

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play catch-up To try to reach the same level of understanding, accomplishment, etc. as others, typically after a late start. *I'm sorry, I'm playing catch-up here—how do you know my wife? I just transferred into this class, so now I have to play catch-up with all the material the professor covered in the first few weeks. Thanks to our terrible start, we've been playing catch-up all season.*

play ducks and drakes with To squander (something). "Ducks and

drakes" is a game played by skipping a stone across the surface of water. *Don't play ducks and drakes with this internship—it's a great opportunity, even if it doesn't pay!*

play dumb To pretend that one has no or little knowledge (of something); to act ignorant or uninformed (about something). *I don't think I'm supposed to know that Rick is getting fired, so I'm just going to play dumb the next time I see him. A: "Did Tammy ask you about my date with Steve?" B: "Yeah, but I played dumb about it. I just couldn't handle more of her drama today."*

play each end against the other To manipulate two opposing sides of an argument, conflict, competition, etc., against one another for one's own benefit or advantage. *My father and my uncle are engaged in a bitter business rivalry. If I can play each end against the other, I might be able to secure some sizeable investments for my own company. Janet really dislikes Mary and wants to date her boyfriend Mike, so she's been playing each end against the other to get them to break up.*

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play favourites To give preferable treatment to someone or something one likes or favours more than others. Primarily heard in UK. *The teacher is always playing favourites in class, letting the students she likes go home a little bit earlier than the rest. As an MP, I promise not to play favourites with our public services.*

play first fiddle To have a leading, commanding, or controlling role, position, or part (in something). (A less common extension of the phrase "play second fiddle," meaning to serve in a subordinate role or position.) *Ever since the power shift in Congress, Senator Smith has been playing first fiddle in the agenda for tax reforms. Though she's had many small parts in a variety of films, this is the first movie that sees Ms. Warren playing first fiddle.*

play for laughs To do, act, or perform with the express intention of being funny; to do something for comedic effect. *I do like getting dramatic*

roles, but if I'm honest, I prefer playing for laughs when I act. While many took offense at the rather unsavory theater piece, I can't help feeling like the whole thing was, at heart, being played for laughs.

play for love To play purely for one's pleasure or for a love of the game, sport, etc., rather than for money or for other stakes. *A truly great player plays for love, not because a win might benefit his bank account the next day.*
A: "You're pretty great with those cards. Interested in making this next game a little bit interesting with a wager?" B: "Sorry, pal, I only play for love."

play hide and seek See [hide and seek](#).

play hooky To absent oneself or leave early from school or work when one would normally be required to be there. Primarily heard in US. *I was so restless and bored at work that I decided to play hooky after lunch. Hey, Jim and I are playing hooky from school on Friday, do you want to come with us? That's the last time you play hooky, mister! From now on, I'm dropping you off at school every morning!*

play ignorant To pretend that one has no or little knowledge (of something); to act ignorant or uninformed (about something) *I don't think I'm supposed to know that Rick is getting fired, so I'm just going to play ignorant the next time I see him.*
A: "Did Tammy ask you about my date with Steve?"
B: "Yeah, but I played ignorant about it. I just couldn't handle more of her drama today."
A: "What vase?" B: "Don't play ignorant with me! You know which one I mean!"

play it straight To do something in a completely serious, straightforward manner, without any kind of jocosity, foolishness, duplicity, deception, etc. *I started dating Samantha because I loved her sense of humor and her chilled out manner, but I wish she would play it straight with me about what she thinks about our relationship. I'm tired of playing it straight; from now on, if there's an easy way to make a buck, I'm going to exploit it!*

play Old Harry with (something) To ruin or cause serious damage to something; to greatly upset, disrupt, or negatively affect something; to play the devil with something ("Old Harry" being a nickname for the devil). *Lack of oversight allowed overzealous investment bankers to play Old Harry with the economy. I love wine, but it plays Old Harry with my stomach!*

play on words A creative use of words that have multiple meanings,

often in a humorous way; a pun. *Most people groan when they hear a pun, but a clever play on words can always make me laugh.*

play one against another To manipulate two opposing sides of an argument, conflict, competition, etc., against one another for one's own benefit or advantage. *My father and my uncle are engaged in a bitter business rivalry. If I can play one against another, I might be able to secure some sizeable investments for my own company. Janet really dislikes Mary and wants to date her boyfriend Mike, so she's been playing one against another to get them to break up.*

play one end against the other To manipulate two opposing sides of an argument, conflict, competition, etc., against one another for one's own benefit or advantage. *My father and my uncle are engaged in a bitter business rivalry. If I can play one end against the other, I might be able to secure some sizeable investments for my own company. Janet really dislikes Mary and wants to date her boyfriend Mike, so she's been playing one end against the other to get them to break up.*

play one off against another/each other/the other To manipulate two opposing sides of an argument, conflict, competition, etc., against one another for one's own benefit or advantage. *My father and my uncle are engaged in a bitter business rivalry. If I can play one off against another, I might be able to secure some sizeable investments for my own company. Janet really dislikes Mary and wants to date her boyfriend Mike, so she's been playing one off against the other to get them to break up.*

play one side against the other To manipulate two opposing sides of an argument, conflict, competition, etc., against one another for one's own benefit or advantage. *My father and my uncle are engaged in a bitter business rivalry. If I can play one side against the other, I might be able to secure some sizeable investments for my own company. Janet really dislikes Mary and wants to date her boyfriend Mike, so she's been playing one side against the other to get them to break up.*

play (one's) cards close to (one's) chest To keep one's plans, intentions, or tactics secret from everyone else. Refers to holding one's playing cards close to one's chest in a card game, so as not to allow other players to see one's hand. *We're all curious about what the boss has been discussing in those meetings with the lawyers, but she's playing her cards*

close to her chest. Sorry for not being more straightforward about my plans, but I'm playing my cards close to my chest for the time being.

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play (one's) cards close to (one's) vest To keep one's plans, intentions, or tactics secret from everyone else. Refers to holding one's playing cards close to one's vest in a card game, so as not to allow other players to see one's hand. *We're all curious about what the boss has been discussing in those meetings with the lawyers, but she's playing her cards close to her vest. Sorry for not being more straightforward about my plans, but I'm playing my cards close to my vest for the time being.*

play (one's) cards right To act adeptly and with good judgment; to make the best and most effective use of the resources at one's disposal. *The bosses have been impressed with your work so far. If you keep playing your cards right, you could see a promotion inside of a year. I'm really hoping Janet will agree to go on a second date, but I'll have to play my cards right tonight!*

play (one's) cards well To act adeptly and with good judgment; to make the best and most effective use of the resources at one's disposal. *Well Mr. Smith, the bosses have been impressed with your work so far. If you keep playing your cards well, you could see a promotion inside of a year. I'm really hoping Janet will agree to go on a second date, but I'll have to play my cards well tonight!*

play phone tag To engage in a series of telephone calls with another person in which each time one party calls, the other is not available to answer. *Hi Mary, just leaving you another message. We've been playing a bit of phone tag today, huh? Just give me a call back whenever you get this, thanks!*

play Russian roulette 1. Literally, to participate in a potentially deadly game of chance involving a revolver loaded with a single bullet, in

which a participant spins the cylinder so that the bullet's location is unknown, puts the barrel to their head, and pull the trigger. *A university student died while apparently playing Russian roulette with other members of his fraternity.* **2.** By extension, to commit or participate in any reckless, foolish, and/or dangerous act or stunt, especially that in which the risk of danger or trouble is increased with the number of times one repeats it. *You're playing Russian roulette every single time you get behind the wheel of a car when you've been drinking.*

play second fiddle To have a subordinate, lesser, or smaller role, position, or part (in something). *I'm really sick of playing second fiddle to this ignoramus—I'm the one who deserves to be the star of the show! Because I wasn't willing to play office politics, I never got the big promotion and have been playing second fiddle ever since.*

play (someone) like a fiddle To easily and deftly manipulate someone to suit one's own needs, ends, or benefits. *That travelling salesman played me like a fiddle. Now what am I going to do with all this junk that he convinced me to buy? Can't you see that his flattery is totally insincere? He's playing you like a fiddle!*

play (something) close to (one's) chest To keep one's plans, intentions, or tactics secret from everyone else. Refers to holding one's playing cards close to one's chest in a card game, so as not to allow other players to see one's hand. *We're all curious about what the boss has been discussing in those meetings with the lawyers, but she's playing it close to her chest. Sorry for not being more straightforward about my plans, but I'm playing this one close to the chest for the time being.*

play telephone tag To engage in a series of telephone calls with another person in which each time one party calls, the other is not available to answer. *Hi Mary, just leaving you another message. We've been playing a bit of telephone tag today, huh? Just give me a call back whenever you get this, thanks!*

play the angles See [play \(all\) the angles](#).

play the devil with (something) To ruin or cause serious damage to something; to greatly upset, disrupt, or negatively affect something. *Lack of oversight allowed overzealous investment bankers to play the devil with the economy. I love wine, but it plays the devil with my stomach!*

play the fool To behave comically or playfully, often to amuse others. *Joe never plays the fool—he's always serious. If you continue to play the fool, you're going to have to leave the classroom.*

play the gender card To dismiss or discredit an opinion, argument, position, action, decision, etc., as being the product of prejudice against one's gender. *The candidate played the gender card as an explanation for why her polls were much lower recently, claiming that the media has been giving her less visibility than her male opponents simply because she is a woman. I hate it when casual misogynists try to brush off legitimate criticism by claiming that you're just "playing the gender card."*

play the goat To behave comically or playfully, often to amuse others. *Joe never plays the goat—he's always serious. If you continue to play the goat, you're going to have to leave the classroom.*

play the hand (one) is dealt To accept, deal with, and make the most of one's current situation or circumstances; to make use of that which one is afforded or has available. *I know you feel unsatisfied with your life at the moment, but we all have to play the hand we're dealt. Just keep working hard and things are bound to improve! I never asked to be responsible for the business, but I'm going to play the hand I was dealt.*

play the papers To gamble. Primarily heard in US. *If you keep playing the papers, you'll have no money left at all! I refuse to lend him any more money until he stops playing the papers!*

play the race card To dismiss or discredit an opinion, argument, position, action, decision, etc., as being the product of prejudice against one's race. *The candidate played the race card as an explanation for why her polls were much lower recently, claiming that the media has been giving her less visibility than her white opponents simply because she is African American. I hate it when casual racists try to brush off legitimate criticism by claiming that you're just "playing the race card."*

play (the) wag To absent oneself or leave early from school or work when one would normally be required to be there. Primarily heard in UK. *I was so restless and bored at work that I decided to play the wag after lunch. Hey, Jim and I are playing wag from school on Friday, do you want to come with us? That's the last time you play wag, mister! From now on, I'm dropping you to school every morning!*

play the waiting game To postpone or delay a decision or course of action so as to first see what might happen or what one's opponent(s) might do. *The market is rather tumultuous at the moment, so I think we're better off playing the waiting game rather than making any hasty decisions. The prosecution is playing the waiting game to see if the defendant will change her mind about taking the plea bargain.*

play their cards close to their chests See [play \(one's\) cards close to \(one's\) chest](#).

play their cards close to their chests See [play \(one's\) cards close to \(one's\) chest](#).

play their cards close to their vests See [play \(one's\) cards close to \(one's\) vest](#).

play their cards right See [play \(one's\) cards right](#).

play their cards well See [play \(one's\) cards well](#).

play them like a fiddle See [play \(someone\) like a fiddle](#).

play to the crowd To act, behave, or perform in such a way as to receive as much approval from an audience or group of spectators as one can get, especially the lowest common denominator therein. *The band still puts on a great performance, even after all these years. I do wish, though, that they played more of their new material and didn't just play to the crowd with their greatest hits the whole night. Rather than acting in a way that best suits the role and the play as a whole, he prefers to play to the crowd and soak up the spotlight when he can. She's a great basketball player, but she spends more time playing to the crowd than playing to win the game.*

play to the gallery To act, behave, or perform in such a way as to receive as much approval from an audience or spectators as one can get, especially the lowest common denominator among them. *I wish the band played more of their new material and didn't just play to the gallery with their greatest hits the whole night. Rather than acting in a way that best suits the role and the play as a whole, he prefers to play to the gallery and soak up the spotlight when he can. She's a great basketball player, but she spends more time playing to the gallery than playing to win the game.*

play to win To do something with the primary aim of attaining victory; to compete at the highest level one is capable of. *My husband is so competitive*

that he always plays to win, even when we're just playing board games. Let's not be conservative and just try to defend—let's play to win.

play truant To absent oneself or leave early from school or work when one would normally be required to be there. Primarily heard in UK. *I was so restless and bored at work that I decided to play truant after lunch. Hey, Jim and I are playing truant from school on Friday, do you want to come with us? That's the last time you play truant, mister! From now on, I'm dropping you to school every morning!*

play well with others To be amiable and cooperative when interacting with others. The phrase is based on a common statement of praise for schoolchildren and is often used in the negative to describe adults who are competitive or aggressive. A: *"Who can we add to the team that won't mess up its chemistry?"* B: *"How about Melissa? She plays well with others."* *I didn't come on this reality show to make friends. The other competitors better watch out, because I don't play well with others.*

play with loaded dice 1. Literally, to use dice that have been weighted to one side so as to increase the odds of their landing on the opposite number. *When they found out we'd been playing with loaded dice, they threw us out of the club and told us to never come back.* **2.** By extension, to gain an advantage through the exploitation or manipulation of rules or regulations. *At the height of the economic boom, investment bankers were playing with loaded dice by using sub-prime mortgages with falsified credit ratings to make as much money as possible.*

plead the Fifth (Amendment) 1. To refuse to testify against oneself in court, in accordance with the rights guaranteed by the Fifth Amendment to the United States Constitution. *The alleged kingpin of the east coast drug cartel simply pled the Fifth after every question the prosecution put to him.* **2.** By extension, to refuse to answer a question or provide information, especially if doing so may incriminate or embarrass oneself. *Just plead the Fifth if your mom asks where you've been all night!* A: *"So, I hear things got pretty messy at the bar last night."* B: *"Yeah, I'm going to have to plead the Fifth Amendment on that one!"*

plod along To move, progress, or develop at a slow but constant and deliberate pace. *I've been plodding along with my thesis for the last few weeks and making some decent progress. My 95-year-old grandfather still makes a*

point of plodding along to the local shop each morning to catch up with neighbors and friends. As the lecture plodded along, I could feel my eyelids getting heavy.

plod on To move, progress, or develop at a slow but constant and deliberate pace. *John: "Hey Steve, what's new?" Steve: "Nothing much, just been plodding on with my thesis for the last few weeks." My 95-year-old grandfather still makes a point of plodding on to the local shop each morning to catch up with neighbors and friends. I could feel my eyelids getting heavy as the lecture plodded on.*

plough on To move, progress, or develop at a slow but constant and deliberate pace, especially that which is menial, time consuming, or tedious. Primarily heard in UK. *John: "Hey Steve, what's new?" Steve: "Nothing much, just been ploughing on with research for my thesis." A: "I've still got a ways to go before I'll be finished clearing out debris from the property." B: "Well, just keep ploughing on until you're done!"*

plow the sands To do something that seems futile. *I know that I'm just plowing the sands by telling you to stay away from that boy, but I'm your father, and I don't want to see you get hurt. That couch will never fit up the steps—tell them to stop plowing the sands!*

plug into See [be plugged into \(something\)](#).

plumber's helper A hand tool used to unclog a drain, especially a toilet, consisting of a long wooden or plastic handle with a rubber suction cup at one end (i.e., a "plunger.") *Randy, the toilet is overflowing in the upstairs bathroom again! Go get the plumber's helper from underneath the kitchen sink. A plumber's helper should be one of the very first purchases you make when moving into a new home.*

PM An abbreviation for "private message," a way to communicate only with a select person or people on social media sites or Internet forums. It is most commonly used as a verb. *I'll PM you the address. PM me if you have any questions. Send me a PM so it's not public.*

po' boy A traditional sandwich from New Orleans, Louisiana, made with a long roll of French bread and containing a variety of fillings, almost always with some kind of meat or fried seafood. ("Po' boy" being short for "poor boy," supposedly referring to striking workers in 1929 to whom a local restaurant served such sandwiches.) Primarily heard in US. *Ever since*

leaving New Orleans to go to college, I can't stop craving a proper roast beef po' boy from back home. I'm ordering a dozen po' boys for the party, so if you have any food allergies, let me know this afternoon.

poacher turned gamekeeper A person whose job or role has completely changed, from one extreme to another. Primarily heard in UK. *The notorious computer hacker who once stole money from unsuspecting Internet users now helps the government catch other hackers—it's a strange case of poacher turned gamekeeper.*

pocket dial **1.** verb To inadvertently make a phone call by accidentally sitting or otherwise pressing on one's cell phone (typically when it is in one's pocket). *A: "Do you know why grandma called me last night?" B: "Oh, I think she just pocket dialed you."* **2.** noun The act of making such a phone call. *I was excited when Jill called me for the first time in months, but she didn't actually want to talk to me—it was just a pocket dial.*

pocket-sized Said of an item that is small enough in size that it could, at least hypothetically, fit inside one's pocket. *I have a pocket-sized pack of tissues in my purse, if you need one. I love going through my grandparents' massive unabridged dictionary—it puts my pocket-sized version to shame!*

PO'd Very disgruntled, irritated, angry, or outraged. ("PO'd" being a euphemistic abbreviation of "pissed off.") *John was so PO'd when he found out that someone else had been given the promotion instead of him. There's no point in getting PO'd over a bad grade on your exam. Just study harder next time!*

poetry in motion Something that is very elegant, graceful, and/or beautiful to observe, especially dance or the performing arts. *The ballet was sublime to watch, truly poetry in motion.*

poison pen **1.** adjective (hyphenated and used before a noun) Spiteful, malicious, or defamatory in composition, as of a letter or other written work, generally sent anonymously and with the aim of damaging or destroying a person's, group's, or organization's reputation or happiness. *After agreeing to defend the alleged mass-murderer, the public defendant began receiving a large number of poison-pen letters from around the city. We've had enough trouble getting this restaurant up and running without having a poison-pen review like that in the papers!* **2.** adjective (hyphenated and used before a noun) Characterized by, typified by, or inclined toward the writing and

sending of such letters or pieces of writing. *The outspoken feminist figure has been the target of a hateful poison-pen campaign by online misogynists who have hidden behind the shield of anonymity to conduct their attacks.* **3.** noun A disposition, attitude, inclination, or ability typified by the writing and sending such letters or pieces of writing. *Every year or so, there is a new piece of diatribe and vitriol from the poison pen of the infamous white supremacist. The poison pen of the oft-feared but well-respected critic has been enough to cause the downfall of more than one virtuoso's career.*

poison-pen letter A letter that contains malicious statements or accusations about the recipient or another party. *Shortly after announcing his candidacy, he received an anonymous poison-pen letter attacking his platform.*

poisoned chalice Something that initially appears to be good, wholesome, or positive, but is really harmful. Primarily heard in UK. *We thought the change in leadership was going to have a positive effect on the organization, but it turned out to be a poisoned chalice.*

poke (one's) nose in(to) (something) To involve oneself in an intrusive or nosy manner into something that is not one's business or responsibility. *I wish my neighbors would quit poking their noses in and just leave us alone! Don't poke your nose into your brother's affairs—he can manage well enough on his own.*

policy of pin pricks A government policy that is regarded as particularly petty. The phrase was first applied to tense relations between England and France at the end of the 19th century. *How long do we have to suffer under this policy of pin pricks before they finally repeal it?*

polish a turd slang To make something unpleasant seem more appealing than it really is—which is often a futile effort. "Turd" is a slang term for a piece of feces. *Look, man, your term paper was bad before, and all of your edits are just making it worse—polishing a turd won't make it better.*

a polite fiction A general untruth or falsehood that is accepted in place of the truth to maintain politeness, civility, or stability among a given social group. *Our parents' marriage was just a polite fiction in our household up until my youngest sister was off to college. By the time the military junta overthrew the dictatorship, the promise of democratic rule was little more than a polite fiction among the citizens of the country.*

political football A problem or situation that causes an argument between different political parties, often in an attempt to gain an advantage. *It didn't take too long before the issue of property taxes turned into a political football for the candidates.*

pooh-bah **1.** A self-important government official who holds several positions but performs little or no actual duties. The term comes from the character Pooh-Bah, Lord-High-Everything-Else, from *The Mikado*, a comic opera by W.S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan. *Only that pooh-bah in the cabinet could hold so many titles and do so little.* **2.** The most important or powerful person in a group, organization, business, or movement (e.g., the boss, leader, etc.). *I think it sounds like a great idea, but you'll have to ask the pooh-bah first.*

poop (one's) pants **1.** Literally, to defecate while still wearing one's pants. *I need you to pull over the car right now, or else I'm going to poop my pants!* **2.** By extension, to be very surprised. *When I saw that the magazine had published my letter to the editor, I totally pooped my pants!*

a poor craftsman blames his tools If someone performs a job or task poorly or unsuccessfully, they will usually lay the blame on the quality of their equipment, or other such external factors, rather than take responsibility for their own failure. *After John spent all day assembling his new desk only to discover it was lopsided, he immediately declared that the package must have contained the wrong pieces. His wife replied, "only poor craftsmen blame their tools, dear."*

poor form Behavior or actions that are considered socially inappropriate, distasteful, or rude. *It is generally acknowledged that pointing out a person's flaws in public is quite poor form.*

poor man's A less desirable substitute for the genuine item. *The local artist became known as the poor man's Picasso. I was happy with my new car, even though my friends called it a poor man's Jaguar.*

poor relation A less desirable substitute for the genuine item. *The cheap motorcycle jacket I bought is nice, but it is a poor relation of actual leather.*

pop a cap in (someone's) ass slang To murder or attempt to murder someone with a gun. Primarily heard in US. *If you don't get out of here right now, we're gonna pop a cap in your ass! They popped a cap in his ass when*

he began hurling racial slurs at them.

pop by (for a visit) To come somewhere, usually a person's home or residence, for a brief or casual visit. *Hey, if you're free this Saturday, why don't you pop by for a visit? I'd love to show you the new truck I bought. You and your girlfriend should pop by sometime. We could grab some dinner or go out for some drinks.*

pop in (for a visit) To come somewhere, usually a person's home, for a brief or casual visit. *Hey, if you're free this Saturday, why don't you pop in for a visit? I'd love to show you the new truck I bought. If you're ever in town, you and your girlfriend should pop in. I just need to pop in at the office to see Cheryl, but I won't be staying all day.*

pop into (someone's) head To occur or form suddenly in someone's mind, as a thought, idea, or revelation. *The idea for this new model of car just popped into my head as I was driving home last night. I had been struggling to remember her name throughout the evening, but it only popped into my head the next morning.*

pop (one's) clogs To die. Primarily heard in UK. *A friend of mine is convinced he's going to pop his clogs whenever he feels the slightest bit unwell.*

pop (one's/someone's) cherry **1.** vulgar slang (of someone else) To have sexual intercourse with a virgin, especially a female. *Before you go popping a girl's cherry, you had better make damn sure that you and she are both totally ready to sleep with each other.* **2.** vulgar slang (of oneself) To have sexual intercourse for the first time. *There is nothing wrong with waiting until you're absolutely ready before you pop your cherry. Too many people try to pressure you into it from too young an age.* **3.** vulgar slang (of oneself) To do something for the first time, especially that which is particularly daunting, difficult, dangerous, or illegal. *Somebody pass Marcus the joint, he still needs to pop his cherry tonight! For her birthday, I bought my friend Samantha a voucher so she could pop her cherry sky diving.*

pop over (for a visit) To come somewhere, usually a person's home or residence, for a brief or casual visit. *Hey, if you're free this Saturday, why don't you pop over for a visit? I'd love to show you the new truck I bought. You and your girlfriend should pop over sometime. We could grab some dinner or go out for some drinks.*

pop (someone's) bubble To disprove, ruin, or destroy someone's fantasy, delusion, or misbelief. A less common variant of "burst (someone's) bubble." *Sorry to pop your bubble, Janet, but Sarah only went out on a date with you to make Suzie jealous. Sean took pleasure in popping the environmentalist's bubble, explaining to him that renewable energy devices cause huge environmental damage to produce.*

pop the bubble of (someone) To disprove, ruin, or destroy someone's fantasy, delusion, or misbelief. A less common variant of "burst the bubble of (someone)." *The Supreme Court ruling is likely to pop the bubble of all the activists who were in favor of overturning the case.*

pop the cherry vulgar slang To have sexual intercourse for the first time. *There is nothing wrong with waiting until you're absolutely ready before you pop the cherry. Too many people try to pressure you into it from too young an age.*

popcorn film A film that is entertaining to watch but is generally not of a very high quality or rich in emotional or intellectual depth. A: "So what film do you want to go see later?" B: "I don't feel like watching anything too heavy or complex—let's just see whatever popcorn film is out."

popcorn flick A film that is entertaining to watch but is generally not of a very high quality or rich in emotional or intellectual depth. A: "So what movie do you want to go see later?" B: "I don't feel like watching anything too heavy or complex—let's just see whatever popcorn flick is out."

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the pope's mustard maker A pompous person, especially one in an insignificant job or role. In the 14th century, Pope John XXII had a personal "moutardier" (mustard-maker), to ensure that his food was properly seasoned. *All she does is copy files all day, but she acts like she's the pope's mustard maker. I practically have to beg for a chance to use the copier!*

pope's nose The fatty tail of a cooked fowl, especially a chicken. *When we were kids, it was always a special treat to be given the pope's nose off the Sunday roast chicken.*



porch monkey offensive slang A derogatory term for a black person.

pork chop 1. A thick cut of meat from a pig. Often used in the plural when it is prepared as a meal. *Well, at least sit down and have a pork chop with us before you go out! Mom said that she's making pork chops for dinner tonight, so don't be late!* 2. offensive slang A black person who acts submissively toward white people.

port of call 1. A port visited by a ship among others on a voyage. *The sailors were thrilled to finally see a port of call after months at sea.* 2. A short stop during a trip or journey. *Harold's first port of call on his trip across Europe was Paris.*

portmanteau word A word that is formed by combining syllables from several other words. Each part of the portmanteau word typically retains its original meaning; in combination, then, they give the portmanteau word its unique meaning. For instance, a "dramedy" (a work that is both dramatic and funny) is a portmanteau word combining "drama" and "comedy." *Did you know that "brunch" is just a portmanteau word created from "breakfast" and "lunch"? It seems like every famous couple in Hollywood has a portmanteau word that combines their two names.*

Portuguese man-of-war A jellyfish-like sea creature with a deadly sting. *I don't want you kids to go swimming today—there's been reports of a Portuguese man-of-war in the water.*

poster boy A boy or man who typifies or is the perfect example of a particular characteristic, attitude, opinion, cause, or type of person. *Pete managed to disassemble their washing machine, fix the problem, and then reassemble it all by himself? Wow, he's like the poster boy of DIY. What new earth-saving plan does the poster boy for environmentalism have in mind now? Mr. Walsh built his fortune from nothing, through his own tireless work and intense ambition. He really is the poster boy for the rags-to-riches American Dream.*

poster child A person (usually an adult, not a child) who typifies or is the perfect example of a particular characteristic, attitude, opinion, cause, or type of person. *Pete managed to disassemble their washing machine, fix the problem, and then reassemble it all by himself? Wow, he's like the poster child of DIY. Ms. Walsh built her fortune from nothing, through her own tireless work and intense ambition. She really is the poster child for the rags-*

to-riches American Dream.

poster girl A girl or woman who typifies or is the perfect example of a particular characteristic, attitude, opinion, cause, or type of person. *Georgina managed to disassemble their washing machine, fix the problem, and then reassemble it all by herself? Wow, she's like the poster girl of DIY. What new earth-saving plan does the poster girl for environmentalism have in mind now? Ms. Walsh built her fortune from nothing, through her own tireless work and intense ambition. She really is the poster girl for the rags-to-riches American Dream.*

pot luck 1. A situation or circumstance in which the outcome is uncertain but where one takes a chance in the hopes of achieving a fortunate or beneficial end result. (Used especially in the phrase "take pot luck.") *I like to just take pot luck when I travel to new cities and try out whatever local establishments I happen upon. I love going into old antique stores. I know finding something worthwhile is just a bit of pot luck, but it's fun to see all the old things they have!* **2.** (More often "potluck.") A shared meal in which separate dishes are prepared and/or brought by different individuals; the food that is brought to such a meal. Primarily heard in US. *Sarah and I are hosting a pot luck this Saturday, and you are both welcome to join us! Just bring something that we can all share! Potluck dinners are a great way for neighbors or groups of friends to spend time together or get to know each other better. We're just asking guests to bring a bit of pot-luck, nothing fancy!*

pot shot 1. Literally, a shot fired easily or recklessly. The phrase comes from hunting (in which shots ideally yield food for one's pot). *You boys can't just take pot shots at any creature you see—there are rules we have to follow out here! Why did you fire a pot shot like that and betray our position to the enemy?* **2.** By extension, a reckless or careless remark directed at a vulnerable person. *Now that everyone knows I was involved in that scandal, the reporters love taking pot shots at me.*

potayto, potahto A negligible, trivial, or unimportant difference, distinction, or correction. (While "potahto" is not an accepted pronunciation in any English-speaking population, the phrase is an allusion to a verse in the song "Let's Call the Whole Thing Off": "You like potayto, I like potahto; you like tomayto, I like tomahto; potayto, potahto, tomayto, tomahto, let's call the whole thing off!") A: "Well, technically, the Hindenburg was a rigid airship, not a blimp." B: "Eh, potayto, potahto, who cares?"

Potemkin village Something that is made to seem very grand, elaborate, and/or prosperous for the purposes of impressing others, but which in reality has no real worth or substance. Taken from a story about Russian minister Grigory Potemkin (1739–1791), who allegedly erected false, painted façades to mimic a thriving, successful village along the Dnieper River in Crimea to impress the visiting Empress Catherine II. *The tightly controlled totalitarian country is often accused of creating a Potemkin village each time it televises some event, a meager attempt to convince the outside world that its people are happy under the thumb of the dictatorship.*

potter's clay A special type of clay that does not contain iron and is often used for making pottery. *OK, class, make sure to get some potter's clay before you sit down at your wheel today.*

potter's field A place where the indigent or the unknown are buried. A reference to the Bible, "So they conferred together and bought the potter's field with it as a burial place for foreigners" (Matthew 27:7). Primarily heard in US. *The work was so grueling that a great number of immigrant laborers who built the railroads across this country ended up in some potter's field or another before the job was complete.*

potty about See [be potty about \(something\)](#).

potty mouth A person who uses obscenities, vulgarities, or profanities in their speech, especially at inappropriate times. Used especially in reference to a child or as a childish rebuke to an adult. *Hey, you little potty mouth! If I hear you speaking like that around your grandmother again, you're going to be grounded for a week! Well there's no need to be a potty mouth about it, Rick. You could have just said no like a civilized person.*

pounce at 1. To physically leap or jump at (someone or something). *I can't believe your cat pounced at my face! All I was doing was trying to rub its belly. Sarah could barely keep herself from pouncing at her boyfriend as he got off the train from Toronto.* **2.** To seize or take advantage of (something, such as a chance or opportunity) with great alacrity or enthusiasm. *I understand wanting to weigh your options, but I think you'd be a fool not to pounce at the job they've offered you. I saw an opening where I might score a goal, so I pounced at it and took the shot!*

pounce at the death sports To secure an equalising goal at the final moment of the match and so avoid defeat. Primarily heard in UK, Ireland.

But it was O'Grady who was destined to be the star of the match, pouncing at death in the 92nd minute of the match to equalise with the English squad and keep Ireland's tournament hopes alive.

pound it slang An invitation to bump the knuckle side of one's clenched fist with someone else's, either as a greeting or in a cheerful or celebratory manner. The move is known as a "pound" or a "fist bump." *So good to see you, buddy, pound it!*

pound salt To engage in pointless, menial efforts or labor. Used as an imperative to express disdain, contempt, or dismissal. A variant of the more common expression "pound sand." *I can't believe Sam told his teacher to go pound salt. Where does that kid get such attitude? Charles, why don't you pound salt instead of coming around here hassling me about my business?*

pound sand To engage in pointless, menial efforts or labor. Used especially as an imperative to express disdain, contempt, or dismissal. *I can't believe Sam told his teacher to go pound sand. Where does that kid get such attitude? Charles, why don't you pound sand instead of coming around here hassling me about my business?*

pound (something) into (one's/someone's) head To commit some piece of information into one's or someone else's long-term memory, especially through intense repetition. *How many times do I have to pound it into your head? Do not drive my car unless I give you permission first! I've just been trying to pound these formulas into my head for the big test tomorrow!*

pound (something) into (one's/someone's) thick skull To commit some piece of information into one's or someone else's long-term memory, especially through intense repetition. *How many times do I have to pound it into your thick skull? Do not drive my car unless I give you permission first! I've just been trying to pound these formulas into my thick skull for the big test tomorrow!*

pour fuel on the fire To do or say something to make an argument, problem, or bad situation worse; to further incense an already angry person or group of people. *You know mom's upset with you. Don't pour fuel on the fire by coming home late again. Revelations of the CEO's massive retirement package poured fuel on the fire for consumers already furious over the company's dubious financial dealings.*

pour gas/gasoline on the fire To do or say something to make an argument, problem, or bad situation worse; to further incense an already angry person or group of people. *The debate was going poorly for the senatorial candidate, and his strikingly uncouth comments simply poured gasoline on the fire. Revelations of the CEO's massive retirement package poured gas on the fire for consumers already furious over the charity's dubious financial dealings.*

pour it on thick To exaggerate, aggrandize, or overstate some emotional experience, response, or appeal, such as blame, praise, flattery, excuses, etc. *Jim carries on as though flattering the boss will get him a promotion, so he's always pouring it on thick for her. OK, Bob, I think Mary understands the trouble she's in, no need to pour it on so thick.*

pour salt in(to) the/(someone's) wound(s) To make something that is already difficult, unpleasant, or painful even worse; to accentuate, aggravate, or intensify a negative situation, emotion, or experience (for someone). *After losing the championship match, it really poured salt in John's wound for his girlfriend break up with him the next day. My pride was already hurting when I didn't get the job, but hearing that they gave it to Dave really poured salt into the wound. I can't believe you would ask me to pay you back on the day that I got laid off. Thanks for pouring salt in my wounds, man.*

powder keg A situation that could quickly become very volatile and dangerous. *It became obvious we were sitting on a powder keg as the protests in the city became more frequent.*

power chord A chord commonly used in rock music that combines a root (a low note that forms the foundation of a chord) and its fifth (a note that is five notes higher than the root on the scale). A: *"When do you want me to come in?"* B: *"Why don't you hit that power chord, and we'll go into the chorus from there."*

power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely The more powerful one is, the more unscrupulous one becomes. A: *"I never should have appointed him head of the committee."* B: *"You need to call him in for a meeting before he thinks that he can do whatever he wants. Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely."*

praise from Sir Hubert The most prestigious compliment one can

receive. Derived from a line in the 1797 Thomas Morton play *A Cure for the Heartache*. *The CEO actually commended you for your work on the project? Wow, that's praise from Sir Hubert indeed!*

praise the Lord, and pass the ammunition Keep going, despite trouble or stress. The phrase is widely believed to have been said by a Navy chaplain during the attack on Pearl Harbor; it later became the title of a popular patriotic song. *Until help comes, there's nothing we can do but keep trying to plug the holes in the roof. Praise the Lord, and pass the ammunition!*

prawn cocktail offensive The (often derisive) name used for politicians' efforts to gain financial support while attending a social event (where prawn cocktails are traditionally served). Primarily heard in UK. *I don't want to go to this dinner party—it's just going to become another prawn cocktail offensive, and I'm sick of people asking me for money!*

pray tell (set phrase) Please tell me (about something). *Pray tell, will your lovely wife be accompanying you to the gala this evening? A: "Sir, we have received news of the king's response." B: "Pray tell!"*

preach to deaf ears To present arguments to or attempt to persuade or advise those who have no inclination to change their opinion or belief. *You're preaching to deaf ears if you think you can convince these kids to stay away from alcohol before they turn 21. Even though they know they're preaching to deaf ears, the hate group makes a point of holding protests outside churches and the funerals of slain soldiers.*

prefer charges To make a formal complaint of wrongdoing or mistreatment against another person. *A: "Is it true that Greg preferred charges against you?" B: "Yes, but his claim is completely false! I've never done anything to him!" I really hope our neighbors don't prefer charges against us—I never would have cut down that tree if I had known it was on their property!*

press (one's) luck To risk losing the good favor or fortune one has garnered thus far by brashly or overconfidently seeking more. *I know you're in the boss's good graces now, but don't press your luck: she's been known to turn on people for getting too cocky. I've had some good winnings at blackjack, but I don't think I should press my luck any further.*

press (someone's) buttons 1. To do things that create a very strong

emotional reaction in someone, especially anger, irritation, or exasperation. *I hate Dave's new boyfriend—he's always trying to press my buttons, and he's doing a good job of it! No one will be able to press your buttons like your children, but it's all a part of the adventure of parenthood.* **2.** To be sexually attractive or arousing to someone. *Did you see that waitress over at the other table? Man, she presses my buttons.*

press the panic button To overreact to a negative situation with an inordinate amount of fear, alarm, or confusion. *If you're going to be a successful boss, you can't press the panic button every time your company has a minor setback. New parents tend to press the panic button over every little snuffle their first baby gets.*

pretty kettle of fish A difficult or awkward situation; a mess. Primarily heard in US. *Well, that's a pretty kettle of fish. I thought I paid the credit card bill, but it turns out that I missed the due date by a week.*

a pretty pass A particularly difficult, troublesome, or bad state or situation. (Used especially in the phrase "come to/reach a pretty pass.") *Now don't spread this around, but I hear things have come to a pretty pass between Mark and his wife. Negotiations between management and the striking employees reached a pretty pass when the labor union rejected the company's latest deal.*

previous to Before. *Previous to going back to school, he worked in a restaurant. Previous to moving away, I used to live in that neighborhood.*

the price of cheese See [What's that got to do with the price of cheese?](#)

the price of eggs See [What's that got to do with the price of eggs?](#)

the price of fish See [What's that got to do with the price of fish?](#)

the price of meat See [What's that got to do with the price of meat?](#)

the price of tea in China See [What's that got to do with the price of tea in China?](#)

a price on (one's) head An amount of money being offered as a reward for one's capture, or, in some cases, killing. *I'm sorry, but we can't travel with your brother any longer. The sheriff has put a price on his head and it's too dangerous for the rest of us! I'll never be able to live peacefully in this town as long as I have a price on my head.*



prior to Before. *Prior to going back to school, he worked in a restaurant. Prior to moving away, I used to live in that neighborhood.*

#priorities A common hashtag that accompanies social media posts of things deemed important. It is often used humorously. *Which candidate has promised to lower taxes? #priorities I was already running late, but I still stopped for coffee because #priorities.*

private branch exchange A telephone system within an institution or business that can only be used by the people inside that establishment. *There was an issue with the private branch exchange this morning, but we hope to have the phones working again shortly.*

private language 1. A way of communicating that is shared between and understood by only a few people. *My sister and I have had our own private language ever since we were girls—our brothers still can't understand it! After working together for so many years, Ellen and I have a private language that is all our own.* 2. philosophy A type of inner language only comprehensible to a single person. The concept was introduced by Ludwig Wittgenstein, who argued that it could not exist. *The concept of private language is still a topic of debate among philosophers, especially due to its potential ramifications for metaphysics.*

private message A way to communicate only with a select person or people on social media sites or Internet forums. It is most commonly used as a verb. *Private message me if you have any questions. If you don't want everyone to see it, send a private message instead of posting it.*

problem child 1. A child who is prone to wild or disobedient behavior. *I know it's hard to believe now that he's a successful lawyer, but Timmy was a total problem child and constantly got into trouble! Debbie just keeps misbehaving no matter what we do—do you have any suggestions for dealing with a problem child?* 2. One aspect of a company that is not performing as well as others. *At this point, our retail store has become such a problem child that management is probably going to close it down before it bankrupts us.* 3. A product that requires a lot of attention and funding in order to be successful. *I know you all see this book as a problem child, but I really do think that it can a bestseller with the right marketing approach.*

a problem shared is a problem halved Talking about a problem with someone else usually makes it seem less daunting or troubling. *Just tell*

me what's bothering you, honey. You know what they say—a problem shared is a problem halved.

proclaim (something) from the rooftops To share some news or information publicly and with as many people as possible. *I was ready to proclaim from the rooftops that we'd be having a baby, but my wife wanted to wait for a while before we made the news public. I know you want to proclaim it from the rooftops that you came in first in your class, but you should think about how it might make the other students feel and have a bit of modesty about it.*

Procrustean bed A situation or place that someone is forced into, often violently. In Greek mythology, the giant Procrustes would capture people and then stretch or cut off their limbs to make them fit into his bed. *This new law creates a Procrustean bed designed to get those people deemed undesirable by the local government to move out of the neighborhood.*

professional student **1.** Someone in the process of earning a "professional degree"—one in a field like medicine, law, or education, for instance. *We have a stellar group of professional students joining our program this year.* **2.** slang One who continues to pursue education instead of employment. *I'm starting to worry that my son just wants to be a professional student forever and will never get a job.*

professional victim slang A derisive term for someone who claims to receive mistreatment from others, usually as a way to get attention. *Boy, he's really the professional victim these days. What is he claiming I did to him this time?*

project management In business, the process of organizing, planning, and executing a particular project. *You can take all the training seminars you want, but at the end of the day, project management is the art of getting things done with whatever resources you have.*

a promise is a promise A phrase emphasizing that a promise should be kept. *I know you feel differently now, but you said you would help me, and a promise is a promise!*

a promise made is a promise kept When one makes a promise, it should be done with the intention of following through. *I said I would help you, and I will—because, as far as I'm concerned, a promise made is a promise kept.*

prop up the bar To spend a large amount of time drinking at a pub or pubs in general. Primarily heard in UK. *My father spent most of my childhood propping up the bar, so forgive me if I am not overly enthusiastic about social drinking. John's down at the local, propping up the bar with his mates from work.*

prophet of doom A person who always warns others about possible negative consequences of decisions or actions. *Don't tell Rodney about your new plan—he's such a prophet of doom that he'll completely kill your motivation.*

proud below the navel outdated Having an erect penis. Primarily heard in UK. A: *"I think that Sir Edgar grows proud below the navel every time he sees you, dear sister."* B: *"Oh, hush! Someone from the garden might hear us!"*

prunes and prisms Intentionally formal and/or prudish speech or action. The phrase originated in Charles Dickens' novel *Little Dorrit* as an example of proper speech. *When you talk to your grandmother, stick to prunes and prisms so that you don't offend her. If you want to become a proper lady, practice saying "prunes and prisms"!*

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psychological warfare The use of threats, intimidation, or other such tactics to try to bring about a particular outcome. *The department head can try all the psychological warfare he wants, but I'm tenured, and I refuse to give up my position on the faculty! All right, I'll go to the family dinner—anything to get mom to stop her psychological warfare!*

psychological warfare The use of threats, intimidation, or other such tactics to try to bring about a particular outcome. *The dropping of leaflets announcing the bombing campaign was really just psychological warfare. All right, I'll go to the family dinner if only to get mom to stop her psychological warfare. I can't stand the way she tries to guilt me!*

pub crawl A recreational activity that involves drinking alcohol at several

different establishments in the same day. *For his bachelor party, Frank's friends decided to take him on a pub crawl.*

pub crawl A tour of local pubs or bars, usually with the purpose of having one or more drinks at each along the way. *We're going on a literary pub crawl tonight to visit all the pubs the city's famous authors used to frequent. That's the last time I do a pub crawl; my body just can't handle that much booze anymore!*

public display of affection A physical act of intimacy between a romantic couple done in the view of others. Often shortened to the abbreviation "PDA." *I really wish you didn't have such a hang-up over public displays of affection—no one cares if we have a quick kiss out in the open! When we go out, my girlfriend is always trying to hold my hand or kiss me, even though she knows that any public display of affection makes me uncomfortable. I don't mind PDAs in general, but teenagers take it way too far.*

public eye Attention from the general public. Typically used in the phrase "in the public eye." *Famous actors really can't do much without being in the public eye—their every move is noticed and scrutinized. I'm pretty nervous because this is the first time I'll be in the public eye since that terrible news conference.*

public intellectual A celebrated academic or literary mind who puts forth views in a public forum or setting *France in the early 20th-century was home to many renowned public intellectuals who often gathered and debated topics of the day.*

the public weal The common good of public society; the welfare of the general public. *Having ousted the dictator from power, the new president has pledged to focus all his energy on the public weal.*

publicity hound Someone who seeks to have the attention of the public constantly focused on him- or herself, typically by means of attracting media coverage. *The former actor's run at politics is seen by many as just another stunt by a publicity hound desperate to keep the spotlight on himself.*

puke (one's) guts out To vomit violently and at length. *My friends got me so drunk on my 21st birthday that I spent the whole next day puking my guts out.*

pull a disappearing act To depart or go away very suddenly or without warning, especially so as to avoid doing something. *My roommate loves to throw parties here, but she always pulls a disappearing act the next day when everything needs to be cleaned up! Brian is nearly two weeks late finishing his sales report—that's why he's been pulling a disappearing act whenever the boss is around.*

pull a face (at someone) To make a grimacing or humorously distorted facial expression (at someone). *Young lady, don't you pull a face at me! You will eat your broccoli or you won't have any dessert. The teacher scolded Jimmy for pulling faces at her from the back of class. When I told him my mother was coming over for dinner, John just pulled a face and went down to the basement.*

pull a hoax (on someone) To carry out a trick, deception, or practical joke (against someone). *It turns out that the supposed alien visitors that people had been seeing were just a bunch of teenagers pulling a hoax on the town. I've got a great plan to pull a hoax on the school for April Fools' Day. The fake article had been in print in the renowned scientific journal for more than a week before its author revealed that he had pulled a hoax when he decided to submit it.*

pull a prank (on someone) To carry out a trick, deception, or practical joke (against someone). *It turns out that the supposed alien visitors that people had been seeing were just a bunch of teenagers pulling a prank on the town. I've got a great plan to pull a prank on the school for April Fools' Day. The fake article had been in print in the renowned scientific journal for more than a week before its author revealed that he had pulled a prank when he decided to submit it.*

pull a rabbit out of a hat To do something surprising and seemingly impossible; to produce something in a way that has no obvious explanation, as if done by magic. A reference to the magician's trick of literally pulling a live rabbit out of a hat. *The caterer really pulled a rabbit out of a hat by producing 100 cupcakes with just 20 minutes' notice. Unless someone can pull a rabbit out of a hat, we're out of solutions.*

pull a train vulgar slang Of a woman, to have sex with two or more men sequentially or at the same time. *Things were starting to get weird with my boyfriend already, but when he said he wanted me to pull a train with him*

and some of his friends, I knew the relationship was over.

pull a trick (on someone) To carry out a trick, deception, or practical joke (against someone). *It turns out that the supposed alien visitors that people had been seeing were just a bunch of teenagers pulling a trick on the town. I've got a great plan to pull a trick on the school for April Fools' Day. The fake article had been in print in the renowned scientific journal for more than a week before its author revealed that he had pulled a trick when he decided to submit it.*

pull a U-ie To make a U-turn. Primarily heard in US, Australia. *Dang it, I forgot my keys! Pull a U-ie up ahead so I can go back and get them.*

pull a vanishing act To depart or go away very suddenly or without warning, especially so as to avoid doing or dealing with something. *My roommate loves to throw parties here, but she always pulls a vanishing act the next day when everything needs to be cleaned up! Brian is nearly two weeks late finishing his sales report—that's why he's been pulling a vanishing act whenever the boss is around.*

pull an all-nighter To remain awake all night long, especially so as to study or to complete something. *I was a bit of a procrastinator in college, so I tended to pull a lot of all-nighters. Jeff pulled an all-nighter on Thursday to get his report finished for work by the deadline today, so I don't think he'll be coming out with us tonight.*

pull caps To have an argument, especially in a way that lacks propriety. This now-outdated phrase was mostly applied to women and their head coverings. A: *"What is all that commotion?"* B: *"I believe that Lady Judith and her sister are pulling caps in the sitting room."*

pull faces (at someone) To make distorted, silly, or humorous facial expressions (at someone) for one's own or someone else's amusement. *I get great laughs out of my nieces and nephews by pulling faces at them. Mom, tell Billy to quit pulling faces, he's really annoying me!*

pull in the reins To begin doing something more carefully or cautiously; to regain or tighten control over someone or something. *This thesis you're planning is becoming wildly unfocused—I think you should pull in the reins a bit! I wish those parents would pull in the reins on their kids—the little devils are tearing the place apart!*



pull my finger A set expression said as a part of a joke or prank in which the speaker passes gas when their finger is pulled. A: "Pull my finger, Billy!" B: "Don't do it, Billy! No one wants to smell that!"

pull (one's) chestnuts out of the fire To do a difficult, and often dangerous, task for someone else's benefit. *David really pulled my chestnuts out of the fire that time he saved me from drowning. I can't believe my car broke down on this desolate road late at night—thank you so much for pulling my chestnuts out of the fire and picking me up!*

pull (one's) finger out To cease stalling or procrastinating and do something soon or at once. Primarily heard in UK, Ireland. *I've had my learner's permit for nearly two years—I need to pull my finger out and get my driver's licence already! I wish Mary would pull her finger out about choosing the florist she wants for the wedding.*

pull (some/a few) strings To use the power or influence one has over others, especially people of importance, to get what one wants or to help someone else. *I hear that the only reason Johnny got into college was because his dad pulled some strings with the president of the university. I actually know a few people who work at the restaurant, so I'll see if I can pull a few strings and get you a table. You wait and see, he's going to start pulling strings to get this police investigation quashed.*

pull (some/a few) wires To utilize the power or influence one has over others, especially people of importance, to get what one wants or to help someone else. *I hear that the only reason Johnny got into college was because his dad pulled some wires with the president of the university. I might see if I can pull a few wires to get this police investigation quashed. I'm so sick of this old-boy culture pulling wires in high places to keep themselves in control.*

pull (someone) down a notch (or two) To reduce or damage someone's ego or pride; to humble or humiliate someone. *I'm really glad that pompous oaf lost his court case—maybe that will pull him down a notch or two. It's about time that someone pulled Sarah down a notch. Her snotty arrogance is intolerable!*

pull (someone) down a peg (or two) To reduce or damage someone's ego or pride; to humble or humiliate someone. *I'm really glad that pompous oaf lost his court case—maybe that will pull him down a peg or two.*

It's about time that someone pulled Sarah down a peg. Her snotty arrogance is intolerable!

pull (someone or something) out of a hat To select someone or something entirely at random. *I don't understand why our company is being targeted. It's as if the IRS pulled us out of a hat to scrutinize! It doesn't really matter who gets promoted to assistant manager—just pull a name out of a hat for all I care!*

pull (someone's) bacon out of the fire To save someone from imminent or impending trouble, difficulty, or danger. *My brother is the best lawyer in town, and he's pulled my bacon out of the fire on more than one occasion! The president gets all the credit for the economic recovery, but it was really a team of international financial strategists that pulled our bacon out of the fire.*

pull (something) out of (one's) ass vulgar slang To completely fabricate or invent something; to draw something from little or no real evidence, facts, information, etc. *You just pulled those statistics out of your ass! Whenever the teacher calls on him, Jake just pulls an answer out of his ass.*

pull teeth To do something that is especially difficult, tedious, or requires an extreme amount of effort; to do something in the most difficult or unpleasant way possible. *With this new way of preparing vegetables, you'll no longer have to pull teeth to get your kids to eat their greens! I've been pulling teeth trying to get my family members organized for this get together, but I think it will all be worth it!*

pull the other leg (it's got bells on)! You're joking; I don't believe you. Used to express that one finds what has been said to be incredible, unlikely, or laughable. Primarily heard in UK. *You, the descendant of a king? Pull the other leg, mate! A: "I think the country would be way better off if we just abolished taxes altogether." B: "Yeah, OK, pull the other leg, it's got bells on!"*

Pull the other one (it's got bells on)! Used to express that one finds what's been said to be incredible, unlikely, or laughable. Primarily heard in UK. *You, the descendant of a king? Pull the other one, mate! A: "I think the country would be way better off if we just abolished taxes altogether." B: "Yeah, OK, pull the other one, it's got bells on!"*

pull the rug (out) from under (someone) To suddenly or unexpectedly remove or rescind support, help, or assistance from someone; to abruptly leave someone in a problematic or difficult situation. *I felt like someone had pulled the rug out from under me when my health insurance said it was going to stop paying for my medical bills. I'd love to quit my job, but I just can't pull the rug from under my team like that.*

pull the rug (out) from under (someone's) feet To suddenly or unexpectedly remove or rescind support, help, or assistance from someone; to abruptly leave someone in a problematic or difficult situation. *I felt like someone had pulled the rug out from under my feet when my health insurance said it was going to stop paying for my medical bills. I'd love to up and quit my job, but I just can't pull the rug from under their feet like that.*

pull the trigger (on something) To make a final decision or commit to a certain course of action (about something). *Jeff's been hemming and hawing about which car to buy—I wish he would just pull the trigger already! If we don't pull the trigger on this deal then we might never get the chance again.*

pull up a floor slang To sit down on the floor. It is used as a humorous variation of the common phrase "pull up a chair." *I'm sorry, I don't have a couch yet, so you'll have to pull up a floor for our chat.*

pull up (one's) socks To make a redoubled effort; to make a sincere attempt to improve. *After that abysmal grade on my midterm exam, I'm going to have to really pull up my socks if I want to pass math this year. John, if you don't start pulling up your socks, we're going to have to give your job to someone else.*

pull up stumps **1.** In cricket, to call an end to gameplay for the day, as by removing the stumps (part of the wicket) from the ground. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *As the umpire draws stumps for the day, India has beaten England by 133 runs. This has gotten horribly boring, let's pull up stumps and go home.* **2.** By extension, to cease doing something or bring something to an end. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *In spite of the biting scandal, the footballer said he would not be pulling up the stumps on his international career. OK, I think we've done enough work for the day. Let's pull up stumps and get out of here.* **3.** To pack up and leave from one's camp site. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *After a week of roughing it in the countryside, we*

finally pulled up stumps and decided to stay in a bed and breakfast for the night before going back home.

pull wires See [pull \(some/a few\) wires](#).

pulled out of (one's) ass vulgar slang Completely fabricated; drawn from little or no real evidence, facts, information, etc. *Those statistics were just pulled out of your ass! When the teacher called on him to answer the question, Jake just said something he had pulled out of his ass.*

pulling power The ability or power to draw people in, as by having particularly unique, interesting, famous, desirable, etc., qualities or characteristics. *The restaurant has been capitalizing on the pulling power of its celebrity chef to drum up huge crowds in its opening week. The attraction, at one time, had enormous pulling power but is now regarded as little more than a tourist trap.*

pumpkin head **1.** A dim-witted or unintelligent person; a dolt. *Why did I ever hire that pumpkin head? He can't do anything right around here.* **2.** prison slang A prisoner who has been beaten severely about the face and head; such an attack itself. (So called due to the swelling of the head that results.) *No one went near the pumpkin head after his beating from one of the prison gangs, which had served as a warning to the other inmates. Whatever fellow prisoners might do to you, it's the guards you have to look out for. They're very fond of giving a pumpkin head to anyone to who steps out of line.*

punch above (one's) weight **1.** To perform, achieve, or do something at a level that is considered beyond one's abilities, talents, or personal attributes. *The small-town mayor has been punching above her weight recently, going head-to-head with federal lawmakers over the issue of immigration reform.* **2.** To be romantically or sexually involved with someone who is considered by others to be superior in physical appearance, intelligence, or success. *I think Janet's new boyfriend is a model or something. She's really punching above her weight!*

punch below (one's) weight **1.** To perform, achieve, or do something at a level that is considered to be lower than one's abilities, talents, or personal attributes. *The Oscar-winning actor is truly punching below his weight in this new film, with a performance that is dull at best and downright amateurish at worst.* **2.** To be romantically or sexually involved with

someone who is considered by others to be inferior in physical appearance, intelligence, or success. *It's odd to me that someone so motivated by his career would punch below his weight with some gas station attendant like her.*

Puppy Bowl A TV program that airs on Animal Planet on the afternoon of Super Bowl Sunday. Puppies play on a mock football field, and kittens take the field for the "Kitten Halftime Show." The animals shown are usually available for adoption. *Who cares about the Super Bowl—when is Puppy Bowl on?*

puppy love A state of short-lived infatuation or romantic attraction among children or adolescents. *Puppy love is starting to bloom among many of my fifth-graders.*

purple patch 1. A section of writing that is showy and extravagant and often stands out in contrast to the rest of the writing in a piece. *I don't want to see a single purple patch in these research papers, class. Focus on communicating the facts!* **2.** A period marked by much success or good luck. Primarily heard in UK. *After falling behind early, the team hit a purple patch and scored three quick goals to tie the game. We had few lean years, but our business is finally in a purple patch now, thank goodness.*

purple state In U.S. general elections, a state that votes in roughly equal proportion for candidates of both the Democratic and Republican Parties. Primarily heard in US. *Whoever is going to win the election will have to focus their power on swinging the purple states of the country in their favor.*

purse strings The spending power of a given group, such as a family, company, country, etc. *Their government is going to have to learn to tighten the purse strings if they want to continue receiving bailout money from the IMF. After my dad's gambling problem came to light, it was my mother who started holding the purse strings.*

pursuant to In accordance with. This phrase is commonly used in legal documents and proceedings. *The defendant was expected to pay my client monthly, pursuant to the lease he signed.*

push back the clock To revisit, recount, return to or recreate a time or era from the past. *The purpose of this conference is to push back the clock by analyzing early human remains and try to gain insight into their way of life. The governor is bent on pushing back the clock and returning us to the ethics*

of the 1950s.

push (one's) buttons 1. To do things that create a very strong emotional reaction in one, especially anger, irritation, or exasperation. *I hate Dave's new boyfriend, he's always trying to push my buttons, and he's doing a good job of it! No one will be able to push your buttons like your children, but it's all a part of the adventure of parenthood.* 2. To be sexually attractive or arousing to someone. *A guy who knows how to cook really pushes my buttons.*

push (one's) luck To risk losing the good favor or fortune one has garnered thus far by brashly or overconfidently seeking more. *I know you're in the boss's good graces now, but don't push your luck. She's been known to turn on people for getting too cocky. I've had some good winnings at blackjack, but I don't think I should push my luck any further.*

push (one's) weight around To assert oneself in a controlling, domineering, or authoritarian manner; to exercise one's position of authority, power, or influence, especially to an overbearing or excessive degree. *An effective leader should inspire enough confidence in their team that they don't have to push their weight around to get things done. I'm sick of Donald coming into these meetings and pushing his weight around. Can't he just leave us to our own devices?*

pussy out rude slang To refuse or avoid doing something, especially something dangerous, because one feels apprehensive about it. The phrase is usually used mockingly. *Come on, man, don't pussy out on me now! There's no way we'll get caught!*

put a crimp in To disrupt or interfere with something. *That rain last week sure put a crimp in our beach vacation.*

put a dampener on (something) To discourage, inhibit, or deter something; to make something less enjoyable, pleasant, or fun; to have a subduing or deadening effect on something. (A variant of "put a damper on something.") *The foul weather really put a dampener on our picnic yesterday. Without question, this tax scandal has put a dampener on the senator's likelihood of being re-elected. CDs quickly became the dominant format for music, but when digital formats arrived soon thereafter, it put a dampener on CD sales just as quickly.*

put a damper on (something) To discourage, inhibit, or deter

something; to make something less enjoyable, pleasant, or fun; to have a subduing or deadening effect on something. *The foul weather really put a damper on our picnic yesterday. Without question, this tax scandal has put a damper on the senator's likelihood of being re-elected. The construction happening near our building has really put a damper on sales this month.*

put a good face on To act as though a particular situation is not as undesirable or grim as it really is. *Although my mother tried to put a good face on her medical situation, I knew that her health was rapidly deteriorating. They tried to put a good face on their break-up, but we all knew that they had been fighting with each other for weeks.*

put a gun to (someone's) head To force someone to do something they do not want to do, especially by the use of threats or intimidation (not necessarily with an actual gun). *Look, no one is putting a gun to your head. If you don't want to come, then just stay here. The city council has put a gun to our heads to trim the budget wherever possible.*

put a (monkey) wrench in(to) the works To disrupt, foil, or cause problems to a plan, activity, or project. Primarily heard in US. *We had everything in line for the party, but having the caterer cancel on us at the last minute really threw a wrench in the works! It'll really put a monkey wrench into the works if the board decides not to increase our funding for this project.*

put a price on (someone's) head To offer an amount of money as a reward for someone's capture. *I'm sorry, but we can't travel with your brother any longer. The sheriff put a price on his head, and it's too dangerous for the rest of us! Once they put a price on my head, I knew I'd never be able to live in this town peacefully.*

put a rope to the eye of a needle To attempt a futile task. A: *"I can't believe he thinks that he'll get into law school with his poor grades!"* B: *"I know, he's really putting a rope to the eye of a needle with that plan."*

put a stop to (something) To stop, cease, or conclude something. *I'm going to put a stop to the corruption in this department once and for all! I wish my sisters would put a stop to their bickering and just be civil to one another!*

put a/the plug in the jug To become permanently sober; to give up intoxicants, especially alcohol. (Alludes to plugging up a jug of an alcoholic

beverage.) *I've always loved my dad, but he's become a much friendlier and sympathetic person since finally putting the plug in the jug. It took me waking up in a ditch and covered in vomit to realize that I needed to put a plug in the jug for good.*

put across See [put \(oneself\) across](#).

put affairs in order See [put \(one's\) affairs in order](#).

put all (one's) eggs in one basket To invest, devote, or commit all of one's energy or resources into a single venture, opportunity, or goal, generally at the risk of losing everything in the event that that thing fails or does not come to fruition. *She has all her eggs in one basket with this merger deal. If it doesn't work out, I doubt her company can survive. I applied to several colleges so I wasn't putting all my eggs in one basket.*

put (an animal) down To euthanize an animal, typically to prevent its suffering in old age or illness, or because it poses a threat to humans or other animals. *We decided to put our dog down last week. He was in so much pain from cancer that we felt it would be cruel to let him struggle on. Animal control ended up having to put a bear down that had been found roaming the neighborhood for the third time this month.*

put an end to (something) To stop, cease, or conclude something. *I'm going to put an end to the corruption in this department once and for all! I wish my sisters would put an end to their bickering and just be civil to one another!*

put an idea in(to) (someone's) head To suggest something to someone; to lead someone to start believing (in) something; to make someone want to start doing something. (Used of suggestions, ideas, or beliefs that someone wouldn't have thought of on their own, especially those that are foolish or negative.) *Of course we're not going to sell the house! Who put that idea in your head? I can't believe you were caught smoking marijuana. I bet it's that no-good kid Casey who put an idea like that into your head. I heard John putting an idea into his sister's head that she was adopted.*

put ass on the line See [put \(one's\) ass on the line](#).

put at ease See [put \(oneself\) at \(one's\) ease](#).

put at ease See [put \(one\) at \(one's\) ease](#).

put back the clock To revisit, recount, return to or recreate a time or

era from the past. *The purpose of this conference is to put back the clock by analyzing early human remains to try and gain insight into their way of life. The governor is bent on putting back the clock and returning us to the ethics of the 1950s.*

put back up See [put \(one's/someone's\) back up](#).

put behind bars See [be put behind bars](#).

put behind bars See [put \(someone\) behind bars](#).

put butt on the line See [put \(one's\) butt on the line](#).

put clock back See [put the/\(one's\) clock\(s\) back](#).

put clock forward See [put the/\(one's\) clock\(s\) forward](#).

put down (an animal) To end the life of an animal (generally through euthanasia) so as to prevent its suffering in old age or illness, or because it poses a threat to humans or other animals. *We decided to put down our dog last week. He was in so much pain from cancer that we felt it would be cruel to let him struggle on. Animal control ended up having to put down the bear once it was spotted roaming the neighborhood for the third time in recent months.*

put down for See [put \(one\) down for](#).

put 'er there(, pal) Give me your hand so that I can shake it. Typically said as a greeting or in agreement to a deal. A: *"That's my final offer for the computer."* B: *"I wish I could get more for it, but you win. Put 'er there!"* Put 'er there, pal! *I haven't seen you in a donkey's age!*

put food on the table To earn enough money to provide the basic necessities for oneself and (often) one's family. *With my hours at work being cut so dramatically, I just don't know how I'll be able to put food on the table. At the end of the day, as long as I'm putting food on the table, I don't care what kind of career I have.*

put genie back in the bottle See [put the genie back in the bottle](#).

put hand to See [put \(one's\) hand to \(something\)](#).

put hands together See [put \(one's\) hands together \(for someone or something\)](#).

put hat in the ring See [put \(one's\) hat in\(to\) the ring](#).

put head in the lion's mouth See [put \(one's\) head in the lion's mouth](#).

put head in the wolf's mouth See [put \(one's\) head in the wolf's mouth](#).

put head on the block See [put \(one's\) head on the block](#).

put himself in someone else's place See [put \(oneself\) in \(someone's\) place](#).

put himself in someone else's shoes See [put \(oneself\) in \(someone's\) shoes](#).

put in force To be authorized or enacted, or to authorize or enact something. *Now that this law has been put in force, officers are going to be much more stringent at traffic stops. The board isn't expected to put in force the new regulations until next quarter.*

put in her place See [be put in \(one's\) place](#).

put in (one's) tuppence (worth) To share one's opinion, idea, or point of view, regardless of whether or not others want to hear it. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *I find Jeff's husband a bit trying at times. He always has to put in his tuppence, even when it's clear he knows nothing about what's being discussed. If I can just put in my tuppence worth, I think the staff would really appreciate a bump in their pay, and productivity would increase as a result.*

put in (one's) two cents To share one's opinion or point of view for whatever it may be worth, generally when it is unasked for. *I find Jeff's husband a bit trying at times. He always insists on putting in his two cents whether we want his opinion or not! If I can just put in my two cents, I think the staff would really appreciate a bump in their pay.*

put in (one's) two cents' worth To share one's opinion or point of view for whatever it may be worth, generally when it is unasked for. *I find Jeff's husband a bit trying at times. He always insists on putting in his two cents' worth whether we want his opinion or not! If I can just put in my two cents' worth, I think the staff would really appreciate a bump in their pay.*

put in (one's) two pennies (worth) To share one's opinion, idea, or point of view, regardless of whether or not others want to hear it. Primarily

heard in UK. *I find Jeff's husband a bit trying at times. He always has to put in his two pennies, even when it's clear he knows nothing about what's being discussed. If I can just put in my two pennies worth, I think the staff would really appreciate a bump in their pay, and productivity would increase as a result.*

put in (one's) two penn'orth To share one's opinion, idea, or point of view, regardless of whether or not others want to hear it. ("Penn'orth" is a contraction of "pennies' worth.") Primarily heard in UK. *I find Jeff a bit trying at times. He always has to put in his two penn'orth, even when it's clear he knows nothing about what's being discussed. If I can just put in my two penn'orth, I think the staff would really appreciate a bump in their pay, and productivity would increase as a result.*

put in (one's) twopence (worth) To share one's opinion, idea, or point of view, regardless of whether or not others want to hear it. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *I find Jeff's husband a bit trying at times. He always has to put in his twopence, even when it's clear he knows nothing about what's being discussed. If I can just put in my twopence worth, I think the staff would really appreciate a bump in their pay, and productivity would increase as a result.*

put in perspective See [put \(something\) in\(to\) perspective](#).

put in the hard yard See [hard yards](#).

put in the picture See [put \(someone\) in the picture](#).

put into action See [put \(something\) into action](#).

put it on a pedestal See [put \(someone or something\) \(up\) on a pedestal](#).

put it on the back burner See [put \(something\) on the back burner](#).

put it on the front burner See [put \(something\) on the front burner](#).

put it on the long finger See [put \(something\) on the long finger](#).

put it right See [put \(something\) right](#).

put it straight See [put \(something\) straight](#).

Put it there Shake my hand. As in greeting or in agreement to a deal. A: "50 dollars is my final offer for the computer." B: "I wish I could get more for it, but you win. Put it there!" Hey, John, put it there! I haven't seen you in a

donkey's age!

put it through its paces See [put \(something\) through its paces](#).

put it to rights See [put \(something\) to rights](#).

put John Hancock on See [put \(one's\) John Hancock on](#).

put life on the line See [put \(one's\) life on the line](#).

put lights out See [put \(one's\) lights out](#).

put lipstick on a pig To make some superficial or cosmetic change to something so that it seems more attractive, appealing, or successful than it really is. *The only things the new manager has come up with to save the restaurant have been to put lipstick on a pig, but slapping on a fresh coat of paint and making a few repairs will do nothing to address the underlying problems. It looks like they've just put lipstick on a pig for this new operating system. It's still just as buggy and unintuitive as the last one they released.*

put me at ease See [put \(one\) at \(one's\) ease](#).

put me behind bars See [put \(someone\) behind bars](#).

put me down for See [put \(one\) down for](#).

put me on the griddle See [put \(one\) on the griddle](#).

put me on the hot seat See [put \(one\) on the hot seat](#).

put me out of business See [put \(someone or something\) out of business](#).

put me out of humor See [put \(someone\) out of humour](#).

put me out of sorts See [put \(someone\) out of sorts](#).

put me right See [put \(someone\) right](#).

put me straight See [put \(someone\) straight](#).

put me through my facings See [put \(one\) through \(one's\) facings](#).

put me through the hoop See [put \(someone\) through the hoop](#).

put me through the mangle See [put \(someone\) through the mangle](#).

put me through the wringer See [put \(one\) through the wringer](#).

put me to the sword See [put \(someone\) to the sword](#).



put me to work See [put \(one\) to work](#).

put me under See [put \(one\) under](#).

put me under a microscope See [put \(someone or something\) under a microscope](#).

put me under the cosh See [put \(someone\) under the cosh](#).

put me under the microscope See [put \(someone or something\) under the microscope](#).

put me under the pump See [put \(someone\) under the pump](#).

put me up on a pedestal See [put \(someone or something\) \(up\) on a pedestal](#).

put mind to rest See [put \(one's/someone's\) mind to rest](#).

put my affairs in order See [put \(one's\) affairs in order](#).

put my ass on the line See [put \(one's\) ass on the line](#).

put my back up See [put \(one's/someone's\) back up](#).

put my butt on the line See [put \(one's\) butt on the line](#).

put my clock back See [put the/\(one's\) clock\(s\) back](#).

put my clock forward See [put the/\(one's\) clock\(s\) forward](#).

put my hand to See [put \(one's\) hand to \(something\)](#).

put my hands together See [put \(one's\) hands together \(for someone or something\)](#).

put my hat in the ring See [put \(one's\) hat in\(to\) the ring](#).

put my head in the lion's mouth See [put \(one's\) head in the lion's mouth](#).

put my head in the wolf's mouth See [put \(one's\) head in the wolf's mouth](#).

put my head on the block See [put \(one's\) head on the block](#).

put my John Hancock on See [put \(one's\) John Hancock on](#).

put my life on the line See [put \(one's\) life on the line](#).

put my lights out See [put \(one's\) lights out](#).

put my name in the hat See [put \(one's/someone's\) name in the hat](#).

put my neck on the block See [put \(one's\) neck on the block](#).

put my neck on the line See [put \(one's\) neck on the line](#).

put my oar in See [put \(one's\) oar in\(to\) \(something\)](#).

put my pants on one leg at a time See [put \(one's\) pants on one leg at a time \(just like everybody else\)](#).

put my shoulder to the wheel See [put \(one's\) shoulder to the wheel](#).

put my thinking cap on See [put \(one's\) thinking cap on](#).

put my trousers on one leg at a time See [put \(one's\) trousers on one leg at a time \(just like everybody else\)](#).

put my two cents in See [put \(one's\) two cents in](#).

put my two cents' worth in See [put \(one's\) two cents' worth in](#).

put myself across See [put \(oneself\) across](#).

put myself at ease See [put \(oneself\) at \(one's\) ease](#).

put myself in someone else's place See [put \(oneself\) in \(someone's\) place](#).

put myself in someone else's shoes See [put \(oneself\) in \(someone's\) shoes](#).

put no stock in (something) To not pay any attention to something; to have or invest no faith or belief in something; to not accept something. *You'll put no stock in John's promises if you know what's good for you because, more often than not, he'll end up letting you down. I don't know how the company expects its managers to perform well when it puts no stock in their abilities.*

put on a brave front 1. To appear or make oneself seem more courageous, resolute, or dauntless than one really feels. *I could feel my knees shaking with terror before my commencement speech, but I put on a brave front and stepped out onto the stage to deliver it. This girl I'm dating has a big dog that I'm really scared of, but I'm trying to put on a brave front when it's around.* 2. To react to or face difficulties, setbacks, or adversity with high spirits or good cheer. *John's been putting on a brave front ever since his wife*

left him, but I can tell that he is devastated on the inside. I really didn't want to spend Thanksgiving with my wife's parents, but I put on a brave front and suffered through it with a smile.

put on a pedestal See [put \(someone or something\) \(up\) on a pedestal](#).

put on one side See [put \(something\) on one side](#).

put on (one's) dancing shoes To be ready to dance, as at a party or other celebratory event. *I hope you all put on your dancing shoes for the reception—I don't want to dance alone!*

put on (one's) thinking cap To begin thinking or considering very carefully and seriously (about something). *If we all put on our thinking caps, I'm sure we can come up with a way to earn enough money to go to the baseball game this weekend. A: "Well, boss, what do you think we should do?" B: "Just let me put on my thinking cap for a minute."*

put on the acid See [put the acid on \(someone\)](#).

put on the back burner See [put \(something\) on the back burner](#).

put on the front burner See [put \(something\) on the front burner](#).

put on the long finger See [put \(something\) on the long finger](#).

put on the (old) feed bag slang To begin eating; to have a meal. *I can't wait to get to grandma's and put on the old feed bag. She always cooks the tastiest food! What do you say we put on the feed bag before we head out?*

put (one) at (one's) ease To calm, comfort, or reassure one; to make one comfortable or relaxed. *I'd like to put you all at your ease and assure you that there will be no layoffs, so please do not listen to the rumors going around. The duke was renowned for going to great lengths to put his guests at their ease when they called over for social visits.*

put (one) down for To note one's commitment to a particular task or course of action. *Oh, I'd love to help! Put me down for a \$20 donation. A: "When do you guys want to work at the fair?" B: "Put us down for the four o'clock shift."*

put (one) on the griddle To criticize someone, usually severely. *The boss put me on the griddle after he found out that I was responsible for the error in the report.*

put (one) on the hot seat To criticize someone, usually severely. *The boss put me on the hot seat after he found out that I was responsible for the error in the report.*

put one over on (one) To fool or deceive someone; to make someone the victim of a prank or hoax. *I'm not as naïve as I once was, so you won't be putting one over on me again! The conman spotted Jane from a mile away, and quickly figured out how he would put one over on her.*

put one past (someone) To fool or deceive someone; to make someone the victim of a prank or hoax. *I'm not as naive as I once was, so you won't be putting one past me again! The con man spotted his mark from a mile away, and quickly figured out how he would put one past her.*

put one right See [put \(someone\) right](#).

put one straight See [put \(someone\) straight](#).

put (one) through (one's) facings To force one to demonstrate one's skill in a particular area, usually in a grueling manner. *Boy, they really put me through my facings at that job interview today—I had to give a mock lecture to a whole team of people! If my son wants a promotion, I'm going to put him through his facings so that he truly earns it.*

put (one) through the wringer To subject one to some ordeal, difficulty, trial, or punishment; to force one to undergo an unpleasant experience. *My mother's recent bout with cancer has really put us through the wringer this year.*

put (one) to work To give one a particular task to do. *We're here to help, so just put us to work wherever you need us. Whenever I come home for a visit, my mom wastes no time putting me to work—last time, I had to vacuum the whole house!*

put (one) under To render unconscious by anesthesia, as during a surgical procedure. *Your daughter is doing great. We put her under with no issues, and the surgeon is operating now. I've never had surgery before, and I'm really nervous for when they put me under—what if I don't wake up?*

put (one's) affairs in order To organize one's financial and legal arrangements, especially in preparation for death. *The doctors told me I likely had six months to live, so I need to start putting my affairs in order now. My father never put his affairs in order, and now, my brothers and I are*

embroiled in lawsuits over his estate.

put (one's) ass on the line rude slang To personally assume or expose oneself to some risk, danger, or responsibility; to imperil oneself or put oneself in harm's way. *Look, I'm putting my ass on the line for you here. I could get fired if they find out what we're up to! You have to take some risks to be successful in business and in life, but don't put your ass on the line for no good reason.*

put (one's) butt on the line rude slang To personally assume or expose oneself to some risk, danger, or responsibility; to imperil oneself or put oneself in harm's way. *Look, I'm putting my butt on the line for you here. I could get fired if they find out what we're up to! You have to take some risks to be successful in business and in life, but don't put your butt on the line for no good reason.*

put (one's) hand to (something) To undertake or apply oneself to (doing) something; to attempt or be able to do something. *Now that I'm on a pretty stable career path, I'd like to put my hand to learning the saxophone in my spare time. With Sarah's intelligence, she could probably put her hand to anything after high school.*

put (one's) hands together (for someone or something) To applaud (someone or something); to clap. *Ladies and gentlemen, please put your hands together for our next comedian this evening! Everyone started putting their hands together to signal that they wanted the concert to begin.*

put (one's) hat in(to) the ring To announce or make known one's intention to compete with others, especially in a political election. *I'm thinking about putting my hat in the ring for class president! As has been widely predicted, the governor put his hat into the ring yesterday for the upcoming presidential election.*

put (one's) head in the lion's mouth To subject oneself to danger or trouble. *I really put my head in the lion's mouth by sneaking out of the house late at night. I think you're putting your head in the lion's mouth by driving in such torrential rain.*

put (one's) head in the wolf's mouth To subject oneself to danger or trouble. *I really put my head in the wolf's mouth by sneaking out of the house late at night. I think you're putting your head in the wolf's mouth by driving in such torrential rain.*

put (one's) head on the block To assume or expose oneself to some risk, danger, or responsibility; to imperil oneself or put oneself in harm's way; to risk damaging one's reputation as the result of doing something. *Look, I'm putting my head on the block for you here. I could get fired if they find out what we're up to! You have to take some risks to be successful in business and in life, but don't put your head on the block for no good reason.*

put (one's) John Hancock on To sign one's name on a document or other item. John Hancock, an influential figure in the American Revolution, is known for his especially large and legible signature on the Declaration of Independence. *As soon as you put your John Hancock on these papers, you'll be the proud owner of a brand new car! I would never have put my John Hancock on such an unfavorable contract—I think my signature was forged.*

put (one's) life on the line To put oneself in harm's way to achieve something, especially at the risk of losing one's life. (Sometimes used hyperbolically.) *It's important to honor the men and women in the military who put their lives on the line every day defending our country. Look, I'm putting my life on the line to push this deal forward, so you had better make sure your company follows through on its promises!*

put (one's) lights out To render someone unconscious with a punch. *A: "Oh man, what happened?" B: "Well, you and Bart were fighting, and then Bart put your lights out." Wow, you're strong—you could put someone's lights out with a punch like that!*

put (one's) neck on the block To assume or expose oneself to some risk, danger, or responsibility; to imperil oneself or put oneself in harm's way; to risk damaging one's reputation. *Look, I'm putting my neck on the block for you here. I could get fired if they find out what we're up to! You have to take some risks to be successful in business and in life, but don't put your neck on the block for no good reason. The news anchor put his neck on the block by publicly disparaging one of the presidential candidates on live television.*

put (one's) neck on the line To personally assume or expose oneself to some risk, danger, or responsibility; to imperil oneself or put oneself in harm's way. *Look, I'm putting my neck on the line for you here. I could get fired if they find out what we're up to! You have to take some risks to be successful in business and in life, but don't put your neck on the line for no good reason.*



put (one's) oar in(to) (something) 1. To offer or express one's opinion (on some matter), even though it was not asked for or desired. Primarily heard in UK. *I don't know why you feel you have to put your oar into every dispute Terry and I are having. The members of the board are perfectly capable of arriving at a decision of their own accord, so I'll thank you for not putting your oar in, Tom.* 2. To involve oneself in an intrusive or nosy manner into something that is not one's business or responsibility. Primarily heard in UK. *I wish my neighbors would quit putting their oars in and just leave us alone! Liam, don't put your oar into your brother's affairs—he can manage well enough on his own.*

put (one's) pants on one leg at a time (just like everybody else) To be an ordinary human being; to go through life like everyone else. (Used especially in reference to someone who is of an elevated social status, such as a celebrity, star athlete, member of royalty, etc. Variations of "everybody else" are also often used, such as "the rest of us," "you and me," "ordinary people," and so on.) Primarily heard in Australia. *Because our only interaction with celebrities is through the media, it's easy to forget that they are just human beings who put their pants on one leg at a time. The superstar comedian's latest non-fiction book gives you a quirky insight into her day-to-day life, and reminds you that she puts her pants on one leg at a time just like the rest of us. Even though I made my millions at a young age, I was determined that I would still put my pants on one leg at a time just like everybody else.*

put (one's) shoulder to the wheel To make a sustained, concentrated, and vigorous effort; to work very hard and diligently. *After I was nearly expelled in my first year of college, I decided to stop fooling around, put my shoulder to the wheel, and get as much out of my degree as I could. I know that the new deadline is tight, but if everyone puts their shoulders to the wheel, I know we can get it done in time!*

put (one's) thinking cap on To begin thinking very hard about something, especially a solution to a problem. *If we all put our thinking caps on, I'm sure we can come up with a way to earn enough money to go to the baseball game this weekend. A: "Well, boss, what do you think we should do?" B: "Just let me put my thinking cap on for a minute."*

put (one's) trousers on one leg at a time (just like

everybody else) To be an ordinary human being; to go through life like everyone else. (Used especially in reference to someone who is of an elevated social status, such as a celebrity, star athlete, member of royalty, etc. Variations of "everybody else" are also often used, such as "the rest of us," "you and me," "ordinary people," and so on.) Primarily heard in UK. *Because our only interaction with celebrities is through the media, it's easy to forget that they are just human beings who put their trousers on one leg at a time. The superstar comedian's latest non-fiction book gives you a quirky insight into her day-to-day life, and reminds you that she puts her trousers on one leg at a time just like the rest of us. Even though I made my millions at a young age, I was determined that I would still put my trousers on one leg at a time just like everybody else.*

put (one's) two cents in To share one's opinion or point of view, generally when it has not been asked for. *I find Jeff a bit trying at times. He always insists on putting his two cents in no matter what the topic is, and no matter how much, or how little, he knows about it! If I can just put my two cents in, I think the staff would really appreciate a bump in their pay.*

put (one's) two cents' worth in To share one's opinion or point of view, generally when it has not been asked for. *I find Jeff a bit trying at times. He always insists on putting his two cents' worth in no matter what the topic is, and no matter how much, or how little, he knows about it! If I can just put my two cents' worth in, I think the staff would really appreciate a bump in their pay.*

put (one's/someone's) back up To be or become angry, hostile, defensive, defiant, or irritable, or to instill such a feeling in someone else. *John put his back up when his parents brought up the subject of college. Election season always puts my dad's back up.*

put (one's/someone's) mind to rest To assuage or relieve someone's or one's own worry, anxiety, dread, fear, etc. *I know you're anxious to hear how your father is doing after the surgery, so let me put your mind to rest: he's going to make a full recovery. I'm trying to put my mind to rest about these debts, but I just can't get it out of my head.*

put (one's/someone's) name in the hat To submit one's own or someone else's name for consideration in a selection, such as a competition, application pool, election, etc. *I'm thinking about putting my name in the hat*

for class president! Just so you know, I put your name in the hat for a chance to win an all-expenses-paid trip to Florida! As has been widely predicted, the governor announced today that he was putting his name in the hat for the presidential election next year.

put (oneself) across To communicate and express oneself clearly and effectively, such that others can understand one's opinions, ideas, and what one is like on a personal level. *Jared has a bit of social anxiety, so he has trouble putting himself across around other people he doesn't know. The most important thing when you are speaking in front of an audience to is make sure you put yourself across well.*

put (oneself) at (one's) ease To calm, comfort, or reassure oneself; to make oneself comfortable or relaxed. *I think we could all put ourselves at ease if we had some personal reassurance from the owners that our jobs weren't in danger. Welcome to my estate, dear guests! I want you to have a most pleasant time here, so please put yourselves at your ease.*

put (oneself) in (someone's) place To imagine oneself in the situation or circumstances of another person so as to understand or empathize with their perspective, opinion, or point of view. *Before being quick to judge someone for their actions, you should always try to put yourself in their place. Everyone is human, after all. Put yourself in my place and then tell me what you would have done! It isn't as straightforward as you're making it seem!*

put (oneself) in (someone's) shoes To imagine oneself in the situation or circumstances of another person, so as to understand or empathize with their perspective, opinion, or point of view. *Before being quick to judge someone for their actions, you should always try to put yourself in their shoes. Everyone is human, after all. Put yourself in my shoes and then tell me what you would have done, Dan! It isn't as straightforward as you're making it seem!*

put our cat down See [put \(an animal\) down](#).

put our clock back See [put the/\(one's\) clock\(s\) back](#).

put our clock forward See [put the/\(one's\) clock\(s\) forward](#).

put out a/the fire **1.** Literally, to extinguish a fire. *The firemen were able to put out the fire before too much damage was done to our house.* **2.** To

deal with an emergency or urgent matter rather than ordinary day-to-day tasks. *I spent so much time today putting out a fire with our supplier that I didn't even have a chance to read my emails.*

put out fires To deal with emergencies or urgent matters rather than ordinary day-to-day tasks. *I spent so much time today putting out fires with our suppliers that I didn't even have a chance to read my emails.*

put out of business See [be put out of business](#).

put out the red carpet (for someone) **1.** Literally, to unroll a large red rug or carpet for a very distinguished or important guest to walk on. *The theater put out the red carpet for the duke, who was attending the opening night of the play that evening.* **2.** By extension, to welcome someone with a great or elaborate display of hospitality, ceremony, or fanfare. *Since Jake was their only child, Robert and Sarah always put out the red carpet for him whenever he returned home from college. We're just popping by for a cup of tea and a quick catch-up, no need to put out the red carpet!*

put out the welcome mat (for someone) To welcome someone with a warm or elaborate display of friendliness and hospitality. *My auntie always puts out the welcome mat whenever we call around for a visit. The principal likes to put out the welcome mat for new teachers every autumn, so they can start of the school year on a positive note.*

put (out) to sea To begin or set out on a voyage at sea. *I thought life as a sailor would be filled with adventure, but I've come to really dread putting out to sea. Our cruise puts to sea in just 10 days, I can't wait!*

put someone at ease See [put \(one\) at \(one's\) ease](#).

put (someone) behind bars To arrest someone and hold him or her in prison; to sentence someone to serve time in prison. *I heard that they put Mike's uncle behind bars for robbing a liquor store! The cops put our son behind bars on a charge of drunk driving, so we have to go down to the station to bail him out.*

put (someone) in the picture To keep someone informed, aware, or up to date (about something); to involve someone in something. *Just make sure you put the boss in the picture about the status of the project. I want to be put in the picture when the jewels are sold. Don't cut me out of the profit!*

put (someone or something) out of business To cause or force

a person, company, group, or organization to cease commercial trading. *The advent of digital books has revolutionized the publishing industry, but unfortunately it has also put a lot of traditional book sellers and publishers out of business. The government put us out of business after news of alleged insider trading was leaked to the media.*

put (someone or something) under a microscope To begin closely inspecting someone or something; to examine someone or something with intense scrutiny. *After I got that official reprimand at work, it feels like my bosses are putting me under a microscope. The country's surveillance methods are being put under a microscope lately, after news sources learned that it had been eavesdropping on its own citizens' communications.*

put (someone or something) under the microscope To begin closely inspecting someone or something; to hold someone or something up to intense scrutiny. *After I got that official reprimand at work, it feels like my bosses are putting me under the microscope. The press has put the country's surveillance methods under the microscope since it emerged that it had been eavesdropping on its own citizen's communications.*

put (someone or something) (up) on a pedestal To believe or behave as if someone or something is perfect, extraordinarily wonderful, or better than others, to the extent that one is unable to see its potential flaws or faults. *I know it's easy to be smitten with a romantic partner, but I don't think it's healthy for one to put the other up on a pedestal. Stephen has been putting classic literature on a pedestal ever since college, so he gets really judgmental of other genres he deems to be inferior.*

put (someone) out of humour old fashioned To put someone in an irritable, grouchy, or unhappy mood; to make someone feel unwell, displeased, or in poor spirits. Primarily heard in UK. *Having lived in Gibraltar for most of my life, where the weather remains temperate throughout the year, I must say that these awful London winters put me quite out of humour. It always puts me out of humour to think about the state of our country's political system for too long.*

put (someone) out of sorts old fashioned To put someone in an irritable, grouchy, or unhappy mood; to make someone feel unwell, displeased, or in poor spirits. Primarily heard in US. *Having lived in Florida for most of my life, where the weather remains temperate throughout the*

year, I must say that these awful New York winters put me quite out of sorts. It always puts me out of sorts to think about the state of our country's political system for too long.

put (someone) right To correct someone's attitude, belief, or behavior; to make sure someone understands something correctly. *I had to put Stephen right after I realized that he'd been operating the machinery wrong this whole time. Helen told me she thought the moon landing was faked, so I had to put her right!*

put (someone) straight To correct someone's attitude, belief, or behavior; to make sure someone understands something correctly. *I had to put Stephen straight after I realized that he'd been operating the machinery wrong this whole time. Helen told me she thought the moon landing was faked, so I had to put her straight!*

put (someone) through the hoop To subject someone to some ordeal, difficulty, trial, or punishment; to force someone to undergo an unpleasant experience. *My mother's recent bout with cancer has really put us through the hoop this year. I don't think Jake is a great fit for the military. His superiors are constantly putting him through the hoop for his disobedience.*

put (someone) through the mangle To subject someone to some ordeal, difficulty, trial, or punishment; to force someone to undergo an unpleasant experience. *My mother's recent bout with cancer has really put us through the mangle this year. I don't think Jake is a great fit for the military. His superiors are constantly putting him through the mangle for his disobedience.*

put (someone) to the sword To slay or execute someone, especially in or as a consequence of war. *These prisoners will be shown no mercy: we shall put them to the sword before sunrise.*

put (someone) under the cosh To force (someone) to contend with a difficult or stressful situation; to put (someone) under pressure or difficulty. Primarily heard in UK. *Local businesses have been increasingly put under the cosh by the austerity measures imposed by the government after the economic crash. Middlesbrough has really been putting Manchester United under the cosh in this second half.*

put (someone) under the pump To put (someone) under pressure

to perform, succeed, or achieve results. Primarily heard in UK. *The fast-food giant has been put under the pump in the last few years by dropping sales and sliding market value. The cricket community has really put the ageing batsman under the pump to deliver results this season, or else consider retirement.*

put (someone's) teeth on edge **1.** To greatly irritate or annoy someone, especially to the point of affecting their nerves. (A less common variant of "set someone's teeth on edge.") *Nothing puts my teeth on edge like seeing these damn cyclists run every red light in town! I don't know what it is about Terry, but there's something about his demeanor that just puts my teeth on edge!* **2.** To cause someone to be upset, nervous, or uncomfortable. *Please don't tell me about your surgery, it puts my teeth on edge hearing about blood and gore.*

put (something) into action To execute a particular plan or decision. *Now that we've devised this chore schedule, we need to put it into action with our housemates. I spent the weekend at the library, putting my research plan into action. The changes outlined in this meeting will be put into action tomorrow.*

put (something) in(to) perspective To clarify, appraise, or assess the true value, importance, or significance of something. *Seeing the devastation caused by a natural disaster like that really puts our petty gripes and problems in perspective, doesn't it? You don't think it's that big a deal? Well, let me put it into perspective for you: each of us will get 10 years in prison if we're caught.*

put (something) on one side To keep something separate, reserved, or in stasis so as to use or deal with it later. *The players on this team need to put their frustrations with one another on one side until after the championship match. I think I'll put that research paper on one side until I have these smaller assignments completed.*

put (something) on the back burner To establish something as being a low priority; to give something less or little thought or attention; to postpone, suspend, or hold off on doing something. *I'm going to be putting work stuff on the back burner for a while once my son is born. I think we should put painting the house on the back burner until we decide on what furniture we want to buy.*

put (something) on the front burner To establish something as a being a high priority; to give something more or a lot of thought or attention; to decide to do something immediately, right away, or sooner than other things. *Now that I'm finished with work for the summer, I can put my thesis on the front burner again. We need to put picking out furniture on the front burner before we even discuss painting the house.*

put (something) on the long finger To delay or postpone something indefinitely or for a long time; to procrastinate. Primarily heard in Ireland. *I've been meaning to send in my college applications, but I keep putting it on the long finger. Buying life insurance might not be something you want to think about, but if you're planning on starting a family, you shouldn't be putting it on the long finger.*

put (something) right To fix, correct, or make amends for something. *I know I said some things I shouldn't have, so I'm here to put things right between us. We need to put this right before we launch the product, or else we'll have bigger problems once it's in the wild.*

put (something) straight To straighten something out or make something properly arranged; to fix, correct, or make amends for something. *There are a few details in this contract we need to put straight before I'm ready to sign it. Tom's brother really made a mess of things with the company, but there's still time to put things straight. Sorry I can't come out with you tonight, I've just got to put my marriage straight before I can think of doing anything else.*

put (something) through its paces To give something a thorough testing or examination so as to evaluate its worth, ability, or functionality. *I can't wait to take this new sports car out on the open road so I can put it through its paces! Whenever you're buying a piece of equipment second hand, it's best to put it through its paces before you hand over the money for it.*

put (something) to one side To keep something separate, reserved, or in stasis so as to use or deal with it later. *The players on this team need to put their frustrations with one another to one side until after the championship match. I think I'll put that research paper to one side until I have these smaller assignments completed.*

put (something) to rights To restore or arrange something to its

proper, natural, or original state or condition. *I never worry about keeping my hotel room tidy, because I know they'll send someone to put it to rights once I leave. That new assistant is completely useless. Now I'm going to have to spend the entire weekend putting this contract to rights!*

put (something) to work To actively use something, such as a skill, trait, or object. *You're a smart guy, so put that brain of yours to work and come up with a solution to this problem. If Sam just puts his boyish charm to work, he'll raise lots of money for us at the event tonight. Put that broom to work and sweep up this garage, will you?*

put stock in To pay attention to something; to have or invest faith or belief in something; to accept something. Often used in the negative. *Oh, John is very dependable—I would put stock in his promises. Our managers put stock in their employees' abilities, and I think that definitely contributes to our company's success. Don't put stock in their criticism—they're just jealous.*

put store by (something or someone) To have faith, confidence, or belief in someone or something; to care about, appreciate, or respect someone or something. *I, however, have put store by the promise of the afterlife, so I choose to lead my life piously and devoutly. I'm afraid my brother should be kept off the list of guests, as he's not one to put great store by obeying social rules or etiquette. It's important to have close friends in life that you may put store by when times are tough.*

put store in (something or someone) To have faith, confidence, or belief in someone or something; to care about, appreciate, or respect someone or something. *I, however, have put store in the promise of the afterlife, so I choose to lead my life piously and devoutly. I'm afraid my brother should be kept off the list of guests, as he's not one to put great store in obeying social rules or etiquette. It's important to have close friends in life that you may put store in when times are tough.*

put that right See [put \(something\) right](#).

put the acid on (someone) To beg, importune, or proposition (someone) for something, such as a money loan, a favor (sexual or otherwise), or information. Primarily heard in Australia, New Zealand. *My no-account brother-in-law is always putting the acid on for a money loan—which, I'll add, he has never once paid back. It's like he's surprised when*

women in a random bar don't all come up putting the acid on him.

put the animal down See [put \(an animal\) down](#).

put the bee on (someone) To ask or pressure someone for a loan or donation of money. Primarily heard in US. *Jane's good-for-nothing brother always comes around our place every couple of weeks to put the bee on us for a few bucks. The alumni association of my old university puts the bee on me once or twice a year looking for a donation.*

put the bite on (one) To ask or pressure someone for a loan or donation of money. Primarily heard in US. *Jane's good-for-nothing brother is always coming skulking around our place every couple of weeks to put the bite on us for a few bucks. The alumni association of my old university puts the bite on me once or twice a year looking for a donation.*

put the dampener on (something) To discourage or deter something; to make something less enjoyable, pleasant, or fun; to extinguish or lessen people's enthusiasm for something. (A less common variant of "put a dampener on something.") *The foul weather really put the dampener on our picnic yesterday. Without question, this tax scandal has put the dampener on the senator's likelihood of being re-elected. CDs quickly became the dominant format for music, but when digital formats arrived soon thereafter, it put the dampener on CD sales just as quickly.*

put the damper on (something) To discourage or deter something; to make something less enjoyable, pleasant, or fun; to extinguish or lessen people's enthusiasm for something. (A less common variant of "put a damper on something.") *The foul weather really put the damper on our picnic yesterday. Without question, this tax scandal has put the damper on the senator's likelihood of being re-elected. CDs quickly became the dominant format for music, but when digital formats arrived soon thereafter, it put the damper on CD sales just as quickly.*

put the genie back in the bottle To attempt to revert a situation to how it formerly existed by containing, limiting, or repressing information, ideas, advancements, etc., that have become commonplace or public knowledge. Almost always used in the negative to denote the impossibility of such an attempt. *Many people lament the ubiquity and pervasive nature of social media, but no one will be able to put that particular genie back in the bottle.*

put the hammer down To press down the accelerator (of an automobile) as far as possible; to accelerate to or travel at an automobile's maximum speed. Primarily heard in US. *It would normally take us three days driving to New York from Colorado, but with my brother putting the hammer down the whole way, we made it in two.*

put the plug in the just See [put a/the plug in the jug](#).

put the screws to (someone) To exert excessive and coercive pressure, force, or threats of violence on someone. *The bank has really started putting the screws to me ever since I began missing my mortgage payments. I'll send a bit of muscle around tomorrow to put the screws to him. Then we'll see if he's still so sure he won't sign the contract.*

put the touch on (someone) To ask or pressure someone for a loan or donation of money. Primarily heard in US. *Jane's good-for-nothing brother always comes around our place every couple of weeks to put the touch on us for a few bucks. The alumni association of my old university puts the touch on me once or twice a year looking for a donation.*

put the whammy on To curse someone. A "whammy" is an evil spell typically bestowed upon one's enemies. *I think my ex-girlfriend put the whammy on me or something because I can't get a date anymore. My favorite team is playing for the championship, so I put the whammy on their opponents.*

put the wind up (someone) To make someone very anxious, upset, or frightened. *If they keep putting pressure on you, we'll threaten them with legal action; that should put the wind up them!*

put the/(one's) clock(s) back To adjust the time on one's clock(s) back by one hour to account for the end of daylight saving time. *Don't forget to put your clock back tonight. I hate having to put the clocks back every autumn, it's such an antiquated custom.*

put the/(one's) clock(s) forward To advance the time on one's clock(s) ahead by one hour to account for the beginning of daylight saving time. *Don't forget to put your clock forward tonight or you'll end up oversleeping tomorrow! I hate having to put the clocks forward every spring, it's such an antiquated custom.*

put themselves across See [put \(oneself\) across](#).

put themselves at ease See [put \(oneself\) at \(one's\) ease](#).

put themselves in someone else's place See [put \(oneself\) in \(someone's\) place](#).

put themselves in someone else's shoes See [put \(oneself\) in \(someone's\) shoes](#).

put thinking cap on See [put \(one's\) thinking cap on](#).

put through facings See [put \(one\) through \(one's\) facings](#).

put through the hoop See [be put through the hoop](#).

put through the hoop See [put \(someone\) through the hoop](#).

put through the mangle See [put \(someone\) through the mangle](#).

put through the mangle See [be put through the mangle](#).

put through the wringer See [be put through the wringer](#).

put through the wringer See [put \(one\) through the wringer](#).

put to one side See [put \(something\) to one side](#).

put to rights See [be put to rights](#).

put to rights See [put \(something\) to rights](#).

put to sea See [put \(out\) to sea](#).

put to the blush To be made to blush, usually from shame or embarrassment. *I had to leave the dinner party after being put to the blush by my own mother, who decided that my shortcomings were an appropriate topic of conversation.*

put to the proof To be tested, or to test something. *I'm hopeful that the invention will now finally work properly, but it needs to be put to the proof first.*

put to the sword See [be put to the sword](#).

put to the sword See [put \(someone\) to the sword](#).

put to work See [put \(one\) to work](#).

put to work See [put \(something\) to work](#).

put trousers on one leg at a time See [put \(one's\) trousers on one](#)

[leg at a time \(just like everybody else\).](#)

put two cents in See [put \(one's\) two cents in.](#)

put two cents' worth in See [put \(one's\) two cents' worth in.](#)

put under See [put \(one\) under.](#)

put under a microscope See [put \(someone or something\) under a microscope.](#)

put under the cosh See [put \(someone\) under the cosh.](#)

put under the microscope See [put \(someone or something\) under the microscope.](#)

put under the pump See [put \(someone\) under the pump.](#)

put up a smoke screen To create a diversion or otherwise draw attention away from someone or something. *Look, we need to put up a smoke screen so that the committee stops investigating the funds we embezzled. As soon as my mother starts prying into my dating life, I put up a smoke screen by asking my grandfather about his favorite fishing spots—a topic he could talk about for hours. Works every time!*

put-up job A deliberate attempt to con or deceive someone. *The want ad ended up being a put-up job designed to scam money from unsuspecting victims.*

put up on a pedestal See [put \(someone or something\) \(up\) on a pedestal.](#)

put you at ease See [put \(one\) at \(one's\) ease.](#)

put you behind bars See [put \(someone\) behind bars.](#)

put you down for See [put \(one\) down for.](#)

put you in the picture See [put \(someone\) in the picture.](#)

put you on the griddle See [put \(one\) on the griddle.](#)

put you on the hot seat See [put \(one\) on the hot seat.](#)

put you out of business See [put \(someone or something\) out of business.](#)

put you out of humor See [put \(someone\) out of humour.](#)



put you out of sorts See [put \(someone\) out of sorts](#).

put you right See [put \(someone\) right](#).

put you straight See [put \(someone\) straight](#).

put you through the hoop See [put \(someone\) through the hoop](#).

put you through the mangle See [put \(someone\) through the mangle](#).

put you through the wringer See [put \(one\) through the wringer](#).

put you through your facings See [put \(one\) through \(one's\) facings](#).

put your affairs in order See [put \(one's\) affairs in order](#).

put your ass on the line See [put \(one's\) ass on the line](#).

put your back up See [put \(one's/someone's\) back up](#).

put your butt on the line See [put \(one's\) butt on the line](#).

put your clock back See [put the/\(one's\) clock\(s\) back](#).

put your clock forward See [put the/\(one's\) clock\(s\) forward](#).

put your hand to See [put \(one's\) hand to \(something\)](#).

put your hands together See [put \(one's\) hands together \(for someone or something\)](#).

put your hat in the ring See [put \(one's\) hat in\(to\) the ring](#).

put your head in the lion's mouth See [put \(one's\) head in the lion's mouth](#).

put your head in the wolf's mouth See [put \(one's\) head in the wolf's mouth](#).

put your head on the block See [put \(one's\) head on the block](#).

put your John Hancock on See [put \(one's\) John Hancock on](#).

put your life on the line See [put \(one's\) life on the line](#).

put your lights out See [put \(one's\) lights out](#).

put your mind to rest See [put \(one's/someone's\) mind to rest](#).

put your name in the hat See [put \(one's/someone's\) name in the hat](#).

put your neck on the block See [put \(one's\) neck on the block](#).

put your neck on the line See [put \(one's\) neck on the line](#).

put your oar in See [put \(one's\) oar in\(to\) \(something\)](#).

put your pants on one leg at a time See [put \(one's\) pants on one leg at a time \(just like everybody else\)](#).

put your shoulder to the wheel See [put \(one's\) shoulder to the wheel](#).

put your thinking cap on See [put \(one's\) thinking cap on](#).

put your trousers on one leg at a time See [put \(one's\) trousers on one leg at a time \(just like everybody else\)](#).

put yourself across See [put \(oneself\) across](#).

put yourself at ease See [put \(oneself\) at \(one's\) ease](#).

put yourself in someone else's place See [put \(oneself\) in \(someone's\) place](#).

put yourself in someone else's shoes See [put \(oneself\) in \(someone's\) shoes](#).

(one) puts (one's) pants on one leg at a time Someone being spoken of or referred to is just an ordinary human being. Used especially in reference to someone who is of an elevated social status, such as a celebrity, star athlete, member of royalty, etc. The phrase is often followed by "just like everybody else." Primarily heard in US. *Because our only interaction with celebrities is through the media, it's easy to forget that they put their pants on one leg at a time, just like everybody else. The superstar comedian's latest non-fiction book provides a quirky insight into her day-to-day life, and reminds you that she puts her pants on one leg at a time just like the rest of us. I might be the youngest billionaire in the world, but I still put my pants on one leg at a time!*

puts (one's) trousers on one leg at a time (just like everybody else) A saying emphasizing that someone is just an ordinary human being. (Used especially in reference to someone who is of an elevated social status, such as a celebrity, star athlete, member of royalty, etc. Variations of "everybody else" are also often used, such as "the rest of us,"

"you and me," "ordinary people," and so on.) Primarily heard in UK. *Because our only interaction with celebrities is through the media, it's easy to forget that they put their trousers on one leg at a time, just like everybody else. The superstar comedian's latest non-fiction book provides a quirky insight into her day-to-day life, and reminds you that she puts her trousers on one leg at a time just like the rest of us. I might be the youngest billionaire in the world, but I still put my trousers on one leg at a time!*

pwn slang To defeat someone soundly or perform at a superior level. It most often refers to video games, where it likely originated as a typo of "own," a slang term with the same meaning. *I totally pwnd him in Mario Kart last night. He told me he pwned the math test, so I don't think it's going to be that tough. Wow, you guys played great today. You were pwning out there!*

Pyrrhic victory A victory that is not worth achieving because of the excessive toll it takes on the victor. *Winning the lawsuit was a Pyrrhic victory, since it cost us everything we had.*

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Q

quake in (one's) boots To tremble with fear or nervousness. (Sometimes said sarcastically.) *My brother is so strong and scary-looking that people quake in their boots when he threatens them. Ooh, I'm really scared of you! I'm quaking in my boots, you frighten me so!*

quake like a leaf To tremble violently with fear or nervousness. *My brother is so strong and scary-looking that he leaves people quaking like a leaf when he threatens them. I was quaking like a leaf when I went up to deliver my speech.*

Quaker gun A replica gun, usually made of wood. The name references the Quakers' belief in pacifism. *This Quaker gun should spook our enemies—from that far away, they won't be able to see that it's a decoy, and we'll have time to escape.*

the quality The condition of something, usually as good or bad. *I can barely hear you—the quality of this phone call is terrible. I was willing to spend a little more on these boots because the quality is great.*

quantum jump A sudden or important change or improvement. *That brand-new shopping center is a quantum jump from the old, run-down mall that used to be in that location.*

quantum leap A sudden or important change or improvement. *Gary's new job in upper management is a quantum leap forward from his old position at the factory.*

(a) quarter of (a given hour in time) A quarter of an hour (15 minutes) before the named hour in time (e.g., "quarter of six" would mean 5:45). Primarily heard in US. A: "What time does the movie start?" B: "Not until a quarter of eight, so we've got plenty of time!" I thought I'd be home already, but with this traffic, it'll be quarter of before I'm back.

quarter past (a given hour in time) A quarter of an hour (15 minutes) after the named hour in time. A: "What time does the movie start?" B: "Not until a quarter past eight, so we've got plenty of time!" I thought I'd be home already, but with this traffic, it'll be quarter past before I'm back.

quarter-pounder A hamburger that weighs roughly four ounces (a quarter of a pound) before it is cooked. The phrase is best-known as the name of a hamburger served at McDonald's fast food restaurants. *I think I'm going get a quarter-pounder for dinner tonight—what would you like?*

que sera sera A phrase that suggests that the future is uncertain or out of one's control. Its most common spelling is in Spanish, and it is usually understood to mean "whatever will be will be." A: "How are you not stressed about getting your exam grades back?" B: "Oh, que sera sera! I studied, I took the tests—what else can I do now?"

Queen Anne is dead A sarcastic phrase said in response to outdated news. A: "Did you know that Kelly is getting a divorce?" B: "Oh please, that happened months ago. Did you know that Queen Anne is dead?"

queen bee A woman who has authority or is in a dominant or favored position over her peers. An allusion to the (typically) lone egg-laying female of a bee colony. *Martha fancies herself a queen bee after her promotion, but she's only an assistant supervisor. You'll have to ask the queen bee before you put through any more orders on the company card.*

Queen's weather Good weather, especially on a day that an outdoor event is scheduled to happen. The phrase refers to Queen Victoria, who tended to have favorable weather conditions at her public appearances. *With how much it's rained this month, we were so lucky to have Queen's weather for our wedding weekend.*

queer bashing slang The act of attacking someone, either physically or verbally, for being homosexual. Primarily heard in UK. *How can people say such hurtful things? This queer bashing has got to stop!*

queer duck A rather unusual, strange, eccentric, or peculiar person. *His new girlfriend is nice enough, but she's a bit of a queer duck, don't you think?*

queer fish Someone who is very strange. Primarily heard in UK. *Everyone could tell he was a queer fish as soon as he walked into the party with his mismatched clothing.*

queer in the attic slang Mentally impaired, either due to stupidity or intoxication. In this phrase, "attic" is used as a synonym for "one's mind." *I have no idea what I told you last night—I'd been at the pub for a while before you got there, so I was a little queer in the attic. Is he queer in the attic? How*

could he make such a reckless decision?

quelle surprise A French phrase that means "what a surprise." Often said sarcastically. A: "*Ruth isn't coming tonight? Quelle surprise.*" B: "*I know, she's ditched us at the last minute once again.*"

quench (one's) thirst at any dirty puddle To be sexually promiscuous. *In my day, you had one sexual partner your whole life—now, people will just quench their thirst at any dirty puddle!*

question mark An unknown or uncertainty. The question mark is the grammatical symbol used to punctuate interrogative sentences (i.e. questions). *I don't know why the experiment turned out this way—it's a real question mark right now. Injuries have left the team with a big question mark at the position of quarterback.*

question mark over An element of doubt surrounding the quality, ability, or future of (something). *If we don't secure new funding soon, there is going to be a question mark over the future of this agency. The recent media coverage of the scandal has left a question mark over whether he should remain CEO of the company.*

a question of time An inevitability or eventuality; something that is or seems sure to happen at some point in the future. *With your reckless spending behavior, it's just a question of time before you go broke.*

quibble about (something) To argue, dispute, or contend (with someone) about something, especially that which is trivial or petty. *I'm happy enough with following your plan, so let's not quibble about the details. The couple stood quibbling about the bill, much to the waiter's consternation.*

quibble over (something) To argue, dispute, or contend (with someone) over or about something, especially that which is trivial or petty. *I'm happy enough with following your plan, so let's not quibble over the details. The couple was just quibbling with one another over the bill, much to their waiter's consternation.*

quiche-eater A man who lacks or does not conform to stereotypical masculine characteristic; an effeminate male. (From the book *Real Men Don't Eat Quiche* (1982) by Bruce Feirstein.) *Well, it's no surprise that a quiche-eater like yourself won't put up a fight when his honor is being insulted! So I'm considered a quiche-eater just because I don't swill beer all day and hold*

sexist opinions?

quick as a bunny See [\(as\) quick as a bunny](#).

quick as a flash See [\(as\) quick as a flash](#).

quick as lightning See [\(as\) quick as lightning](#).

a quick drop and a sudden stop Death from either falling from a great height or from hanging. *I wouldn't get too close to the edge of that cliff if I were you, you'd have a pretty quick drop and a sudden stop.*

quick-fire Occurring in rapid succession. *There were so many quick-fire questions that I felt like I was at an interrogation, not a job interview! Her quick-fire style of storytelling is very engaging.*

quick fix A fast and often temporary solution to a problem. *There is no quick fix for your financial problems. You must learn to budget your money and gradually cut down on your expenses.*

quick one A brief stop or break to have an alcoholic beverage. *Let's stop by the bar for a quick one before we go home. I'm not looking to stay at the bar all night. Let's just grab a quick one before we go to the game.*

quick study A person who can learn new material quickly. Primarily heard in US. *You daughter is making great progress in her piano lessons—she's really a quick study.*

quicker than you can say Jack Robinson Extremely quickly; almost immediately; suddenly or in a very short space of time. *Once I'm finished with high school, I'll be outta this two-bit town quicker than you can say Jack Robinson! I was out fishing one day when, quicker than you can say Jack Robinson, a 20-pound trout jumped out of the water and right into my lap!*

quid pro quo A favor done for someone in exchange for a favor in return. This Latin phrase means "something for something." *You wash my car, and I'll drop off your dry cleaning—quid pro quo. Our company has a specific policy against quid pro quo, to prevent unfair treatment and harassment.*

quiet as the grave See [\(as\) quiet as the grave](#).

quit (something) cold turkey To stop doing something abruptly. The phrase is most often used to describe the sudden cessation of a drug.

After smoking for so long, I should have never tried to quit cold turkey—the withdrawal symptoms are unbearable. I'm so impressed that you quit gambling cold turkey!

quit the funny stuff To stop joking or fooling around and be serious. (Said as an imperative.) *The boss told us to quit the funny stuff and get ready for the meeting. All right kids, quit the funny stuff and open your books to page 53.*

quit while the going is good To cease, end, or give up (doing) something before it becomes too difficult or the consequences become too severe. *There are some reports that the market is about to take a dive, so I reckon we should quit while the going's good. Listen, kid, there's no way you can win this fight, so why don't you quit while the going is good?*

quote chapter and verse See [give chapter and verse](#).

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R

the rabbit died The woman to whom we are referring is pregnant; the pregnancy test was positive. (From an early pregnancy test developed in 1931 in which the urine of a woman thought to be pregnant was injected into a female rabbit; if the woman was pregnant, the rabbit's ovaries would react. A common misconception at the time was that the rabbit would die if the woman was pregnant, hence the expression.) *I saw Carol shopping for maternity clothes in the mall the other day. I guess the rabbit died! Honey, the rabbit died! It looks like we're going to have a baby!*

rabbit hole A situation, journey, or process that is particularly strange, problematic, difficult, complex, or chaotic, especially one that becomes increasingly so as it develops or unfolds. An allusion to *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll, it is used especially in the phrase "(go) down the rabbit hole." *Overhauling the current tax legislation is a rabbit hole I don't think this administration should go down at this point. I've stayed away from drugs and alcohol since coming to college. I have an addictive personality, so I decided to just avoid that rabbit hole altogether.*

rabble rouser Someone who incites others to emotional reaction and/or action; someone who tries to make trouble. The term is always used in a negative way. *How can you listen to that fool? He's just a rabble rouser trying to sway mindless followers so that they join his cause.*

raccoon eye(s) **1.** Discoloration in the area surrounding the eye(s) due to an accumulation of blood, as caused by periorbital ecchymosis (i.e., "black eye(s)"). Likened to the black patches around the eyes of a raccoon. *He had a pretty bad raccoon eye after the bully punched him in the face. I had raccoon eyes for several days after my car accident.* **2.** A discoloration immediately around—and especially under—the eye(s) due to the smearing or heavy application of dark-colored makeup. Likened to the black patches around the eyes of a raccoon. *She wouldn't have such a problem with raccoon eyes if she didn't wear so much makeup to begin with! Whenever I cry, it causes my makeup to run and give me raccoon eyes.* **3.** A discoloration immediately around—and especially under—the eye(s) due to prolonged fatigue or lack of



sleep. Likened to the black patches around the eyes of a raccoon. *I must not sleep very soundly because I always have these raccoon eyes when I wake up.*

raccoons age See [a coon's age](#).

race against the clock **1.** noun An attempt to accomplish something in a short amount of time. *After getting a flat tire, it was a race against the clock to make it to the airport in time.* **2.** verb To act quickly to accomplish something in a short amount of time. *Jen's going to have to race against the clock if she wants to get her story in tomorrow's newspaper—it's almost time to send it to the publisher!*

race against time **1.** noun An attempt to accomplish something in a short amount of time. *It was a race against time to put out the fire before it spread to the neighboring properties.* **2.** verb To act quickly to accomplish something in a short amount of time. *Jen's going to have to race against time if she wants to get her story in tomorrow's newspaper—it's almost time to send it to the publisher!*

race out of the traps To begin something with great speed, energy, and/or intensity. *The home team raced out of the traps against their competition in an attempt to gain an early advantage. Reporters came racing out of the traps with their questions as the disgraced senator exited the courtroom after the verdict.*

rack and ruin See [wrack and ruin](#).

rack off Get out of here; go away; get lost. Primarily heard in Australia. *Listen, I don't want to buy any, so why don't you just rack off and leave me alone! Rack off, Jerry! I'm sick of your foolishness.*

rag-chewing Discussion, chatting, conversation, etc., especially that which is drawn out or continued at tedious length. *Please turn the radio to a different channel—listening to this rag-chewing is putting me to sleep.*

rag the puck **1.** In ice hockey, to attempt to run out the remaining time in a game by maintaining possession of the puck for as long possible. *The team is notorious for ragging the puck whenever they take the lead.* **2.** By extension, to stall, postpone, or otherwise cause a delay by deliberately engaging in time-wasting activities. Primarily heard in Canada. *Activist groups are claiming that the government has ragged the puck in relation to legislation that would better protect the environment. Quit ragging the puck,*

John, and make a decision already!

rags-to-riches adjective (used before a noun) Characterized by a rise from poverty to great or exceptional wealth. *My uncle's is a true rags-to-riches story: he grew up without a penny, but through sheer determination, he founded his own company and is now one of the wealthiest men in the state.*

ragtag and bobtail The lowest social class; the common people. *You must be joking—a person of my social status can't eat with the ragtag and bobtail at a fast-food place!*

rain-off An event that has been or will be canceled due to inclement weather. Primarily heard in UK. *Spectators are to be aware that there will be no refunds issued in the event of a rain-off. I was really looking forward to the football match this weekend, but it turned out to be a rain-off.*

rained off See [be rained off](#).

rained out See [be rained out](#).

rainout An event that has been or will be canceled due to inclement weather. *Spectators are to be aware that there will be no refunds issued in the event of a rainout. I was really looking forward to the football match this weekend, but it turned out to be a rainout.*

raise a red flag To offer a sign or signal indicating potential, incipient, or imminent danger or trouble. *Didn't the fact that your accountant used to be a drug dealer raise a red flag or two when you started doing business with him? Well, it definitely raised a red flag when he got so angry at me over such a minor thing, but I never thought he could be so unreasonable to live with!*

raise an eyebrow To show confusion, surprise, concern, or disapproval, either literally (often by actually raising an eyebrow) or figuratively. *When I told my mom how much money we would need, she raised an eyebrow and asked me to add it up again. You need to stop coming in late every day—the boss is starting to raise an eyebrow. My grandmother definitely raised an eyebrow when I stopped going to church.*

raise (one's) consciousness To increase one's awareness or understanding of one's own needs or the needs of others. *Traveling abroad really raised my consciousness about the plight of the poor around the world.*

raise (one's) hackles To greatly irritate, annoy, or aggravate one. *The disrespect he showed our professor during class raised my hackles so badly that I had to go take a walk to calm down. The politician has a gift for raising his opponents' hackles during debates.*

raise (one's) hand Literally, to hold one's hand in the air. This phrase is typically used in academic settings, as students raise their hands to indicate that they want to answer or ask a question. *Don't yell out the answers, raise your hands! I do raise my hand in class, mom, but the teacher never calls on me!*

raise the alarm 1. Literally, to activate an alarm. *I think I see smoke coming from the warehouse. Someone run upstairs and raise the alarm!* 2. To alert other people about something dangerous, risky, or troublesome. *A number of top economic advisors tried to raise the alarm before the economic crash, but no policy makers seemed to heed their warnings.*

raise the bar To raise the standards of quality that are expected of or required for something. *Since higher education became available to a greater number of people, businesses have increasingly been raising the bar for entry-level employees.*

raise the curtain (on something) 1. To begin or commence (something). *It's time to raise the curtain on this new project, everyone, so let's not waste any time! After a few delays, the construction crew was finally ready to raise the curtain.* 2. To make (something) publicly known; to reveal or disclose the truth (about something). *In an attempt to head off a public relations disaster regarding his acceptance of donations, the governor decided to raise the curtain at a press conference.*

raise the specter of (something) To make people aware of or worry about something unpleasant, dreadful, or terrifying. Primarily heard in US. *The sudden dip in stock prices has raised the specter of another global recession with some investors. Throughout the Cold War, politicians raised the specter of Communism and the Iron Curtain over anything they thought to be "un-American."*

raise the white flag To indicate one's surrender, defeat, or submission. *All right, I raise the white flag—you win the game. That attack totally decimated us, and we were forced to raise the white flag.*

raised by wolves A set phrase said of one who seems particularly uncouth and/or socially inept. *Why are you eating spaghetti with your hands? Were you raised by wolves? He's so rude, it's like he was raised by wolves!*

raised in the world See [rise \(up\) in the world](#).

rake-off Profits made from a transaction, usually in an inappropriate, illegal, or dishonest way. *The mayor quickly resigned after it was discovered he was taking a rake-off from the local cartel's drug sales.*

rake over old coals To revisit, dredge up, or talk about something that happened in the past, especially that which is unpleasant. Primarily heard in UK. *Now, now, there's no need to rake over old coals, that disagreement happened a long time ago.*

rake over the ashes To revisit, bring up, or spark the memory of something that happened in the past, especially something unpleasant. Primarily heard in UK. *Now, now, there's no need to rake over the ashes, that disagreement we had happened a long time ago.*

rake (something) together To accumulate from various sources, especially in small amounts of increments. (Often said of money.) *I'm trying to rake enough funds together to go on a trip to Florida this summer. There's no way you'll be able to rake together the votes necessary to pass this amendment.*

random number A number selected without any criteria, often by some sort of generator, such as a computer program. *Don't worry, we're not choosing the winner ourselves—we'll draw a random number to determine who wins.*

rang her bell See [ring \(someone's\) bell](#).

rap across the knuckles A quick, minor punishment that serves as a warning. *The public was outraged that the company only received a rap across the knuckles from the EPA after being caught illegally dumping chemicals in the river.*

rap on the knuckles A quick, minor punishment intended to serve as a warning. *The public was outraged that the company only received a rap on the knuckles from the regulatory agency after being caught illegally dumping chemicals in the river.*



rap over the knuckles A quick, minor punishment intended to serve as a warning. *The public was outraged that the company only received a rap over the knuckles from the regulatory agency after being caught illegally dumping chemicals in the river.*

rap sheet A list of a person's criminal history. *The suspect had a rap sheet a mile long due to his numerous run-ins with the police.*

rare as a hen's tooth See [\(as\) rare as hens' teeth](#).

rare as rocking horse crap See [\(as\) rare as rocking horse crap](#).

rare as rocking horse poo See [\(as\) rare as rocking horse poo](#).

rare as rocking horse shit See [\(as\) rare as rocking horse shit](#).

rarely ever Nearly never; very infrequently; only on a few or rare occasions. *We used to go visit Grandma and Grandpa every year when I was a kid, but nowadays, I rarely ever see them. I rarely ever get the chance to go out to the movies alone since having kids.*

rarer than hens' teeth Incredibly scarce or rare; extremely difficult or impossible to find. *Support for the president is rarer than hens' teeth in this part of the country.*

rat fink **1.** One who is regarded as a traitor for reporting criminal activity to the police. Primarily heard in US. *The gang was determined to find the rat fink who told the police about their illegal activities.* **2.** An unpleasant person. *Mike is such a rat fink that I can't even stand being in the same room as him.*

rat race **1.** A fierce competition for success, wealth, or power. *The company's environment felt like a rat race—employees were constantly sabotaging each other to climb the corporate ladder.* **2.** A busy, tiring routine. *Cathy was tired of the rat race and knew she needed to get a less stressful job.*

rat run A minor roadway, usually one that passes through a residential area, that is used as a bypass for drivers who wish to avoid traffic on larger roads or motorways. *The road works over on Broadway have made our street into a rat run, so be sure to keep a close eye on your kids with all these cars zipping by.*

rather you than me (set phrase) I'm glad that I don't have to experience what you just mentioned having to do or go through. A: "My boss

is making me come in this weekend to do an inventory of the entire store. It's going to take forever!" B: "Wow, rather you than me. I'm going to a baseball game this weekend!"

rattle through (something) To undertake to do or say something rather quickly, especially as a means of finishing as soon as possible. *We've only got a few more things to do before we can close up for the night, so let's just rattle through them and get the heck out of here. My boss rattled through the list of regulations so quickly that I couldn't even catch half of what he said!*

raw deal An unfair situation or poor treatment. *Mandy really got a raw deal at that job. They passed her over for so many promotions!*

ray of light **1.** Literally, a beam of light. *A ray of light warmed my face through the window. How can you read in here? There's hardly a single ray of light!* **2.** Someone or something that brings one joy and/or hope, especially in a challenging situation. *My daughter has been a real ray of light these days—I'm so glad to have her here as I fight this illness. After we moved, we got a puppy, which has been such a ray of light for the kids as they adjust to life in a new place.*

ray of sunshine Someone or something that makes others feel happy and positive, often during a difficult time. *My best friend was a real ray of sunshine when I was recovering from surgery.*

razor-sharp **1.** Literally, very sharp, like a razor. *Stand back, that tool is razor-sharp! Please be careful cutting those vegetables with such a razor-sharp knife.* **2.** Particularly clear, perceptive, and/or intelligent. *Victoria may seem quiet, but she always has these razor-sharp insights on the texts we're reading. The think tank is known for razor-sharp analysis of world affairs. A lot of people are funny, but she has razor-sharp wit.*

RBF rude slang An abbreviation for "resting bitch face," a perpetually angry or sullen look on one's face when it is "resting" or neutral (not intentionally making any expression). This phrase is typically only used to describe women. *I'm not mad, I just have RBF. She looks grumpy but she just has RBF. She's actually very approachable!*

reach a pretty pass To encounter or develop into a particularly difficult, troublesome, or bad state or situation. *Now don't spread this around, but I hear things have reached a pretty pass between Mark and his wife.*

Negotiations between management and the striking employees reached a pretty pass when the labor union rejected the company's latest deal.

reach for the moon To set one's goals or ambitions very high; to try to attain or achieve something particularly difficult. *My parents always taught me to reach for the moon when I was growing up—that I could be anything I set my mind to! With all that money, you could do whatever you want. Reach for the moon, kiddo!*

reach for the sky 1. To set one's goals or ambitions very high; to try to attain or achieve something particularly difficult. *My parents always taught me to reach for the sky when I was growing up—that I could be anything I set my mind to! With all that money, you could do whatever you want. Reach for the sky, kiddo!* **2.** A command for one to put one's hands up in a show of surrender, as during a robbery or an arrest. *Reach for the sky, MacAfee, we've got you surrounded!*

reach for the stars Don't limit yourself—aspire to achieve greatness, even if it seems impossible or impractical. *When choosing a career path, don't settle—reach for the stars!*

reach for the stars To set one's goals or ambitions very high; to try to attain or achieve something particularly difficult. *My parents always taught me to reach for the stars when I was growing up—that I could be anything I set my mind to! With all that money, you could do whatever you want. Reach for the stars, kiddo!*

read the fine print To make oneself aware of the specific terms, conditions, restrictions, limitations, etc., of an agreement, contract, or other document, which are often printed in very small type and thus easy to miss. *The terms of the loan look pretty good at face value, but be sure to read the fine print or you could find yourself in a heap of trouble down the line. I know reading the fine print can be tedious, but it's always important to know what you're getting yourself into.*

read the small print To make oneself aware of the specific terms, conditions, restrictions, limitations, etc., of an agreement, contract, or other document (often printed in very small type and thus easy to go unnoticed). *The terms of the loan look pretty good at face value, but be sure to read the small print, or you could find yourself in a heap of trouble down the line. I know reading the small print can be tedious, but it's always important to*

know what you're getting yourself into!

ready and willing Prepared and inclined to do something. *We'll be there, ornaments in hand, ready and willing to help you decorate! If you're going to join this firm, you have to be ready and willing to work long hours and weekends.*

ready cash Cash funds that are immediately available to spend. *It's good to invest your money, but you should also have some ready cash in case of emergency.*

ready for the knacker's yard In a state of ruin or failure due to having become useless or obsolete. Refers to a slaughterhouse for old or injured horses. *Once a booming industry, home video rental was ready for the knacker's yard as soon as the Internet became a common household utility.*

ready money Cash funds that are immediately at hand to spend. *I hear he has expensive taste, so if you're going to date him, be sure you've got plenty of ready money. Good thing his wife's family has plenty of ready money. I don't know how they could afford to raise a child otherwise.*

the real deal **1.** A person or thing who is genuinely superior or impressive in some regard and is therefore worthy of appreciation or respect. *Boy, that superstar lawyer they brought in is the real deal. She's the one who took down Big Oil in court! Wow, this Corvette is the real deal! I never want to drive another car again!* **2.** The bare truth or facts of a matter. *I'm in the middle of writing a book that gives people the real deal on the ties between elected officials and megacorporations.*

a real dilly Something or someone remarkable, excellent, or very entertaining. "Dilly," an American term from the early 1900s, possibly comes from the first syllable of the word "delightful" or "delicious." Primarily heard in US. *I tell you, she's a real dilly. Out at 6 a.m. for a run, getting the kids off to school at 7, then out to manage the firm at 8. That film last night was a real dilly, I couldn't stop thinking about it all night.*

a real dynamo Someone who has boundless energy, enthusiasm, determination, or ability. A dynamo (short for dynoelectric machine) was the first electric generator that could produce direct current for industrial purposes; the application of the term for a person implies that they are capable of creating a sustained force or productive energy. *Once she is set on*

a task, she never lets up. She's a real dynamo on the job.

a (real) frog-choker A particularly heavy or torrential downpour of rain. (Chiefly heard in the southern United States.) *It's a real frog-choker out there today—looks like we'll have to have our barbecue another day. There's no way I'm biking to work in a frog-choker like this!*

a (real) frog-strangler A particularly heavy or torrential downpour of rain. (Chiefly heard in the southern United States.) *It's a real frog-strangler out there today—looks like we'll have to have our barbecue another day. There's no way I'm biking to work in a frog-strangler like this!*

a real howler 1. A mistake, error, or blunder that causes great laughter at the expense of the person who commits it, i.e., one that results in "howling" laughter. *Do you remember when John actually slipped on a banana peel? That was a real howler.* **2.** An extremely funny joke, anecdote, or remark that results in "howling" laughter. *Boy, Jerry sure knows some real howlers. I thought my sides were going to split I was laughing so hard.*

a real live one See [a live one](#).

real men don't eat quiche A phrase that highlights the belief that men should eat meat and other traditionally masculine foods, rather than more delicate foods like quiche (a savory pie-like dish made from eggs). *Come on, real men don't eat quiche! How about a nice steak instead?*

real time 1. noun The present time, or nearly so. The term is used in applications in which some kind of result or imagery is displayed simultaneously (or nearly simultaneously) with when it is occurring. *The images you're seeing are in real time—this is a live broadcast.* **2.** adjective (often hyphenated) Immediate or nearly immediate; present and completely up-to-date. *Don't worry, we can get real-time information on the other flights that are available.*

real time See [in real time](#).

a (real) toad-choker A particularly heavy or torrential downpour of rain. (Chiefly heard in the southern United States.) *It's a real toad-choker out there today—looks like we'll have to have our barbecue another day. There's no way I'm biking to work in a toad-choker like this!*

a (real) toad-strangler A particularly heavy or torrential downpour of rain. (Chiefly heard in the southern United States.) *It's a real toad-strangler*

out there today—looks like we'll have to have our barbecue another day. There's no way I'm biking to work in a toad-strangler like this!

rearrange (the) deckchairs on the Titanic To partake in or undertake some task, activity, or course of action that will ultimately prove trivial or futile in its possible effect or outcome. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *For all his blustering about overhauling the education system, the prime minister might as well have been rearranging the deckchairs on the Titanic for all the good these proposals will do. You're applying for arts council funding? Why don't you just rearrange deckchairs on the Titanic while you're at it?*

reasonable person In law, a hypothetical person against which the defendant's actions in a case are judged. The goal is to determine whether or not a "reasonable person" would act as the defendant did. *Any reasonable person would have done the same thing my client did in that situation, and you know it!*

rebound relationship A romantic relationship that one begins, often as a means of distraction, while still recovering from the end of a different relationship. *Oh, Peggy doesn't really love that guy—she's just in a rebound relationship so that she doesn't feel so heartbroken about Pat leaving her.*

receive a sneck posset See [sneck posset](#).

receive (one's) just deserts To receive that which one deserves, especially a punishment or unfavorable outcome. (Note: The phrase is often misspelled as "just desserts," due to the pronunciation of "deserts" and "desserts" being the same in this context.) *The CEO cheated his clients out of nearly \$4 million, but he received his just deserts when he was stripped of everything he owned and sent to prison.*

receive the fright of (one's) life To experience an extreme and sudden sensation of shock, surprise, or fear. *I received the fright of my life when I noticed someone standing right behind me. Mary received the fright of her life as the car ahead of her swerved across traffic.*

Received Pronunciation An accent of British English derived from that of the British upper class in the early 20th century. It is commonly used in public broadcasting, as well as in schools such as Oxford and Cambridge. *If you want people to take you seriously, you need to lose your country accent and adopt the Received Pronunciation. Studying at Cambridge has caused*

me to start speaking in the Received Pronunciation.

reck (one's) own rede To trust in and use one's own advice. "Reck" means "to heed," while "rede" means "advice"; both are archaic words. A: *"I have told my sister to question men she deems untrustworthy."* B: *"Then, my lady, if you do not trust Sir Walton, I think you need to reckon your own rede and confront him."*

reckless abandon See [with reckless abandon](#).

reckon without (one's) host To plan without taking into account all the necessary or important factors or people. It was originally used to describe one who did not consult one's host, such as an innkeeper, when calculating one's lodging expenses. A: *"You made plans for Mother's Day without even asking your mom what she wants to do?"* B: *"I know, I really reckoned without my host on that one."*

red as a beetroot Blushing, usually from embarrassment. *I was red as a beetroot when the teacher made me speak in front of the whole class. Oh, Mike definitely likes you—he turns red as a beetroot every time you're around!*

red cent The smallest possible amount of money. Primarily heard in US. *I worked all of that overtime and never received a red cent for my efforts.*

red dog In American football, a defensive tactic in which the offensive player who receives the ball from the snap (usually the quarterback) is charged at by multiple defensive players; a blitz. *The quarterback has been sacked again after another suffocating red dog by the defense.*

red-face test A hypothetical test meant to measure whether or not some question or thing provokes discernible embarrassment, discomfiture, or displeasure in a person. *The old red-face test is a simple but subtle way of telling which employees are the most honest and work the hardest. Well, my proposal didn't pass the red-face test with the boss. I guess we can kiss that idea goodbye.*

red-faced 1. Blushing from embarrassment. *I was completely red-faced when the teacher made me speak in front of the whole class. Oh, Mike definitely likes you—he gets red-faced every time you're around!* **2.** Having a rosy complexion due to strenuous activity. *When I got home from school, I found my father all red-faced and yelling at my brother. I was red-faced after*

lugging that armchair into the house all by myself.

red flag A sign or signal indicating potential, incipient, or imminent danger or trouble. *There are a couple of red flags you need to look out for to make sure your company stays in the black. Well, it definitely raised a red flag when he got so angry at me over such a minor thing, but I never thought he could be so unreasonable to live with!*

red-flag term A word that is particularly offensive or controversial and thus sparks an immediate emotional reaction. The phrase may reference the red flag because it is the tool traditionally used by matadors to aggravate bulls. *How dare you say a red-flag term like that to me, your own mother! Please don't say any red-flag terms at this dinner party.*

a red flag to a bull A willfully infuriating or aggravating provocation; something that incites great anger or annoyance. An allusion to matadors' practice of waving red flags at a bull during a bullfight, though the color of the flag actually makes no difference to the animal. *John's gone to gloat about his success over his brother, which is a red flag to a bull if I've ever seen one. You do realize that bringing your new girlfriend to your ex-wife's house is like a red flag to a bull, right?*

red herring Something irrelevant that diverts attention away from the main problem or issue. *The candidate used the minor issue as a red herring to distract voters from the corruption accusations against him. The mystery writer is known for introducing red herrings to arouse the reader's suspicion of innocent characters.*

red-letter day A very important or significant day. *My college graduation was a real red-letter day for my whole family.*

red light **1.** noun On a traffic light, the color that means "stop." *I pulled up to the red light and stopped the car. Please be careful driving out there—people are maniacs and don't even stop at red lights!* **2.** noun A message or signal to stop. *I'm really not interested in dating Rob, and I thought I gave him a red light, but he keeps pursuing me nonetheless.* **3.** adjective (often hyphenated) Indicative of a brothel (due to the practice of using red lamps to show that an establishment is a brothel). *Be careful if you venture into the red-light district, there are a lot of shady characters there.*

red man An offensive term for a Native American, or Native Americans in general.

red meat Any meat that is red when raw. The phrase is perhaps most often used to describe beef. *I tried to be a vegetarian, but I missed eating red meat too much. I know that your brother doesn't eat red meat, so I'm grilling hamburgers for us and chicken for him.*

red meat rhetoric Rhetoric used by campaigning politicians that is forceful and poignant, as will excite or inflame their supporters. *The incumbent president, who has so far been somewhat lackluster this campaign delivered a blistering speech last night filled with red meat rhetoric.*

red mist A state of extreme anger, excitement, or competitive arousal, such as might cloud one's judgment or senses. Primarily heard in UK. *Their striker isn't the most consistent player on the pitch, but once he sees the red mist, you had better get out of his way. I'm not sure what happened. I was at the pub having a pint, and then someone insulted me, and I guess the red mist must have descended, because, the next thing I knew, I was being dragged away with bloodied knuckles.*

the red mist descends To fall into a state of extreme anger, excitement, or competitive arousal, such as might cloud one's judgment or senses. Primarily heard in UK. *Their striker isn't the most consistent player on the pitch, but once the red mist descends, you had better get out of his way. I'm not sure what happened. I was at the pub having a pint, and then someone insulted me, and I guess the red mist must have descended, because, the next thing I knew, I was being dragged away with bloodied knuckles.*

a red rag to a bull A willfully infuriating or aggravating provocation; something that incites great anger or annoyance. An allusion to matadors' practice of waving red flags at a bull during a bullfight, though the color of the flag actually makes no difference to the animal. *John's gone to gloat about his success over his brother, which is a red rag to a bull if I've ever seen one. You do realize that bringing your new girlfriend to your ex-wife's house is like a red rag to a bull, right?*

red sky at night, shepherd's delight A red sky at sunset is a sign that good weather will follow. The full phrase is "Red sky at night, shepherd's delight; red sky in the morning, shepherd's warning." *I think we're going to have a nice sunny day tomorrow. Look at that sunset—red sky at night, shepherd's delight.*

red sky in the morning, shepherd's warning A red sky at

sunrise is a sign that bad weather will follow. The full phrase is "Red sky at night, shepherd's delight; red sky in the morning, shepherd's warning." *I think we're going to get a bad storm today. Look at that sunrise—red sky in the morning, shepherd's warning.*

red state In U.S. general elections, a state that votes by majority for candidates belonging to the Republican Party. *This is a firmly entrenched red state, so Democratic campaigners don't waste a whole lot of time or money trying to persuade us to vote for them.*

red wine Wine that is red in color from the dark-colored grapes used to make it. Types of red wine include Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon. *What kind of red wine are you serving tonight? I'll have a glass of the red wine, thank you.*

redd up (chiefly Midwestern United States) To clean or tidy up; to empty or clear out (something or some space). Primarily heard in US. *When we were growing up, we were all expected to help redd up after each meal. I'll be spending this weekend redding up the garage.*

redeem (one)self To make amends for one's past misdeeds or shortcomings by doing something positive. *Matt's grades were not great at the beginning of the semester, but he's totally redeemed himself and gotten A's on every test since. My sister was mad at me for not spending time with her, so I redeemed myself by getting us tickets to see her favorite band.*

redeye An overnight flight that arrives at its destination very early in the morning. Primarily heard in US. *My original flight was cancelled, so I caught the redeye back to Philadelphia and got in at 4 in the morning.*

reduce (something) to rubble To completely destroy something, either literally or figuratively. *The tornado reduced whole towns to rubble. Being rejected by that famous director totally reduced my confidence to rubble.*

refrigerator mother A mother who is especially cold and distant toward her children. The "refrigerator mother" was once seen as a contributing factor in autistic children. *I'm really trying to be more affectionate to my children, so as to not be seen as a refrigerator mother.*

regular brick A good-natured, dependable man. *Oh, Earl will certainly help you with that—he's a regular brick.*



reign of terror A period of oppression by a hostile ruler. Sometimes used hyperbolically. *The people could only tolerate the dictator's reign of terror for so long before they started a revolution. Is mom finished with her reign of terror, or do we have to keep cleaning the house every weekend?*

reign supreme To be the best or most influential thing in a particular area or era. *France's fashion houses still reign supreme today. Disco music reigned supreme in the 1970s.*

remain in touch To maintain contact with another person, especially at intervals so as to stay up to date with each other's lives. *My old high school friends and I tried remaining in touch after we graduated, but we all started drifting apart once college got underway. Now, make sure you remain in touch, OK? I want to hear all about your time in Paris!*

remain to be seen To not yet be clear, certain, or known. *We can see for ourselves the disaster's immediate impact, but the long-term environmental effects remain to be seen. Of course, it remains to be seen whether the president's popularity on other issues will carry over into this more controversial endeavor.*

Renaissance man One who possesses skills and knowledge in many different areas. *Bob can fix cars, repair computers, and talk about anything from physics to philosophy. He's an all-around Renaissance man.*

rent boy A boy or young man who is a prostitute. Primarily heard in UK. *The young man was taken from his parents and forced to work overseas as a rent boy.*

respice finem A Latin phrase meaning "look to the end." *Don't make an impulsive decision that will hurt you later—respice finem.*

rest on (one's) oars To relax after achieving a goal or doing a physically strenuous activity (such as rowing, as the phrase suggests). *I know you're happy to have won the election, but you can't just rest on your oars—you need to start planning your first act as class president now. After painting all morning, I had to rest on my oars for a bit before I moved on to the next room.*

rest (squarely) on (someone's) shoulders To be or become the sole responsibility of someone. *I never intended for the company's well-being to rest on your shoulders, but you're the only one who can take over for me*

while I'm ill. With my father gone, putting food on the table for the family rests now squarely on my shoulders.

resting bitch face rude slang A perpetually angry or sullen look on one's face when it is "resting" or neutral (not intentionally making any expression). This phrase is typically only used to describe women. *I'm not mad, I just have resting bitch face. She looks grumpy but she just has resting bitch face. She's actually very approachable!*

return to form 1. noun A restoration to a previously established standard of excellence or brilliance. *This latest film marks a welcome return to form for the beloved filmmaker, whose more recent films have fallen well below the expectations of critics and fans alike.* 2. verb To return to a previously established standard or state of excellence or brilliance. *The president definitely returned to form in the debate last night, much to the joy (and relief) of her supporters.*

return to (one's) muttons antiquated To return to a given topic or subject that one is discussing, explaining, ruminating over, talking about, etc. Taken from a humorous translation of the French idiom "revenons à nos moutons" (literally, "let us return to our sheep," which has the same meaning), which itself came from the medieval play *La Farce de Maître Pathelin*. *The constable, frustrated with the drunkard's rambling explanation, bade him return to his muttons. But I have strayed off course from the lecture, so let us return to our muttons before we run out of time.*

reveal (one's) (true) colors To reveal what one really believes, thinks, or wants; to act in accordance with one's real personality, character, or disposition. Primarily heard in US. *Dave said all along that he only wanted this deal because it was in the company's best interest, but he revealed his true colors once he realized that he wouldn't get any special commission for his efforts. It's only in times of crisis that your friends will really reveal their colors.*

reveal (one's) (true) stripes To reveal what one really believes, thinks, or wants; to act in accordance with one's real personality, character, or disposition. (A less common variant of "show one's (true) colors.") *Dave said all along that he only wanted this deal because it was in the company's best interest, but he revealed his true stripes once he realized that he wouldn't get any special commission for his efforts. It's only in times of crisis that your*

friends will really reveal their stripes.

revolving door A cycle in which employees do not remain in a position for more than a short amount of time before they leave, thus requiring the position to be filled frequently. Likened to a revolving door in front of a building where people can come and go at the same time. Primarily heard in US. *Because public sector jobs typically cannot pay as much as private sector jobs, many positions become revolving doors.*

revolving door syndrome 1. In psychiatry, a patient's pattern of repeated admissions to psychiatric facilities. *Since Penny is back here yet again, we need to devise a different treatment plan for her, to try and stop this revolving door syndrome.* **2.** The behavior exhibited by adult children who can no longer afford to live on their own and thus return home to live with their parents. *My son is living with me once again and, given his disinterest in steady employment, I doubt this revolving door syndrome will ever end!*

rhyme off To quickly articulate a litany of things or recite the items of a list. *When asked if we had any baby names in mind, Sarah started rhyming them off one after the other. I then rhymed off a list of things that needed to be changed or improved if the company wished to survive.*

rhyme or reason The particular logic, sense, method, or meaning of a given situation, action, person, thing, group, etc. (Most often used in negative formations to indicate an absence or lack thereof.) *Could someone please explain to me the rhyme or reason behind the program's selection process? I've looked over it several times, but there's no rhyme or reason to the agreement we were sent this morning.*

rich seam A multifaceted topic that provides a lot of interesting material for discussion or writing. *Judy's childhood experiences were a rich seam for her as she wrote her first novel.*

Richard Roe In legal proceedings, the name given to the second male whose identity is unknown or protected (as "John Doe" would be the name assigned to the first such male). *I'm researching Richard Roe's case right now.*

rickle o' banes A Scottish phrase used to describe someone who is extremely thin. A "rickle" is a group of something, while "banes" are bones. *You've just become a rickle o' banes during your time abroad, so I'm going to*

make all of your favorite meals now that you're home.

rickroll To provide Internet users with a seemingly legitimate link that redirects to the music video for Rick Astley's 1987 song "Never Gonna Give You Up." *I thought I was reading a reliable source until I was rickrolled. Now "Never Gonna Give You Up" is stuck in my head!*

rid out (chiefly Midwestern United States) To clean, empty, or clear out (something or some space). Primarily heard in US. *You've got to learn to rid out some of these negative thoughts you've been having, and make room for some positive emotions. I'll be spending this weekend ridding out the garage.*

rid up (chiefly Midwestern United States) To clean or tidy up; to empty or clear out (something or some space). Primarily heard in US. *When we were growing up, we were all expected to help rid up after each meal. I'll be spending this weekend ridding up the garage.*

a riddle wrapped in an enigma That which is so dense and secretive as to be totally indecipherable or impossible to foretell. It is a shortened version of a line used by Winston Churchill to describe the intentions and interests of Russia in 1939: "I cannot forecast to you the action of Russia. It is a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma; but perhaps there is a key. That key is Russian national interest." Many versions, variations, and appropriations of the quote, its structure, and its meaning have since been in use. *I can't make any sense of this calculus textbook, it's like a riddle wrapped in an enigma. I just don't have any idea what Mary expects from me; she's a riddle wrapped in an enigma.*

a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma That which is so dense and secretive as to be totally indecipherable or impossible to foretell. It is from a line used by Winston Churchill to describe the intentions and interests of Russia in 1939: "I cannot forecast to you the action of Russia. It is a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma; but perhaps there is a key. That key is Russian national interest." Many versions, variations, and appropriations of the quote, its structure, and its meaning have since been in use. *Political campaigns make my head hurt. They're just a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma.*

ride on a rail To be punished harshly, often publicly, and perhaps culminating in exile. The phrase originally referred to a punishment in which a wrongdoer was paraded around town on a rail and then exiled. *Now that*

this scandal is public knowledge, I'm afraid that I'm going to ride on a rail before it's all over.

ride (on) a wave of (something) To enjoy the advantage of or continue to benefit from a situation that is successful, fortunate, trendy, etc. *Jonathan has been riding a wave of celebrity ever since he was cast in the leading role for the new blockbuster. The popular Internet artist has ridden a wave of support from her fanbase to launch an incredibly successful crowdfunding campaign for a new project.*

ride on (one's) coattails To benefit from someone else's success; to use someone else's success as a means to achieve one's own. *Everyone knows you've been riding on the governor's coattails for the last two years, but once her term ends you'll be on your own. Jonathan rode on the famous professor's coattails to get some recognition for his own work from several esteemed academic journals.*

ride (on) the coattails of (someone) To benefit from someone else's success; to use someone else's success as a means to achieve one's own. *Everyone knows you've been riding on the coattails of the governor these last two years, but once her term ends, you'll be on your own! Jonathan rode the coattails of his professor to get some recognition for his own work in several esteemed academic journals.*

ride (on) the wave (of something) To enjoy the advantage or benefit of a particularly successful, popular, fortunate, interesting, etc., moment or period of time. *Jonathan has been riding the wave of his sister's celebrity ever since she was cast in that blockbuster film series. The popular Internet artist has ridden the wave of support from her fan base to launch an incredibly successful crowd funding campaign for a new project. Ever since I won the lottery, everybody has been really friendly to me, and I've just been riding the wave ever since!*

ride (one's) hobby-horse To frequently or incessantly talk or complain about a subject, topic, or issue in which one is excessively interested. *Ah, here we go again. Once grandpa starts riding his hobby-horse about the government, there's no stopping him!*

ride (one's) luck To find success through fortune or chance rather than through one's own agency or risk-taking. (Used especially in reference to sporting events.) Primarily heard in UK. *Cheltenham has been riding their*

luck lately, winning their last two games on penalty kicks alone, but they'll need to step up their game if they hope to have a place in the championship.

ride or die noun One's closest, most reliable or trustworthy friends. *Liz is my ride or die—I can totally count on her to be there for me in any situation.*

ride-or-die chick slang A very devoted romantic partner. *I know my girl will be waiting for me when I get out of rehab because she's just a ride-or-die chick.*

ride roughshod over (someone or something) To treat someone or something with marked disdain, brutality, or contempt; to act without regard for the wellbeing of something or someone. *In her ascent to the top of the political ladder, the senator rode roughshod over anyone who stood in her way. The new management team has ridden roughshod over the projects that we've been planning for months.*

ride shanks' mare To walk. "Shanks" refers to one's legs. *The store is close enough that we don't need to drive, we can just ride shanks' mare.*

ride (someone's) ass 1. To frequently or constantly harass, nag, or upbraid someone to do, accomplish, or complete something. *The boss is riding everyone's ass to get the project finished by next week. Quit riding my ass, I'll get it done eventually!* 2. To tailgate, i.e. to follow unnecessarily closely behind another vehicle while driving. *I wish that trucker wouldn't ride my ass down this hill.*

ride (someone's) back To frequently or constantly harass, nag, or upbraid someone to do, accomplish, or complete something. *The boss is riding everyone's back to get the project finished by next week. Quit riding my back, I'll get it done eventually!*

ride (someone's) butt To frequently or constantly harass, nag, or upbraid someone to do, accomplish, or complete something. *The boss is riding everyone's butt to get the project finished by next week. Quit riding my butt, I'll get it done eventually!*

ride tall in the/(one's) saddle To be or remain proud, stoical, or august in one's manner or composure. *Even after two years of a losing war, the general still rode tall in his saddle before his troops. I'll have nothing to do with your schemes or plot. One day, you're going to be locked up and lose everything, and I'll be riding tall in the saddle when you do.*



ride the pine In sports (especially baseball), to remain sitting on the bench, rather than be an active participant in the game. Primarily heard in US. *I'm not going to play next year if coach makes me ride the pine again this season. I rode the pine for the rest of the game after I pulled my hamstring sliding to first base.*

ride the rail(s) To travel on a vehicle mounted on rails (especially a train or streetcar). *I know it takes a lot longer than flying, but I love riding the rail from Portland to Vancouver. People often romanticize riding the rails across the country as hobos did during the Great Depression, but I doubt many would actually find much pleasure in it.*

ride with the punches 1. Literally, in martial arts (especially boxing), to maneuver one's body away from a blow so as to lessen the force of its impact. *He's not the most aggressive fighter—instead, he relies on his endurance and skill, riding with the punches to wear down his opponent until the best moment to strike.* 2. By extension, to adapt to setbacks, difficulties, or adversity so as to better manage or cope with their impact on one's life. (Note: This phrase is a less common variant of the phrase "roll with the punches," which carries the same literal and figurative meanings.) *Losing my job was really tough, but I've just been trying to ride with the punches until I get back on my feet. I learned that my grandfather passed away right before my final exams in college, but I just rode with the punches and did the best that I could.*

riffraff Undesirable, disreputable, or vulgar people, often used in a condescending manner. *I wouldn't be seen in a place like that, there's a lot of riffraff that hang out around there.*

rifle approach In business, a marketing strategy in which a very narrow, focused, or selective group, demographic, or population is targeted or advertised to. *Our competitors have been drawing away a large proportion of the market share of teenaged customers, so our next marketing campaign is going to have a rifle approach to get them back.*

a rift in the lute A small problem or flaw in something that jeopardizes the whole. *I hope this bit of rust isn't a rift in the lute and doesn't end up damaging the whole paint job.*

rig out 1. To fit, fasten, or equip (with something). *Tom just bought a new motorcycle that's been rigged out with a super powerful engine. I'm planning*

on rigging out my computer with a new processor and some extra memory once I save up a bit of money. **2.** To clothe or be dressed, especially in a fancy or fashionable attire. *Well, it looks like Jeremy rigged out nicely for the prom. I've got to get home and rig out before our big date tonight.*

right as a trivet See [\(as\) right as a trivet](#).

right as ninepence See [\(as\) right as ninepence](#).

right back at you An exclamation used to express the same sentiment back to the original speaker; same as "you too" and "same to you." Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *A: "You're one of the nicest people I know." B: "Aw, thanks! Right back at you!" A: "You act like an idiot sometimes." B: "Right back at you, you jerk."*

right back atcha An exclamation used to express the same sentiment back to the original speaker; same as "you too" and "same to you." ("atcha" is a colloquial contraction of "at you.") Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *A: "You're one of the nicest people I know." B: "Aw, thanks! Right back atcha!" A: "You act like an idiot sometimes." B: "Right back atcha, you jerk."*

right foot foremost Indicative of positive or favorable start. The phrase derives from a Roman superstition that one should enter a room with one's right foot first, so as to ensure good luck. *In an effort to put my right foot foremost this semester, I've already begun to research for my thesis.*

the right hand doesn't know what the left hand is doing One part of an organization or group does not know what the others are doing. *I thought I was supposed to order shirts for the family reunion, but now I hear Aunt Jean did that already. This just proves that we need to have a family meeting—the right hand doesn't know what the left hand is doing! We both scheduled meetings in the conference room at the same time because the right hand doesn't know what the left hand is doing.*

right now At this moment in time; immediately. *I need the money right now. The delivery guy is at the door. I told you to clean your room right now. Not in an hour, not tomorrow—right now!*

right off Immediately; at once; without delay. *Right off, I could tell that the plan had no chance of success. Sarah's parents took to her new girlfriend right off.*

right royal 1. Very fine, enjoyable, or excellent. Primarily heard in UK. *I*

can't wait for Friday—we're going to have a right royal night out on the town. It meant a lot to me that my parents put out such a right royal welcome for me when I came home from university. **2.** Absolute; utter; extreme. Primarily heard in UK. *This course I started last month is a right royal pain in my arse. Well, this is a right royal mess you've found yourself in, eh Bob?*

right spot at the right time See [be in the right spot at the right time](#).

right through like a dose of salts See [go \(right\) through \(one\) like a dose of salts](#).

right to life **1.** noun The belief that every human being has the right to live. The phrase is often used in discussions of war, abortion, and capital punishment, among other topics. *I believe in the right to life, and I'm not going to debate that with you, since you clearly support legalized abortion. How can we claim to believe in the right to life and also support the war effort?* **2.** adjective (often hyphenated) Holding such beliefs. *Yes, I am a member of a right-to-life group, as that cause is very important to me. The right-to-life issues are always the ones that trip up politicians.*

right to work **1.** noun The right of anyone who wants to work to not be prevented from obtaining employment. *They can't block you from applying for that job—you have the same right to work as anyone else!* **2.** adjective (often hyphenated) Relating to laws that prohibit employers from requiring their employees to join a union. Primarily heard in US. *They can't bully you into joining a union—that's what right-to-work laws are for.*

right up her street See [\(just/right\) up \(one's\) street](#).

(right) up (one's) alley Ideally suited to one's interests. *Anna loves watching movies, so I'm sure she'll go to the film festival with you—that's right up her alley.*

(right) up there with (someone or something) Equal in some way to another thing. *Oh, chocolate mousse is right up there with my favorite desserts. Going to a town hall meeting is right up there with getting a root canal, as far as I'm concerned.*

rim job vulgar slang The sexual stimulation of one's anus by another.

ring (someone's) bell **1.** To strike someone with a violent blow to the head, especially as might stun or concuss. *I would have rung that guy's bell if I knew he had been trash-talking you. Sarah's likely to ring your bell if you*

keep harassing her like that. **2.** To be enjoyable, preferable, or satisfactory to someone; to be or provide something that someone wants. A: "How's that new book you're reading?" B: "Eh, it isn't really ringing my bell, to be honest." I'd rather go see the action movie, if that's all right. Dramas just don't ring my bell. **3.** To sexually attract or arouse someone; to bring someone sexual gratification or satisfaction. That redhead from across the bar has been ringing my bell all night. He looks mighty fine, all right. I'd like to take him home and ring his bell!

ringside seat **1.** Literally, a front-row seat next to a boxing ring (thought to be the best place to watch the match). Wow, you got ringside seats to that fight? They must have cost thousands! **2.** By extension, a place in close proximity to a certain situation or event. I unexpectedly had a ringside seat when a fight broke out at the bar. Living near this forest my whole life, I've had a ringside seat to witness the change in the population of birds.

rip-off A bad deal; a fraudulent business or transaction. I can't believe I spent so much on this blender, and it's already broken. What a rip-off! I heard on the news that the charity is a rip-off, so don't send them any money.

rip-off merchant One who cons or otherwise deceives people. I wouldn't play cards against him if I were you—he has a reputation as a rip-off merchant.

rip-snorting mad Extremely angry and agitated; infuriated. My mom was rip-snorting mad when I came home drunk at 2 AM. You've got to learn to stay out of the boss's way when he gets rip-snorting mad like that.

rip (someone or something) to shreds **1.** To criticize, upbraid, or condemn someone or something severely or thoroughly. A: "Have you heard anything about this movie we're about to see?" B: "Well, one reviewer ripped it to shreds, but I still think it's going to be great." I hear John's bosses ripped him to shreds at his annual performance review. **2.** To cause great damage, disorder, or ruin to someone or something. Enjoy the tranquility and order of your house now because soon, your kids will start ripping the place to shreds. Sarah's very first opponent in amateur boxing ripped her to shreds, but that's how it goes for most novice fighters.

ripe for the picking See [be ripe for the picking](#).

ripen up To grow ripe; to become mature enough to harvest or pick. Make sure you plant your tomatoes in a spot that gets plenty of sunshine, or else it

will take a whole lot longer for them to ripen up.

ripple effect The continuing impact that one thing or event has on others. *She always hoped that the kindness she showed others would have a positive ripple effect through her community. Many people believe that the flapping of a butterfly's wings can cause a ripple effect that impacts weather patterns hundreds of miles away.*

rise (up) in the world To elevate or improve one's social, political, and/or financial position in life; to become more successful than one was before. *You're only going to truly rise up in the world if you make a point of rubbing elbows with those of a higher social standing. It's unsurprising how quickly Sarah has risen in the world when you consider that her tenacity and determination are only matched by her intelligence and talent. The Robinsons really rose up in the world after they won the lottery.*

a rising tide lifts all boats economics A strong economy benefits businesses and individuals at all levels. The phrase was popularized by US President John F. Kennedy. *Thanks to the economy doing so well lately, our business has been booming. I guess it's really true what they say, that a rising tide lifts all boats.*

rite of passage An event or activity often performed or experienced as part of passing from one stage of life to another. *Bar Mitzvah celebrations are a rite of passage as Jewish boys become men. Getting lost while trying to find their classrooms is kind of a rite of passage for freshmen at this school.*

rivet counter Someone who demands an exceptionally or unreasonably high level of minute detail or accuracy in something. Used especially in reference to hobbyists, particularly in the field of model train building. *I might be considered a rivet counter by others, but I'm particularly proud of the level of detail that goes into my model sets. I can't stand seeing movies with a rivet counter like Jerry. After every film, he just sits there listing all the factual inaccuracies in it rather than just enjoying the darn thing!*

rivet the eyes on To stare or gape at something. Often used as an imperative. *Rivet the eyes on this—my first A in Chemistry!*

rn An abbreviation of "right now" that is typically used in text messages and written in lower case. *I need coffee rn.*

road hog A driver who takes up too much space on the road, making it



difficult or impossible for other drivers to pass. *Many morning commuters became frustrated at the road hog straddling two lanes.*

a roaring success See [be a roaring success](#).

roast snow in a furnace To attempt a futile, often ridiculous, task. *You're so tiny that there's no way you can carry that armchair upstairs all by yourself—you might as well roast snow in a furnace!*

rob the till To steal the earnings of a shop or restaurant from out of its cash register. *Just remember, this place has insurance, so if anyone comes in with a gun looking to rob the till, you don't offer up any resistance, OK? I hear Janet was fired from her last job for robbing the till.*

robber baron **1.** A disparaging term applied to any of the prominent businessmen in the late 19th-century US who used unethical means to increase industrialization (and thus their own wealth and prestige). *John Rockefeller is usually regarded as a robber baron, but he's certainly not the only one.* **2.** By extension, anyone who achieves great wealth and success by unscrupulous means. *Of course I don't trust him—he's a robber baron who's made all his money by manipulating the stock market!* **3.** In the Middle Ages, a thief who robbed unsuspecting travelers. *Please be mindful of robber barons on your journey through the countryside.*

rock hound **1.** Someone who professionally studies the origin, history, structure, and composition of the Earth; a geologist. *We found some kind of mineral deposit during the dig, so the university is going to send some rock hounds over to have a look at it.* **2.** An amateur collector of rocks, minerals, gemstones, fossils, etc.; one who collects and/or studies such things as a hobby. *Great hike, Dan—nothing to see here but a bunch of boring dirt and stones. Only a rock hound like you could find this interesting!*

rock on An expression of happiness, excitement, or enthusiasm. A: *"I hear our class won a trip to Paris!"* B: *"Rock on! I've always wanted to see Paris!"*

rock the house slang To elicit an enthusiastic response from an audience that one is performing for. *Man, we really rocked the house! Did you see all those people dancing to our music? It's a great speech—I think you're going to rock the house tonight.*

rocket science A pursuit, activity, or endeavor that requires



extraordinary skill or intelligence. Most often used in the negative to imply the opposite. *Look, all you need to do is reformat the hard drive on your computer. It isn't rocket science! I thought it would be simple enough to fix the car's engine on my own, but this turned out to be like rocket science to me!*

rocket up To make very rapid progress in some area. *They're such a popular band that their new single is just rocketing up the charts.*

rocking horse crap See [\(as\) rare as rocking horse crap](#).

rocking horse poo See [\(as\) rare as rocking horse poo](#).

rocking horse shit See [\(as\) rare as rocking horse shit](#).

rocking horse shit vulgar slang Something is extremely rare or unlikely; all but, or most likely, impossible or non-existent. Often used in the phrase "(as) rare as rocking horse shit." Primarily heard in Ireland. *An honest person in politics? Yeah, that's as rare as rocking horse shit. I'm sorry to say, but the part this engine needs is rare as rocking horse shit. They haven't manufactured these in nearly 50 years!*

roger that Message received. The phrase originated in radio communications. A: *"I'll meet you there at 6 o'clock."* B: *"Roger that."*

a Roland for an Oliver An exchange, especially in battle, in which that which is given is equal in measure and might to that which is received. Named for the two legendary medieval knights Roland and Oliver, who fought for the emperor Charlemagne. Their feats and powers were so equally matched that they were considered to be equal measures of military prowess. *The rebels might have scored a victory against us earlier, but we'll be sure to give them a Roland for an Oliver in our next offensive.*

roll back the clock To revisit, recount, return to or recreate a time or era from the past. *The purpose of this conference is to roll back the clock by analyzing remains of early human and trying to gain insight into their way of life. The governor is bent on rolling back the clock and returning us to the ethics of the 1950s. I'd love to roll back the clock to when I was a kid. It was such a happy, carefree time in my life.*

roll back the years 1. To perform at an exceptionally high level despite no longer being young and in one's prime. (Used especially in reference to athletes.) *O'Connor, playing his 15th championship match in this*

league, rolled back the years and stood out as one of the best players on the pitch. Will the retired skater, seeking a gold medal after all this time, be able to roll back the years and keep step with the competition? **2.** To induce a sense or state of nostalgia; to be reminiscent of or make people think about the past. *Wow, those bell-bottom pants you're wearing really roll back the years to the 1970s. Hearing this song again rolls back the years to a time when I was young and carefree.*

roll in the hay A sexual encounter, often one considered casual. *You know, you can try to get to know the girls you date before you have a roll in the hay.*

roll in wealth To be extremely rich; to enjoy the benefits or luxuries of great wealth. *It sickens me to see these politicians roll in wealth while so many of us struggle to keep a roof over our heads. My girlfriend's family has been rolling in wealth for years. I don't know what I can offer her that she doesn't have already!*

roll (one's) eyes To turn one's eyes upward or around in a circle, usually as an expression of exasperation, annoyance, impatience, or disdain. *Don't you roll your eyes at me, young lady! You will finish your homework this instant, or you can kiss your weekend goodbye! I just rolled my eyes as my dad told another one of his corny jokes.*

roll out the red carpet (for someone) **1.** Literally, to unroll a large red rug or carpet for a very distinguished or important guest to walk on. *The theater rolled out the red carpet for the duke, who was attending the opening night of the play that evening.* **2.** By extension, to welcome someone with great or elaborate hospitality, ceremony, or fanfare. *Since Jake is their only child, Robert and Sarah always roll out the red carpet for him whenever he returns home from college. We're just popping by for a cup of tea and a quick catch-up, no need to roll out the red carpet!*

roll out the welcome mat (for someone) To welcome someone with a warm or elaborate display of friendliness and hospitality. *My auntie always rolls out the welcome mat whenever we call around for a visit. The principal likes to roll out the welcome mat for new teachers every autumn, so they can start off the school year on a positive note.*

roll (over) in (one's) grave To (hypothetically) show enormous anger, disfavor, or regret for something that happens after one has died. (That

is, if someone were still alive, they would be greatly upset, angered, or disgusted by what has happened.) *I can't believe you're using our employees' pension payments to prop up a Ponzi scheme. The founder of this once-great company would be rolling in his grave to see its directors stoop so low. Your poor mother would roll over in her grave if she heard the horrible things you were saying about your sister. I can't believe you wrecked your grandfather's prized vintage Ford Mustang. That's enough to make him roll over in his grave!*

roll the dice **1.** Literally, to roll dice, as for or in a game of chance. *I'm usually not much of a gambler, but I couldn't resist heading to the craps table to roll the dice!* **2.** By extension, to take some risk on the hope or chance of a fortunate outcome. *Look, worst case scenario is that we get hit with a fine, so I say we just roll the dice and hope it doesn't come to that.*

roll with the punches **1.** Literally, in martial arts (especially boxing), to maneuver one's body away from a blow so as to lessen the force of the impact. *He's not the most aggressive fighter, but he relies on his endurance and skill, rolling with the punches to wear down his opponent until the best moment to strike.* **2.** By extension, to adapt to setbacks, difficulties, or adversity so as to better manage or cope with their impact on one's life. *Losing my job was really tough, but I've just been trying to roll with the punches until I get back on my feet. Remember to roll with the punches during the debate— don't get hung up on the mistakes that you make.*

roller coaster A series or period of drastic changes that occur without warning. *After she graduated from college, her life became a roller coaster filled with ups and downs as she tried to establish herself as a fashion designer.*

rolling in dough Exceptionally wealthy; having large amounts of money to spend. *I hear her father is rolling in dough, so I wouldn't be too worried about her future. Once we get this plan underway, we'll be rolling in dough in no time!*

rolling in it Exceptionally wealthy; having large amounts of money to spend. *I hear her father is rolling in it, so I wouldn't be too worried about her future. Once we get this plan underway, we'll be rolling in it in no time!*

rolling in money Exceptionally wealthy; having large amounts of money to spend. *I hear her father is rolling in money, so I wouldn't be too*

worried about her future. Once we get this plan underway, we'll be rolling in money in no time!

romp home To deftly or easily win a race, contest, or competition. Primarily heard in UK. *With her arch-rival out of commission with a pulled hamstring, the defending champion romped home at the Olympics once again. Showing their utter superiority on the pitch, the boys in blue look set to romp home to a 6–2 victory.*

romp in To deftly or easily win a race, contest, or competition. Primarily heard in UK. *With her arch-rival out of commission with a pulled hamstring, the defending champion romped in at the Olympics once again. Showing their utter superiority on the pitch, the boys in blue look set to romp in with a 6–2 victory.*

romp to victory To deftly or easily win a race, contest, or competition. Primarily heard in UK. *With her arch-rival out of commission with a pulled hamstring, the defending champion romped to victory at the Olympics once again. Showing their utter superiority on the pitch, the boys in blue look set to romp to a 6–2 victory.*

roof over (one's) head A home in which to live or rest; basic shelter. *Every night, you should be grateful that you have a roof over your head and food on the table.*

room for doubt A chance that something might not be as straightforward or true as it seems. *Because there is still room for doubt in this case, I think we need to review the facts before even considering our verdict.*

room-temperature IQ slang The IQ possessed by an inept computer user. Room temperature is 70 degrees in Fahrenheit and 21 degrees in Celsius—two numbers significantly lower than the average IQ (which is around 100). *I know this design change makes sense to us, but will someone with a room-temperature IQ be able to navigate it?*

root cause The most fundamental, central, or basic causal element of something. *Violence in this part of town is rampant, but the root cause is really poverty and the wide distribution of narcotics. You're never going to solve your company's financial issues if you can't identify the root cause of your flagging sales.*

rooting interest A strong desire to support a particular person or group.



Primarily heard in US. *My brother is a huge sports fan and has a rooting interest in all our local teams. I have a rooting interest in that candidate and am going to be campaigning for her.*

rope of sand Something that is not as strong or stable as it seems. *Yes, you're a fool to trust him, and this allegiance will soon prove to be a rope of sand. I thought I finally had a strong bond with my mother, but it was just a rope of sand—she's left us once again.*

the ropes The details or knowhow about a specific situation, task, job, or role. *I know there's a lot to take in, but your partner has been here for over 10 years and will show you the ropes. This class is intense! You're expected to know the ropes from day one.*

rose-colored Of a shade of pink. *I'm going to wear a rose-colored dress to the wedding this weekend. We love watching the rose-colored clouds at sunset.*

rose-colored glasses An unduly idealistic, optimistic, sentimental, or wistful perspective on or about something. Primarily heard in US. *I know Sarah looks on our childhood with rose-colored glasses, but I can't put aside how difficult my parents' failing marriage was for all of us. Despite doing worse every quarter for the last two years, our boss keeps seeing the business through rose-colored glasses. You need to take off your rose-colored glasses for a moment and realize that there are serious problems in the world that need fixing.*

rose-coloured spectacles An unduly idealistic, optimistic, sentimental, or wistful perspective on or about something. Primarily heard in UK. *I know Sarah looks on our childhood with rose-coloured spectacles, but I can't put aside how difficult my parents' failing marriage was for all of us. Despite doing worse every quarter for the last two years, our boss keeps seeing the business through rose-coloured spectacles. You need to take off your rose-coloured spectacles for a moment and realise that there are serious problems in the world that need fixing.*

rose in the world See [rise \(up\) in the world](#).

rose-tinted spectacles An unduly idealistic, optimistic, sentimental, or wistful perspective on or about something. Primarily heard in UK. *I know Sarah looks on our childhood with rose-tinted spectacles, but I can't put aside how difficult my parents' failing marriage was for all of us. Despite*

doing worse every quarter for the last two years, our boss keeps seeing the business through rose-tinted spectacles. You need to take off your rose-tinted spectacles for a moment and realise that there are serious problems in the world that need fixing.

Rosetta Stone **1.** A tablet found near Rosetta, Egypt, in 1799. Carved with Greek, demotic, and hieroglyphic inscriptions, it became the key to deciphering ancient Egyptian writing. *The discovery of the Rosetta Stone made ancient Egypt accessible to us today.* **2.** By extension, an important clue to understanding something that is challenging or puzzling. *Don't worry, this map will be the Rosetta stone that gets us out of this cave. I've been struggling with this experiment, but these new results may prove to be the Rosetta stone that makes everything else comprehensible.*

rotary dial The disk on a rotary telephone that is turned to dial a phone number. *I hated having to use a rotary dial as a kid—it's so much easier to dial a phone number by pressing buttons.*

a rotten apple A person whose own words or actions negatively impacts an entire group of people. Taken from the proverb "a rotten apple spoils the bunch." *Before you accuse the entire department of wrongdoing, you should try to find the rotten apple that initially caused the problem.*

(a little/bit) rough and ready **1.** Unpolished, imperfect, or unkempt, but generally able or ready for use or action. *This video is a bit rough and ready, but it's pretty close to what we want the finished product to look like. This old truck's a little rough and ready, but it's still the most reliable vehicle I've owned.* **2.** Somewhat lacking in refinement, sophistication, manners, etc. *The workers on the oil rig are a little bit rough and ready, but they're good guys, every single one of them. Yeah, the diner is a little rough and ready, but I think that's what gives it its charm.*

(a little/bit) rough around the edges **1.** Unpolished, imperfect, or unkempt, but generally able or ready for use or action. *This video is still a bit rough around the edges, but it's pretty close to what we want the finished product to look like. This old truck's a little rough around the edges, but it's still the most reliable vehicle I've owned.* **2.** Somewhat lacking in refinement, sophistication, manners, etc. *The workers on the oil rig are a little bit rough around the edges, but they're damn decent chaps, every single one of them. Yeah, my local bar is rough around the edges all right, but I think that's what*

gives it its character and charm. **3.** Somewhat sick or unwell, especially because one is suffering from a hangover. *Bill: "So, I hear you had a wild night out. How you feeling this morning?" Ted: "A little rough around the edges, but not as bad as I thought I'd be."*

rough diamond Someone or something that is unrefined but has many exceptional aspects or underlying potential. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *The young actor was a rough diamond. With some training, she'd become a superstar.*

rough-hewn 1. Having or being in a coarse, unpolished, or unfinished state. *Though these labs employ rather rough-hewn methods and technologies, I can assure you that our results have been second to none. The performances are certainly rough-hewn, that's without a doubt, but I'd say that it actually lends credibility to the characters as being more organic and believable than if their lines had been honed to sterile perfection. 2.* Somewhat lacking in refinement, sophistication, manners, etc. *The workers on the oil rig are a bit rough-hewn, but they're damn decent chaps, every single one of them. I tend to head for the more rough-hewn pubs around town. I just find them more charming than their sleeker counterparts.*

a rough patch A period of trouble, difficulty, or hardship. *Almost every new business experiences a rough patch at some point or another.*

a rough ride A tough time. *If you think going to graduate school while working a full-time job is easy, you're in for a rough ride!*

rough sledding A difficult, turbulent, or troublesome period of time or undertaking. *This administration has gone through some rough sledding over the last year, but the president is determined to regain the trust and support of the American people. Even some of the wealthier areas of the country must brace for rough sledding as fresh austerity measures come into effect on the heels of the IMF bailout. The book can be notoriously rough sledding, but if you're able to stick with it, it is in fact a most rewarding experience.*

rough sleeper Someone who sleeps outside at night (i.e., "sleeps rough"), usually because they have no home. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *The government's aim is to have the number of rough sleepers halved in five years' time. I spent a couple of years as a rough sleeper after my house was repossessed. It's not something I would wish on anyone.*

a rough time A challenging period during which one struggles to do or

cope with something. *John went through a rough time after losing both his job and his wife during the same year. I had a rough time repairing the engine because it was so rusty, but I eventually got it running again.*

a rough trot An especially difficult or turbulent period or series of misfortune(s) or hardship(s). Primarily heard in Australia, New Zealand. *It's certainly been a rough trot for the beleaguered celebrity family, as news of yet another scandal started hitting the media outlets this afternoon. I can't believe Jake's wife was diagnosed with cancer. They've really had a rough trot lately, haven't they?*

round as Giotto's O See [\(as\) round as Giotto's O](#).

round of applause A round of clapping, often as a show of approval or appreciation. *Let's welcome our special guest with a round of applause!*

a round peg in a square hole A person who does not fit in or is not comfortable with others or in a particular situation; someone who is unsuited to a certain task, position, situation, or group of people. (A variant of the more common "square peg in a round hole.") *It only took three months to realize I was a round peg in a square hole at the firm. I guess I've just been raised not to buy into the whole corporate hierarchy of modern business. John was a bit of a round peg in a square hole throughout high school, but when he went to college, he found all sorts of people he could relate to.*

round table **1.** noun An open discussion between several people. *I think we all need to get together and have a round table to come up with a solution to this problem.* **2.** adjective (often hyphenated) Featuring open discussion between several people. *I think we all need to get together and have a round-table meeting to come up with a solution to this problem.* **3.** (usually capitalized) The table where the legendary King Arthur and his knights would gather. *I'm currently reading a book about King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table.* **4.** (usually capitalized) A shorthand way to refer to King Arthur and his knights as a group. *Morgan Le Fay is a known enemy of the Round Table.*

(a)round the bend **1.** In close proximity to another location. Said especially when traveling by car, often when literally approaching a bend. *The store isn't far from here, it's just around the bend.* **2.** slang Crazy *It's freezing today, and you're not going to wear a coat? Have you gone around the bend?* **3.** slang Intoxicated from drugs or alcohol. *Do you remember last*

night at all? You were really around the bend!

(a)round the clock Nonstop. *We have been working round the clock to solve this issue with your security system, but it's going to take us another 24 hours to get it back online. Doctors have been working on him around the clock, but his condition is still critical.*

(a)round the corner 1. In close proximity to another location. Said especially when traveling by car, often when literally approaching a corner. *The store isn't far from here, it's just around the corner.* **2.** Imminent or likely to happen very soon. *My little brother believes that an alien invasion is right around the corner and that we should prepare ourselves for life on another planet. Our company is devoted to the self-driving car and believes that its widespread use is right around the corner.*

roundabouts and swings See [swings and roundabouts](#).

a rousing send-off A lively and enthusiastic farewell celebration thrown in honor of someone who is leaving someplace behind and/or setting off on a new endeavor. *The night before I flew to America, the entire town came out to give me a rousing send-off at the local pub.*

roving eye A propensity to be unfaithful to a romantic partner. *Mary dumped Luke after discovering that he had a roving eye.*

row back To quickly or abruptly reverse or retreat from one's earlier position, decision, or opinion. Primarily heard in UK. *The actor had to row back when he let slip a racist remark during the press conference. The government is rowing back on the decision to increase water charges after nationwide protests erupted on Friday.*

rub salt in(to) the/(one's) wound(s) To make something that is already difficult, unpleasant, or painful even worse; to accentuate, aggravate, or intensify a negative situation, emotion, or experience (for someone). *After losing the championship match, it really rubbed salt in John's wound for his girlfriend to break up with him the next day. My pride was already hurting when I didn't get the job, but hearing that they gave it to Dave really rubbed salt into the wound. I can't believe you would ask me to pay you back on the day that I got laid off. Thanks for rubbing salt in my wounds, man.*

rubber 1. slang An eraser, whether or not it is made from genuine rubber. Primarily heard in UK, Australia, Ireland. *Mark, pass me a rubber, will you?*



I got these calculations all bollocksed up. **2.** slang A condom. Primarily heard in US. *Always remember to wear a rubber, bro.*

rubber check A written order to a bank for a certain amount of funds that has been dishonored because such funds are not available in the account in question. "Rubber" here is a play on the bouncing of a check. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *My ex-husband has been writing rubber checks all across the state.*

rubber check A check that draws upon a bank account does not have enough funds to cover the amount. The check is called "rubber" because it "bounces" (i.e. it is not honored because of insufficient funds). Primarily heard in US. *After years of writing rubber checks to businesses all throughout the city, the man was finally arrested.*

rubber chicken dinner A dinner served at a large catered event, especially a political or corporate fundraising event, in which many people must be served simultaneously and the quality of food suffers as a result. ("Rubber chicken" is sometimes hyphenated.) *I'll tell you, though: more than the long hours on the road, the repetitive speeches, or the manic workload, I cannot stand the rubber chicken dinners when I'm on the campaign trail. We really wanted to throw the whole "rubber-chicken dinner" association out the window for our next charity drive, so we've partnered with a local co-op kitchen to bring fresh, home-cooked meals to the table.*

rubber johnny slang A condom. Primarily heard in UK, Ireland. *Remember, mate: only a fool doesn't wear a rubber johnny on a one-night stand. In an effort to promote safe sexual practices, the student union began handing out rubber johnnies to everyone passing by.*

rubber jungle An aviation term among pilots and airline crew for the effect created when the rubber oxygen masks in a commercial aircraft deploy from its ceiling. *Everyone started to panic when the rubber jungle appeared, so I had to reassure them that it was just a minor hiccup and that we were all perfectly safe.*

rubber room slang A room in which the walls are padded. It is typically found in psychiatric institutions, where it houses one who is not mentally stable, in an effort to prevent self-harm. *That patient kept banging her head against the wall, so she is now in a rubber room for her own safety.*

rubbish in, rubbish out If the data entered is inaccurate, the results

will be too, no matter how sophisticated the machine or program is. *We need to get accurate results, so please check your data thoroughly before entering it in the system—rubbish in, rubbish out, after all.*

ruby slippers The magical shoes that Dorothy wears in *The Wizard of Oz*. *I wish I had a pair of ruby slippers like Dorothy so that I could be transported home with the mere click of my heels.*

rude awakening The shocking instance of learning the unpleasant or unwelcome truth about a situation. *We had a rude awakening when the waiter brought us the bill and we saw how much we had spent on dinner and drinks.*

rue the day (that) (something) happened To feel bitter regret or remorse that something has happened; to wish that something never came to pass. *That no-good, lying cheat! I'll make sure he rues the day he crossed me, if it's the last thing I do! Your dad must be ruing the day he agreed to buy you a car if you got an A in all your classes.*

rue the day (that something happened) To curse or bitterly regret a point in time (in which something happened or one did something). *I swear to you now, you will rue the day you ever crossed me! Men, if their soldiers advance upon us, we must ensure that they will rue the day!*

ruffle a few feathers To do something which annoys, irritates, or upsets other people. *I know my presentation about the effects of climate change is going to ruffle a few feathers, but I have got to raise awareness about this issue! Harry's bombastic, arrogant demeanor tends to ruffle a few feathers, but he's a decent guy at heart.*

ruffle (one's) feathers To annoy, irritate, or upset someone. *Sarah's just teasing you. Don't let her ruffle your feathers like that! Harry's bombastic, arrogant demeanor tends to ruffle people's feathers, but he's a decent guy at heart.*

ruffle some feathers To do something which annoys, irritates, or upsets other people. *I know my presentation about the effects of climate change are going to ruffle some feathers, but I have got to raise awareness about this issue! Harry's bombastic, arrogant demeanor tends to ruffle some feathers, but he's a decent guy at heart.*

rule in To decide definitively that something will or can possibly happen. (Used especially—and somewhat redundantly—in the phrase "not ruled in or



ruled out.") *Look, nothing has been ruled in or ruled out at this stage, so we just have to wait until the doctors have more information to work with. We'll neither rule in nor rule out the possibility of a shakeup in management if this branch's profits continue to fall.*

rule of thumb An approximation; a suggested method or guideline. *A good rule of thumb is to plant your seedlings around the end of May.*

rule OK To be the best; to be the most dominant or in control; to be the most favoured or supported by the public. (Used originally in relation to football clubs or local gangs in graffiti writing.) Primarily heard in UK. *Someone had come with a can of black spray paint and crossed out the big "Leeds Rules OK" that was painted on the side of the school. But in this part of the country, the conservatives rule OK with almost no opposition.*

rule the school slang To be the most popular or influential in one's school. *Now that we're seniors, we're going to rule the school! The popular kids always think they rule the school, but not this year!*

rules are made to be broken A phrase used to justify one's rebellious actions. *A: "But we're not allowed to go into the faculty lounge!" B: "Oh, come on, rules are made to be broken."*

a rum do dated An odd, strange, or surprising occurrence, situation, or turn of events, especially one that might be considered somewhat disreputable or distasteful. Primarily heard in UK. *A young man taking a wife so much older than himself? My word, what a rum do that is! Well, this is a rum do, if I've ever seen one. The kitchen porter has just been made the head chef!*

a rum go dated An odd, strange, or surprising occurrence, situation, or turn of events, especially one that might be considered somewhat disreputable or distasteful. Primarily heard in UK. *A young man taking a wife so much older than himself? My word, what a rum go that is! Well, this is a rum go if I've ever seen one: the kitchen porter has just been made the head chef!*

rumor campaign A concentrated and prolonged effort to damage or ruin someone's or some group's reputation through the perpetuation of rumors, innuendos, and/or falsities, generally as a means of persuading a large number of people against him, her, or them. Primarily heard in US. *The local sheriff's slim lead heading into the election quickly evaporated after he*

found himself at the wrong end of a vicious rumor campaign. I think we need to start a rumor campaign to slow down the competitor's growth in the market, but no one can know that it's coming from us!

rumor mill The source from, or process by, which rumors are generated, spread, and perpetuated among a group of people. Primarily heard in US. *Listen, Barry, you can't believe everything that comes out of the rumor mill. I can guarantee you that there will be no layoffs this year. One of the downsides of having a celebrity status is having every aspect of your life subjected to the Hollywood rumor mill.*

rumour campaign A concentrated and prolonged effort to damage or ruin someone's or some group's reputation through the perpetuation of rumours, innuendos, and/or falsities, generally as a means of persuading a large amount of people against him, her, or them. Primarily heard in UK. *Finding himself at the wrong end of a vicious rumour campaign, the local MP's slim lead heading into the election quickly evaporated. I think we need to start a rumour campaign to slow down the competitor's growth in the market, but no one can know that it's coming from us!*

rumour mill The source from or process by which rumours are generated, spread, and perpetuated among a group of people. Primarily heard in UK. *Listen, Barry, you can't believe everything that comes out of the rumour mill. I can guarantee you that there will be no redundancies this year. One of the downsides of gaining celebrity status is having every aspect of your life subjected to the Hollywood rumour mill.*

run a temperature To have an abnormally high body temperature (a fever), which is indicative of or caused by illness. *Dan: "How's Pete feeling?" Marshall: "Well, he ran a temperature last night, but he seemed a lot better this morning after some rest." I think I've started running a temperature. Maybe I should go lie down.*

run a temperature To have an abnormally high body temperature (a fever), which is indicative of or caused by illness. *Marshall was running a temperature last night, but he seemed a lot better this morning after some rest.*

run about 1. Literally, to run haphazardly or in different directions in an area. Primarily heard in UK. *We took the kids to the park so they could run about for a couple of hours.* **2.** Figuratively, to be exceptionally busy doing

many different tasks or activities, especially in several different locations. Primarily heard in UK. *I've been running about all afternoon getting things for Carol's party this evening. I can't wait for the weekend. I've had to run about all week getting little jobs done for my boss, and I'm exhausted!*

run afoul of (someone or something) To be in severe disagreement, trouble, or difficulty with someone or something; to be at odds with someone or something, especially due to disobeying rules or laws. *Always look into the laws of any place you visit, or you may end up unwittingly running afoul of the local police. Ms. Banks has run afoul of this university for the last time. She is no longer welcome here!*

run amok **1.** To behave or run around in a wild, unruly, out-of-control manner; to be crazy or chaotic. *We tried to have some organized games for the kids, but as soon as they all got here they started running amok. The villagers were cleaning up debris for days after the bulls ran amok through the streets.* **2.** To become bad or go awry; to get out of control; to go haywire. *This whole operation has run amok. I don't know how we can be expected to finish under the deadline in these conditions.* **3.** dated To rush around in a violent, murderous frenzy. This is the phrase's original meaning, taken from Malay. "Amok" also has an older alternative spelling, "amuck." *Members of the warrior clan were known to run amok on the battlefield in a bloodthirsty frenzy.*

run amuck **1.** To behave or run around in a wild, unruly, out-of-control manner; to be or become crazy or chaotic. *We tried to have some organized games for the kids, but they all started running amuck as soon as they got here. The villagers were cleaning up debris for days after the bulls ran amuck through the streets.* **2.** To become bad or go awry; to get out of control; to go haywire. *This whole operation has run amuck. I don't know how we can be expected to finish under the deadline in these conditions.* **3.** dated To rush around in a violent, murderous frenzy. (Note: This is the phrase's original specific meaning, taken from Malay. "Amuck" is an older alternative spelling of "amok," which is preferred today.) *Fueled by alcohol and cocaine, Dave ran amuck when his wife told him she'd been seeing someone else. Luckily, a neighbor called the police when they heard such a commotion.*

run around **1.** Literally, to run haphazardly or in different directions in an area. *We took the kids to the park so they could run around for a couple of*

hours. **2.** Figuratively, to be exceptionally busy doing many different tasks or activities, especially in several different locations. *I've been running around all afternoon getting things for Carol's party tonight. I can't wait for the weekend. I've had to run around all week getting little jobs done for my boss, and I'm exhausted!*

run (a)round in circles To waste one's time and energy engaging in trivial, aimless, or futile activities. *I tried to get an outline drafted for my thesis, but my ideas were so jumbled in my head that I just kept running round in circles. The committee spent all afternoon trying to come up with a new PR proposal, but they ran around in circles the whole time.*

run down the clock In sports, to protect a lead by using up as much possible time that remains in a game or match without giving the opposing team a chance to score, generally by maintaining a passive or defensive strategy. *With just a narrow two-point lead, the home team is trying to run down the clock to hold out for a win. I don't know, Jim, there's a lot of game time left for them to start running down the clock already.*

run for (one's) money **1.** A prolonged period of success. *The slot machine gave me a run for my money, but, in the end, the casino was the only real winner.* **2.** A challenge. *Sure, Sheila still became valedictorian, but Tim really gave her a run for her money!*

run for the hills **1.** To move to higher ground, as in preparation for or in response to a natural disaster. *There are bound to be tidal waves after an earthquake like that. We'd better run for the hills!* **2.** To flee hastily; to clear out or depart quickly. *Uh oh, Uncle Jerome's been drinking again. Run for the hills, everyone! The staff all ran for the hills when it was announced that there would be a stock-take at the end of the shift.*

Run for the Roses A nickname for the Kentucky Derby horse race, at which the winning horse is adorned with a garland of roses. *I never thought much of horse racing until I saw the Run for the Roses in person at Churchill Downs—what a spectacle!*

run foul of (someone or something) To be in severe disagreement, trouble, or difficulty with someone or something; to be at odds with someone or something, especially due to disobeying rules or laws. *Always look into the laws of any place you visit, or you may end up unwittingly running foul of the local police. Ms. Banks has run foul of this*

university for the last time. She is no longer welcome here!

run hot and cold To vacillate between two opposing or starkly different states, opinions, or behaviors. *Dan: "So, how are things going between you and Mallory?" Sarah: "Hard to tell. She runs hot and cold one day to the next, so I can never tell how she really feels!" The boss has been running hot and cold about whether or not we're going through with this project. I wish she would just make a decision!*

run of play The overall course, pace, or flow of a game, situation, or series of action, especially in sports. *McKinley has been entirely controlling the run of play on the court up till now, but that twisted ankle could give his opponent a chance to change the tide. The hockey player, once the most sought after in the league, has been having rather inconsistent run of play this season. Late in the game, the struggling German squad managed to score two goals against the run of play.*

run off her feet See [be run off \(one's\) feet](#).

run off smell of an oily rag Of a motor vehicle, to operate with exceptionally good fuel efficiency. Primarily heard in Australia, New Zealand. *This trusty little car may not look like much, but she runs off the smell of an oily rag.*

run on empty **1.** To be particularly ineffectual, insubstantial, or unsuccessful. *The high production value means that the film is visually stunning, but no amount of aesthetic beauty can save a film whose paper-thin plot runs on empty from start to finish. The former president promised quite a lot in his campaign speeches, but his administration ran on empty throughout his time in the White House.* **2.** To continue to operate with no or very little enthusiasm, energy, or resources left. (Usually used in the continuous tense.) *I've been painting the house for four hours every night after work, and I am seriously running on empty at this point. We were running on empty by the time our team made it to the championship round.*

run on fumes **1.** To be especially ineffectual, insubstantial, or unsuccessful. *The high production value means that the film is visually stunning, but no amount of aesthetic beauty can save a film whose paper-thin plot runs on fumes from start to finish. The former president promised quite a lot in his campaign speeches, but his administration ran on fumes throughout his time in the White House.* **2.** To continue to operate with no or very little

enthusiasm, energy, or resources left. (Usually used in the continuous tense.) *I've been painting the house for four hours every night after work, and I am seriously running on fumes at this point. We were running on fumes by the time our team made it to the championship round.*

run on the smell of an oily rag Of a motor vehicle, to operate with exceptionally good fuel efficiency. Primarily heard in Australia, New Zealand. *This trusty little car may not look like much, but she runs on the smell of an oily rag.*

run (one) off (one's) feet To make someone work very hard and/or quickly, especially to an exhausting or exasperating degree; to make great demands of someone's time or energy. *With the recent reductions in staff, my boss has been running me off my feet lately! Just about every parent on the planet knows how kids can run you off your feet.*

run (one's) own show To have complete autonomy or authority over something; to do something according solely to one's own inclinations, desires, opinions, etc. *You can tell that the manager, so used to running his own show in the office, is finding it hard to adjust to having a boss of his own just a few doors down. The CEO's son really ran his own show in here for the last few years, until he was finally busted for fraud and removed from the company.*

run out of town To be forced to leave a place, usually due to one's indiscretions or misdeeds. *Now that this scandal is public knowledge, I'm afraid that I'm going to be run out of town. When people found out that my grandmother had had an affair while my grandfather was fighting in the war, she was run out of town.*

run out the clock In sports, to protect a lead by using up as much remaining time in a game or match as possible without giving the opposing team a chance to score, generally by maintaining a passive or defensive strategy. *With just a narrow two-point lead, the home team will certainly try to run out the clock to hold out for a win. I don't know, Jim, there's a lot of game time left for them to start running out the clock already.*

run roughshod over (someone or something) To treat someone or something with marked disdain, brutality, or contempt; to act without regard for the well-being of something or someone. *In her ascent to the top of the political ladder, the senator ran roughshod over anyone who*

stood in her way. *This new administration has run roughshod over the political goodwill that the previous president forged with the recent foreign ally.*

run the clock down In sports, to protect a lead by using up as much possible time that remains in a game or match without giving the opposing team a chance to score, generally by maintaining a passive or defensive strategy. *With just a narrow two-point lead, the home team has started to run the clock down to hold on for a win. It seems like a risky strategy, Jim. There's a lot of game time left for them to start running the clock down already.*

run the show To have autonomy or authority over something; to be in control of something. *You can tell that the manager, so used to running the show in the office, is finding it hard to adjust to having a boss of his own just a few doors down. I'm the director, so I run the show here, OK? My word is final.*

run wild To behave or run around in a wild, unruly, out-of-control manner; to be or become crazy or chaotic. *We tried to have some organized games for the kids, but they all started running wild as soon as they got here. The villagers were cleaning up debris for days after the bulls ran wild through the streets.*

run with scissors To willfully act in a reckless, foolish, and/or dangerous manner. Alludes to the literal act of running with a pair of scissors in one's hand, which can cause severe injury. *I went through a really rebellious phase in high school and made a point of constantly running with scissors, so to speak, as a way of acting out. Jane's daughter has run with scissors so frequently by now that the family doesn't try to keep her under control anymore.*

rung her bell See [ring \(someone's\) bell](#).

a running start **1.** Literally, in sports, a start to a race in which one is already at full speed by the time one reaches the starting line. *To make things more fair, we're going to give your little sister a running start.* **2.** By extension, an initial advantage, benefit or auspicious position at the beginning or outset of some action, endeavor, or undertaking. *John's company's been given a bit of a running start since his father decided to invest so much money into it. I'm glad I kept up with my studies over the summer because I'll*

to be off to a running start when school starts back up.

runs a temperature See [run a temperature](#).

runs a temperature See [run a temperature](#).

runs about See [run about](#).

runs afoul See [run afoul of \(someone or something\)](#).

runs amock See [run amok](#).

runs amuck See [run amuck](#).

runs around See [run around](#).

runs around in circles See [run \(a\)round in circles](#).

runs down the clock See [run down the clock](#).

runs for the hills See [run for the hills](#).

a rush of blood See [a \(sudden\) rush of blood \(to the head\)](#).

rush (someone) off his/her feet To make someone work very hard and/or quickly, especially to an exhausting or exasperating degree; to make great demands of someone's time or energy. *With the recent reductions in staff, my boss has been rushing me off my feet lately! Just about every parent on the planet knows how kids can rush you off your feet.*

rushed off her feet See [be rushed off \(one's\) feet](#).

Russian roulette **1.** A potentially fatal game of chance involving a revolver loaded with a single bullet, in which each participant in turn spins the cylinder so that the bullet's location is unknown, puts the barrel to their head, and pulls the trigger. *A student of the university died over the weekend after apparently playing a game of Russian roulette with other members of his fraternity.* **2.** By extension, any reckless, foolish, and/or dangerous act or stunt, especially that in which the risk of danger or trouble is increased with the number of times one does it. *Your company might have passed its audit this year, Mr. Fisk, but every year is going to be Russian roulette so long as this embezzlement continues. You're playing Russian roulette every single time you get behind the wheel of a car when you've been drinking.*



S

sacrifice (something) on the altar of To abandon something in exchange for something else (which is named after "of"). The phrase can, but does not have to, include a noun after "sacrifice." *I know you want to help your family, but you can't sacrifice your happiness on the altar of servitude. It seems that the curriculum at this school has been sacrificed on the altar of profit.*

a sad state (of affairs) A particularly unfortunate, unpleasant, and/or upsetting situation or set of circumstances. *Their company has been in a sad state after Jonathan took over. It's a sad state of affairs when you can no longer be sure how you're going to feed your children each night.*

saddle tramp **1.** A cowboy, particularly one who lives a nomadic lifestyle. Primarily heard in US. *You can't trust him—he's just a saddle tramp who roams from town to town!* **2.** One who rides on horseback. Primarily heard in US. *A: "I hear hoofbeats." B: "Yes, there's a saddle tramp approaching in the distance."*

safe bet **1.** Something that is certain to occur. *Based on his grades, it's a pretty safe bet that Harry won't be able to graduate on time.* **2.** A person or thing that is certain to be good or successful. *The department felt that she was a safe bet for the account manager position.*

safe pair of hands A trustworthy and competent person. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *That struggling company really needs a leader who is a safe pair of hands and can make some positive changes.*

safe space A place where one will not encounter mistreatment, discrimination, and, in some cases, words or activities that could trigger reminders of past psychological trauma. *The campus needs a safe space for the LGBTQ community. Is there a safe space for trauma victims to go after that lecture on human trafficking?*

safety valve An activity that one does to release strong feelings (such as stress) in a healthy or positive way. *Golf has become my safety valve—when I'm really stressed about work, I make sure to schedule a tee time.*

sag off To absent oneself or leave early from school or work when one would normally be required to be there; to play truant. Primarily heard in UK. *I was so restless and bored at work that I decided to just sag off after lunch without telling anyone. Hey, Jim and I are planning on sagging off from school on Friday, do you want to come with us? That's the last time you sag off class, mister! From now on, I'm dropping you off to school every morning!*

SAHM An abbreviation for "stay-at-home mom," a mother who forgoes employment outside of the home in order to care for her children and the household. *I used to have a high-powered corporate job, but ever since my daughter was born, I've been living that SAHM life.*

said good-bye to See [say goodbye to \(something\)](#).

said it all See [says it all](#).

said no one ever slang A humorous tag or retort that emphasizes the preceding statement as false. A: *"I think he's ugly in a cute way."* B: *"Said no one ever!"* *"I love it when I stub my toe," said no one ever.*

said the actress to the pope An aside that is used to create a humorous but lewd sexual innuendo out of something mundane or innocent that someone else has said. (The use of "actress" is because the innuendo always refers to a woman in a sexual situation.) Primarily heard in UK. A: *"Wow, that sandwich is huge!"* B: *"Yeah, I can barely put my hands around it."* C: *"Said the actress to the pope!"*

said uncle See [say uncle](#).

sail against the wind To work to achieve something amid challenging circumstances, such as staunch opposition. This nautical phrase refers to the difficulty of sailing in the opposite direction as the wind. *I know that I am sailing against the wind to try get this unpopular law passed, but I am confident that it will ultimately make our town a safer place.*

sail before the wind To achieve something easily. This nautical phrase refers to the ease of sailing in the same direction as the wind. *I don't understand people who just sail before the wind and get great grades without ever opening a book, when I study really hard and am just an average student. I hardly studied, and I still got A's on all of my exams—I really sailed before the wind this semester!*

salad days A youthful, carefree time of innocence and inexperience. The phrase comes from a line in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*: "My salad days, when I was green in judgment, cold in blood." *Ah, to be in love during your salad days, such blissful and carefree times. Whenever I ask my grandfather the meaning of a word I hear on TV, he always laughs and says he'll tell me when I'm no longer in my salad days.*

salad years A carefree time of youthful innocence, ingenuousness, and inexperience. A variant of the more common "salad days," which itself is taken from Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*. *I had a few encounters with truly romantic love back in my salad years, before I graduated; now, however, I think love is largely an elaborate delusion. Whenever I ask my grandfather the meaning of a word I hear on TV, he always laughs and says he'll tell me when I'm no longer in my salad years.*

salt in the/(one's) wound(s) An aggravation that makes something unpleasant, difficult, or painful even worse. *I can't believe Sally broke up with John the day after his team lost the championship match. Talk about salt in the wounds! My pride was already hurting when I didn't get the job, but it was like salt in my wound to hear that they gave it to Dave instead.*

the salt of the earth A person or group that is regarded as genuine, unpretentious, and morally sound. This phrase is typically complimentary. *Don't worry, even with all his success, Robert is still the salt of the earth. He donates most of his salary to charity and volunteers weekly at the hospital.*

salty slang Annoyed. *Of course I'm salty—you made fun of me in front of all our friends! Why is she so salty? I told her I was going to be home late!*

salty dog A sailor, especially a man, who is older and/or has had a lot of experience on the seas. *The bar was packed with old salty dogs who'd travelled all across the world, sharing stories of their adventures.*

Sam Hill slang A euphemism for "hell," usually used for emphasis. *What in Sam Hill are you kids doing in here? You're going to wake the whole neighborhood! What in the Sam Hill made you decide to fight one of your classmates?*

same stripe See [of the same stripe](#).

sanctuary city A US city that protects undocumented immigrants through limited involvement or cooperation with federal immigration

regulations or authorities. Primarily heard in US. *That new immigration law threatens to jeopardize sanctuary cities.*

sanctum sanctorum 1. The innermost sanctuary of a temple, particularly the tabernacle in the Temple of Jerusalem, which housed the Ark of the Covenant. The Latin phrase translates to "holy of holies." *The sanctum sanctorum is a very sacred place—it's where the Ark of the Covenant was kept.* 2. By extension, any place that is regarded as very private and sacred. *The basement is my sanctum sanctorum, and I'm trying to relax down here, so take your drama somewhere else.*

sands are running out There is a limited amount of time before something happens. The phrase refers to an hourglass, in which sand trickles from the top of the hourglass to the bottom through an opening until it has run out. *The sands are running out—if she doesn't move out of that neighborhood, she'll be the next victim of a violent crime. I know that picking a college is a big decision, but the sands are running out.*

a sandwich shy of a picnic A pejorative phrase meaning not very intelligent or of questionable mental capacity. This expression can appear in many different forms and variations (e.g., "several bricks short of a load," "one card shy of a full deck," etc.). *He says he's going to start a business selling bees as pets—I think he may be a sandwich shy of a picnic. The new manager is nice enough, but he's a sandwich shy of a picnic, if you ask me.*

Santa's workshop The workshop of Santa Claus, where Santa or his elves are said to make the toys that he delivers on Christmas. *I'm sure the elves in Santa's workshop are making the toys you'll get for Christmas right now, honey.*

savage 1. noun, slang One who does something extreme or intense, often shocking or inspiring admiration in the speaker. *That kid's a savage—did you see his back flip off the slide? Stay away from that guy, he's a total savage—he beat up my little brother!* 2. adjective, slang Extreme or intense, often in a way that shocks or inspires admiration in the speaker. *Did you see that kid's savage back flip off the slide? Stay away from that guy, he's totally savage—he beat up my little brother!*

save (one's) blushes To prevent someone from feeling embarrassed or awkward. *Due to your family's great service to the crown, we will save your blushes and not create a public scandal around this debacle. I tried saving*

her blushes when she asked me to prom by saying I had no intention of going with anyone.

save (one's) own bacon To rescue or protect oneself from danger, trouble, or difficulty, usually without regard or concern for the welfare of others. *In the face of the IRS audit, the CEO was more concerned with saving his own bacon than ensuring his employees' jobs remained secure. Just be sure not to leave yourself exposed in this scandal—you can be sure that the senator is looking to save her own bacon, and you should be doing the same.*

save (one's) own hide To rescue or protect oneself from danger, trouble, or difficulty, usually without regard or concern for the welfare of others. *In the face of the IRS audit, the CEO was more concerned with saving his own hide than ensuring his employees' jobs remained secure. Just be sure not to leave yourself exposed in this scandal—you can be sure that the senator is looking to save her own hide, and you should be doing the same.*

save (one's) own neck To rescue or protect oneself from danger, trouble, or difficulty, usually without regard or concern for the welfare of others. *In the face of the IRS audit, the CEO was more concerned with saving his own neck than ensuring his employees' jobs remained secure. Just be sure not to leave yourself exposed in this scandal—you can be sure that the senator is looking to save her own neck, and you should be doing the same.*

save (one's) own skin To rescue or protect oneself from danger, trouble, or difficulty, usually without concern for the welfare of others. *In the face of the audit, the CEO was more worried with saving his own skin than ensuring his employees' jobs wouldn't be put into jeopardy. Just be sure not to leave yourself exposed in this scandal. You can be sure that the senator is looking to save her own skin, and you should be doing the same.*

saved the day See [you saved the day](#).

saving grace A redeeming quality of something or someone. *The only saving grace about that house is the large eat-in kitchen. Aunt Gertrude's incessant talking can be annoying, but her kindness is her saving grace—I know that she would help us with anything, no questions asked.*

saw wood **1.** To snore very loudly or intensely, as during a deep sleep. *Once I found out my boyfriend sawed wood at night, I knew I had to break up with him. Jake, roll over on your side, you're sawing wood again!* **2.** By extension, to sleep soundly. *I was so exhausted after that hike that I was*

sawing wood in no time in my tent.

the sawdust circuit dated The itinerary of or route taken by a travelling evangelist preacher. (Variant of the more common "sawdust trail.") Primarily heard in US. *Old Bill Baxton? Shoot, he's been on the sawdust circuit for the better part of his life. He probably wouldn't be able to settle down in one place if he tried!*

the sawdust trail 1. dated The path or journey to redemption or rehabilitation (as for a sinner or criminal) by accepting, practicing, or converting to Christianity at an evangelist revival meeting. Alludes to sawdust-covered aisles of the temporary church dwellings for revival meetings in the early 1900s. Primarily heard in US. *That travelling evangelist has been pleading for everyone in town to hit the sawdust trail, for he believes that the end is nigh.* **2.** (sometimes capitalized) dated The itinerary of or route taken by a travelling evangelist preacher. Primarily heard in US. *Old Bill Baxton? Shoot, he's been on the Sawdust Trail for the better part of his life. He probably wouldn't be able to settle down in one place if he tried!*

say a few words To give a short speech or present a brief account of something. *I've asked Ms. Thompson to say a few words before the assembly begins. Later in the book, I will deal with Samuel Beckett's influence on the avant-garde, but first, I'd like to say a few words about his early childhood in Ireland.*

say again Could you please repeat what you just said? *Sorry, Mike, say again? I'm getting bad reception here.*

say goodbye to (something) To lose or end something, especially suddenly; to be forced to accept such a loss or end. *You were caught drinking on school property? Well, you can say goodbye to your brand new car, mister! After the final horse lost its race, I said goodbye to all the money I'd won that day at the track. You do realize that you'll be saying goodbye to all the benefits the company has to offer if you decide to work as a freelancer?*

say her name A rallying cry to increase awareness of oppression and violence against black women. It was popularized after Sandra Bland, a black woman, died in police custody in 2015. *The protestors outside city hall are chanting, "Say her name!"*

say uncle To admit defeat and/or plead for mercy, especially in an informal physical contest of some kind. Can also be used as an imperative

phrase to demand that someone give up or admit defeat. *The brothers often play fought, but it was invariably the younger of the two who had to say uncle by the end. Say "uncle," and I'll let you out of this headlock!*

says it all A phrase used to emphasize a particular detail, usually because it is evidence of a bigger issue. *When I asked my mom if she was mad at me, her silence said it all. Oh, he's still petrified of dogs—the look of terror on his face says it all!*

Scarborough warning No warning. The phrase might refer to a surprise attack on the castle of Scarborough in the 16th century. Primarily heard in UK. *Well, that thunderstorm came through with a Scarborough warning—it wasn't supposed to rain today at all.*

scarce as a hen's tooth See [\(as\) scarce as hens' teeth](#).

scarcely ever Nearly never; very infrequently; only on a few or rare occasions. *We used to go visit Grandma and Grandpa every year when I was a kid, but nowadays, I scarcely ever see them. I scarcely ever get the chance to go out to the movies alone since having kids.*

scarcer than hens' teeth Incredibly scarce or rare; extremely difficult or impossible to find. *Support for the president is scarcer than hens' teeth in this part of the country.*

scare (someone) silly To shock or frighten someone very suddenly and/or severely. (Hyperbolically alludes to frightening someone so severely as to cause them to lose their mind.) *Don't sneak up on me like that, you scared me silly! That car accident seems to have scared Janet silly—she's still shaken by it.*

scare (someone) straight To shock or frighten someone so severely that their bad behavior or actions become corrected or markedly improved. (That which frightens the person is often some example or manifestation of the possible consequences of those actions or behavior.) *We felt like we just couldn't control our teenager's behavior any longer, so we sent him to a prison boot camp to scare him straight. I had a really bad drug addiction in college, but seeing my friend die from an overdose really scared me straight.*

scare story A story or rumor that makes something seem more serious, dreadful, or terrifying than it really is. *Every year around Halloween, there's some scare story in the news about razor blades being found in candy. You*



just can't listen to all the scare stories people love to spread or you'd end up being afraid of everything!

scare the bejabbers out of (someone) To shock or frighten someone very suddenly and/or severely. ("Bejabbers," a variant of "bejesus," is a mild euphemistic oath used here as an intensifying noun.) Primarily heard in Ireland. *Don't sneak up on me like that, you scared the bejabbers out of me! That car accident seems to have scared the bejabbers out of Janet—she's still shaken by it.*

scare the bejabers out of (someone) To shock or frighten someone very suddenly and/or severely. ("Bejabers," a variant of "bejesus," is a mild euphemistic oath used here as an intensifying noun.) Primarily heard in Ireland. *Don't sneak up on me like that, you scared the bejabers out of me! That car accident seems to have scared the bejabers out of Janet—she's still shaken by it.*

scare the bejeebers out of (someone) To shock or frighten someone very suddenly and/or severely. ("Bejeebers," a variant of "bejesus," is a mild euphemistic oath used here as an intensifying noun.) *Don't sneak up on me like that, you scared the bejeebers out of me! That car accident seems to have scared the bejeebers out of Janet—she's still shaken by it.*

scare the bejesus out of (someone) To shock or frighten someone very suddenly and/or severely. ("Bejesus," a mild euphemistic oath, is here used as an intensifying noun.) *Don't sneak up on me like that, you scared the bejesus out of me! That car accident seems to have scared the bejesus out of Janet—she's still shaken by it.*

scare the crap out of (someone) vulgar To shock or frighten someone very suddenly and/or severely. (Hyperbolically alludes to frightening someone so badly as to cause them to lose bowel control.) *Don't sneak up on me like that, you scared the crap out of me! That car accident seems to have scared the crap out of Janet—she's still shaken by it.*

scare the life out of (someone) To shock or frighten someone very suddenly and/or severely. (Hyperbolically alludes to frightening someone so badly as to cause them to die.) *Don't sneak up on me like that, you scared the life out of me! That car accident seems to have scared the life out of Janet—she's still shaken by it.*

scare the (living) daylight out of (someone) To shock or

frighten someone very suddenly and/or severely. *Don't sneak up on me like that; you scared the living daylights out of me!*

scare the shit out of (one) vulgar slang To shock or frighten one very suddenly and/or severely. (Hyperbolically alludes to frightening someone so badly as to cause them to lose control of their bowels.) *Don't sneak up on me like that, you scared the shit out of me! That car accident seems to have scared the shit out of Janet—she's still shaken by it.*

scaredy-cat A person who is easily frightened or needlessly afraid. *Greg called Joanne a scaredy-cat because she didn't want to go exploring in the woods after dark.*

scarlet red A dark reddish dye that is used as a biological stain. *You can see that the fat in that tissue sample has been stained scarlet red.*

scarlet woman A woman who is ostracized because of promiscuous behavior. *Once everyone learned of her affair, she moved away from the city, rather than staying and being labeled a scarlet woman.*

a scholar and a gentleman Someone (usually a male, due to the gender implication of "gentleman") who is admirable or of high esteem. Although used sincerely as a compliment, it is generally bombastic and lighthearted in nature. *Thank you for helping me move into the new house, you are truly a scholar and a gentleman.*

a scholar and a gentleman See [a gentleman and a scholar](#).

the school of life The informal education one receives by learning from one's experiences, both good and bad, rather than a formal educational institution. *My uncle might not have made it past grade school, but he's learned more from the school of life than most of our professors. A proper education is indeed important, but do not neglect the lessons you receive from the school of life.*

schoolboy error A very simple, basic, or fundamental mistake or error. Primarily heard in UK. *Thanks to a schoolboy error by their opponents' keeper, the football club will advance to the next round of the tourney. The math textbook had to be reprinted after several schoolboy errors were discovered in some of the equations.*

scientia potentia est A Latin phrase meaning "knowledge is power." Renaissance scholar Sir Francis Bacon is usually credited with popularizing

the phrase. *A successful life starts with a good education—after all, scientia potentia est.*

the score The complete, accurate details of a situation; what is really happening or expected to happen. *Okay, everyone knows the score, right? We get in, get the money, and get out—no one inside gets hurt, do you understand?*

score off (someone) To gain an advantage over, outdo, defeat, triumph over, humiliate, or make some detrimental remark to someone. Primarily heard in UK. *It feels as though I'm scoring off life every time I harvest a vegetable out of my back garden. Mark's younger cousin always makes a point of scoring off him when they get into arguments as a way of flaunting his intellect.*

score (something) off (someone, something, or some place) To get something one wants from some person, place, or thing, especially for free. *I scored two tickets to the concert off Janet's brother-in-law! I'm going to try to score some software from the IT department at work. We scored all our furniture off an online swap-and-shop site.*

a score to settle An old problem, grudge, or grievance (with or against someone or something) that one wishes or intends to redress or rectify. *I've had a score to settle with my brother ever since he ran away with my wife. The former champion entered the competition with a score to settle, after being knocked out of the tournament last year by a newcomer. There are a few scores I still need to settle with my old bosses, but otherwise, I've pretty well moved on.*

Scotch mist A thick mist and drizzling rain, as is common in some parts of Scotland and England. Primarily heard in UK. *I hope you brought your umbrella today, because we'll be walking in a Scotch mist.*

scout about (for someone or something) To search, inspect, or look around an area (for someone or something). *I've been scouting about for a suitable plot of land to build our house, but it's been tough finding one! With Jimmy's arm broken, we'll have to scout about for a new pitcher.*

scout around (for someone or something) To search, inspect, or look around an area (for someone or something). *I've been scouting around for a suitable plot of land to build our house, but it's been tough*

finding one. Scout around the yard to see if you can find my lost ring.

Scout's honour An oath that one is being ingenuous or honest, or will uphold a promise or duty. Alludes to the oath taken by a member of the Scouting movement to be upstanding, trustworthy, and honest. Primarily heard in UK. *I swear that I'll behave myself at your brother's wedding, Scout's honour!* A: "Are you really telling me the truth about what happened to my car?" B: "Scout's honour!"

scrape (someone or something) together To find and gather or collect (things or people) from various sources or locations. *I managed to scrape together enough cash to get a bus out to Vancouver to see my girlfriend this weekend. How are we ever going to scrape enough people together to form a team by this weekend?*

scrape (someone or something) up To find and gather or collect (things or people) from various sources or locations. *I managed to scrape up enough cash to get a bus out to Vancouver to see my girlfriend this weekend. How are we ever going to scrape enough people up to form a team by this weekend?*

scrape (someone or something) up off (something) To peel or gather something or someone up from some surface, such as the floor or the road, especially when that person or thing is or seems to be stuck to it. *I passed out after drinking at the party until 6 AM, and I had to be scraped up off the floor the next morning. I spent about an hour last night scraping dried pizza cheese up off the carpet.*

scratch for (one)self To be self-sufficient. *Now that you're a college student living on campus, you can't rely on your parents to take care of you—you need to scratch for yourself. I come from a big family, so I've been scratching for myself since I was a little kid.*

scratch (someone or something) together To find and gather or collect (things or people) from various sources or locations. *I managed to scratch together enough cash to get a bus out to Vancouver to see my girlfriend this weekend. How are we ever going to scratch enough people together to form a team by this weekend?*

scratch (someone or something) up 1. To damage the surface of something or someone's skin with scratches. *Those prickly bushes by the fence really scratched me up. Who scratched my car up? I know it didn't look*

like this the last time I drove it! **2.** To find and gather or collect (things or people) from various sources or locations. *I managed to scratch up enough cash to get a bus out to Vancouver to see my girlfriend this weekend. How are we ever going to scratch enough people up to form a team by this weekend?*

scratch that set phrase An interjection telling someone to ignore, forget, or disregard what was just said or instructed. *I wonder how much it would be to have our wedding inside the aquarium? Actually, scratch that, that's a ridiculous idea.*

scream loudest To draw attention to a particular cause or problem, typically by overshadowing others. *So we get to freeze in here while that department moves to a better office, just because they screamed loudest about the heat not working in this part of the building.*

scream (one's) head off To scream or yell very loudly and lengthily. *Suzy screamed her head off when I told her she couldn't have an ice cream cone. The stadium was packed with fans screaming their heads off for the popular band. Don't bother listening to the crazies who stand on street corners and scream their heads off at passersby.*

scream (something) from the rooftops To share some news or information publicly and with as many people as possible. *I was ready to scream from the rooftops that we'd be having a baby, but my wife wanted to wait for a while before we made the news public. I know you want to scream it from the rooftops that you came in first in your class, but you should think about how it might make the other students feel and have a bit of modesty about it.*

screw (one's) courage to the sticking place To remain bold, resolute, determined, and courageous, especially in the face of possible danger, difficulty, hardship, or adversity. Taken from a line in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*: "We fail! But screw your courage to the sticking-place, and we'll not fail." *Men, some of us may not make it back alive, but such is the nature of war; so screw your courage to the sticking place and show them what you're made of! I'm really nervous about asking Sarah out on a date, but I'm going to screw my courage to the sticking place and ask her by the end of the day.*

screw (one)self up to concert pitch To prepare for any event or

crisis that may occur. *My dad is nervous about me driving so far on my own, so I'm sure he's screwed himself up to concert pitch and is stationed by the phone in case I call.*

screw the pooch vulgar slang To make a very serious, grievous, or irreversible mistake; to ruin something or cause something to fail due to such an error. *I'm sorry, boss, I really screwed the pooch this time. Do you think we can get the clients back if I explain that it was all a misunderstanding because of me? This operation depends on you, so don't screw the pooch!*

screw up (one's) courage to the sticking place To remain bold, resolute, determined, and courageous, especially in the face of possible danger, difficulty, hardship, or adversity. *Men, some of us may not make it back alive, but such is the nature of war; so screw up your courage to the sticking place and show them what you're made of! I'm really nervous about asking Sarah out on a date, but I just need to screw up my courage to the sticking place and go through with it.*

scruff of her neck See [by the scruff of \(one's\)/its/the neck](#).

scuba diver One who dives underwater while wearing a mask attached to a container of compressed air that allows for long periods of breathing without resurfacing. "Scuba" was originally an acronym for "self-contained underwater breathing apparatus." *I don't think I have a future as a scuba diver, but I really enjoyed looking at the coral reef underwater.*

sea change A complete transformation. *The transition from using desktop computers to mobile devices represents a sea change in data management within the field of information technology.*

sea dog A sailor, especially a man, who is older and/or has had a lot of experience on the seas. *The bar was packed with old sea dogs who'd travelled all across the world, sharing stories of their adventures.*

seagull approach business slang A management style or approach in which the manager only becomes involved in a matter when a problem is perceived to have arisen, especially when they have little other knowledge about said matter and only cause more problems as a result of their involvement. *I'm sick of this new boss's seagull approach. If he would just let us get on with our work instead of swooping in every time there's a hiccup, we'd nearly be finished by now!*

seagull management business slang A management style or approach in which the manager only becomes involved in a matter when a problem is perceived to have arisen, especially when they have little other knowledge about said matter and only cause more problems as a result of their involvement. *I'm sick of this new boss's seagull management. If he would just let us get on with our work instead of swooping in every time there's a hiccup, we'd nearly be finished by now!*

seagull manager business slang A manager who only becomes involved in a matter when a problem is perceived to have arisen, especially when they have little other knowledge about said matter and only cause more problems as a result of their involvement. *I'm sick of this new seagull manager. If he would just let us get on with our work instead of swooping in every time there's a hiccup, we'd nearly be finished by now!*

seal the deal To solidify, finalize, or decide upon an agreement or the terms thereof. *I wasn't convinced at first, but it sealed the deal when he offered to include a 10-year warranty for free. We both benefit from this arrangement, so let's quit stalling and seal the deal!*

seat-of-the-pants 1. Done without a clear plan or direction. *I know my parents think that dropping out of college was a seat-of-the-pants decision, but I just signed with a record label and am launching my singing career! 2.* Done without relying on instruments for help or instruction. *Once that computer malfunctioned, the pilot had to make a seat-of-the-pants landing.*

second banana 1. A performer who acts as a support to a lead comedian (the so-called "top banana"), as during a burlesque or vaudeville routine. *I generally don't mind playing second banana when I'm with such a legendary comedian, but it would be nice to be the one getting all the laughs once in a while. 2.* By extension, someone who occupies a secondary, lesser, or subservient role or position. *I've been second banana in this company for too long now. I'm going to start up my own business, and then I'll be the one in charge!*

second bite of the apple A second chance or opportunity. *Since a large percentage of her students failed the calculus exam, the teacher decided to give them a second bite of the apple by allowing them to take the test again.*

second bite of the cherry A second chance or opportunity. Primarily

heard in UK. *Since a large percentage of her students failed the calculus exam, the teacher decided to give them a second bite of the cherry by allowing them to take the test again.*

second childhood 1. A time in a person's life (especially an older person) when their mental capacity is reduced to that of a child, as due to disease or old age. *After my grandfather suffered his second stroke, he really entered into a second childhood.* **2.** A period of rejuvenated or renewed interest in things that interest a child. *Being a part of my son's life as he grows up has been like a second childhood for me, because seeing him experience the magic of the world has made me appreciate it again as well. Jerry's sort of been in his second childhood ever since he lost his job, as he's gotten back into model train building and video games.*

second-class citizen One who is deemed less important than others within a society. *The waitress was so rude to me that I started feeling like a second-class citizen. We live in this neighborhood, too, and we should be allowed to voice our opinions, instead of being ignored like second-class citizens!*

second gear One of the lower gears in a motor vehicle; it prioritizes torque over speed. The term is most often associated with manual transmission vehicles, in which one must shift the gears manually while driving. *The car will drive better if you keep it in second gear while towing the boat. Shift into second gear so that we don't come flying down this steep hill!*

Second place is the first loser. sports adage Coming in second place means you have still ultimately failed to win in the end. Popularized by (and often credited to) race car driver Dale Earnhardt, Sr. (1951–2001). *You go out into that ring and you give it absolutely everything you've got! After all, second place is the first loser!*

second string The substitute players who replace the starters (or "first string") as a game goes on. A player on the second string is considered the second best player in that position. *I'm only a freshman, so I'm thrilled to be second string. Just making the football team at all is exciting! Those guys need a breather—send in the second string.*

see a man about a dog To leave somewhere without explaining where one is going. The phrase is usually used as part of an obvious

euphemism for going to the bathroom or going to get an alcoholic drink. *And that's why quantum physics is a hoax. Now, if you'll excuse me, I need to go see a man about a dog.*

see a man about a horse To leave somewhere without explaining where one is going, but usually used as an obvious euphemism for going to the toilet or getting an alcoholic drink. *And that's why quantum physics is a hoax. Now, if you'll excuse me, I need to go see a man about a horse. Beth's dad is always "seeing a man about a horse." I think he needs some help because the family barely sees him anymore.*

see how the land lies To find out about or come to understand a particular state of affairs or the way a situation exists or has developed, especially before taking any decisive or definitive action. *Given the turbulent nature of this market, I think it would be prudent for us to see how the land lies before we agree to invest in your company. I'm just seeing how the land lies between my parents before I make any solid plans to come visit them.*

see how the wind blows To find out about or come to understand a particular state of affairs or the way a situation exists or has developed, especially before taking any decisive or definitive action. *Given the turbulent nature of this market, I think it would be prudent for us to see how the wind blows before we agree to invest in your company. I'm just seeing how the wind blows between my parents before I make any solid plans to come visit them.*

see how the wind is blowing To find out about or come to understand a particular state of affairs or the way a situation exists or has developed, especially before taking any decisive or definitive action. *Given the turbulent nature of this market, I think it would be prudent for us to see how the wind is blowing before we agree to invest in your company. I'm just seeing how the wind is blowing between my parents before I make any solid plans to come visit them.*

see in a bad light See [in a bad light](#).

see red To fall into a state of extreme anger, excitement, or competitive arousal, such as might cloud one's judgement or senses. *He's generally not a confrontational person, but you'd better get out of his way when he sees red! I see red when anyone disrespects my wife.*

see (someone's) point To understand and/or come to agree with a

particular point someone is trying to make. A: *"The early flight might be cheaper, but we won't enjoy our first day there because we'll be so tired!"* B: *"OK, I see your point. Let's book the later one instead."* But Bob, if we don't secure the investment by Friday, we stand to lose everything the other investors had put in so far. Do you see my point?

see the point in (doing) (something) To understand or appreciate the meaning, reason, or importance of (doing) something. *I just don't see the point in another year in high school when I know I can go find work now! I hope you see the point in all the things your mother and I do for you! I'm just not really sure I see the point in taking classes over the whole summer just so I can graduate a semester early.*

see the point (of something) To understand or appreciate the meaning, reason, or importance of something. *I just don't see the point of another year in high school when I know I can go find work now! I hope you see the point of everything your mother and I do for you! I thought about taking some extra classes this summer, but I'm not sure I see the point.*

see (the) red mist To fall into a state of extreme anger, excitement, or competitive arousal, such as might cloud one's judgment or senses. Primarily heard in UK. *Their striker isn't the most consistent player on the pitch, but once he sees red mist, you had better get out of his way. I'm not sure what happened. I was at the pub having a pint, and then someone insulted me, and I guess I must have seen red mist because, the next thing I knew, I was being dragged away with bloodied knuckles.*

see which way the wind blows To find out about or come to understand a particular state of affairs or the way a situation exists or has developed, especially before taking any decisive or definitive action. *Given the turbulent nature of this market, I think it would be prudent for us to see which way the wind blows before we agree to invest in your company. I'm just seeing which way the wind blows between my parents before I make any solid plans to come visit them.*

see you next Tuesday vulgar slang A euphemism for "cunt," based on the sound of the first two words ("C U") and the initials of the next two.

seek a knot in a bulrush To engage in a futile task; to try to find problems where none exist. A bulrush is a grassy plant that is not prone to knots. *You'd have better luck seeking a knot in a bulrush than getting those*

flowers to grow on such rocky soil. I read the report so many times that the boss will be seeking a knot in a bulrush to try to find errors in it.

seismic shift A major change. (Seismology is the study of earthquakes.)
That press conference was such a disaster that I'm worried it will cause a seismic shift in how voters view him as a candidate for president. In just the last century, there has been a seismic shift in the treatment of women in this country.

seize the moment To take full advantage of life's opportunities whenever and wherever they present themselves; to live life to one's full potential. *I've tried to get the most out of life by always seizing the moment. That's how I ended up living in Europe and fell in love with your father!*

seize the moral high ground To claim, purport, or make it appear that one's arguments, beliefs, ideas, etc., are morally superior to those espoused by others. *The senator always tries to seize the moral high ground during a debate so as to shift public opinion in his favor.*

self-care Actions that one takes to maintain wellbeing and mitigate psychological or emotional stress. *Personally, I hate running, but it really calms some people down—they see it as self-care. Bubble baths are my favorite form of self-care.*

self-made man One who became successful and/or wealthy through hard work and not by inheritance or help from others. *Joe is a self-made man who worked long, hard hours to turn his small business into a large, successful company.*

selfie A picture taken of oneself by oneself, typically on a smartphone. *My little sister is always taking selfies of herself and her friends.*

sell a wolf ticket To threaten or try to intimidate someone with threats of violence or menacing, boastful words. *There's this guy in the bar, drunk off his head, going around selling a wolf ticket to anyone who'll listen. He's going to get himself knocked out if he's not careful. If he tries to sell you a wolf ticket, don't rise to it—I know for a fact that he carries a knife and would be all too happy to put it to use.*

sell a woof ticket To threaten or try to intimidate someone with menacing, boastful words. *There's this guy in the bar, drunk off his head, going around selling a woof ticket to anyone who'll listen. He's going to get*

himself knocked out if he's not careful. If he tries to sell you a woof ticket, don't rise to it. I know for a fact that he carries a knife and would be all too happy to put it to use.

sell-by date 1. The date by which a perishable item must be sold by a store. *Did you check the sell-by date on that carton of milk?* **2.** slang By extension, the figurative date by which one's usefulness or skill ends, usually due to aging. Primarily heard in UK. *I'm sure they think I'm past my sell-by date after I mixed up all those important files. We need to find a new lead dancer, as Bella is past her sell-by date now and only getting older.*

sell in May A warning to sell one's stocks in May, so as to avoid the instability that often plagues the stock market from May to October. *I know you're happy with how your stocks are performing now, but sell in May—you won't regret it.*

sell in May and go away A warning to sell one's stocks in May, so as to avoid the instability that often plagues the stock market from May to October. *I know you're happy with how your stocks are performing now, but sell in May and go away—you won't regret it.*

sell in May and stay away A warning to sell one's stocks in May, so as to avoid the instability that often plagues the stock market from May to October. *I know you're happy with how your stocks are performing now, but sell in May and stay away—you won't regret it.*

sell (one's) birthright for a bowl of soup To exchange something of great, important, or fundamental value for some financial gain that proves to be of little, trivial, or no value but which appears to be attractive or valuable on first reckoning. (A variant of "sell one's birthright for a mess of pottage," an allusion to Esau in Genesis 25:29–32, who sells to Jacob his birthright to his family's estate for a bowl of lentil stew (pottage).) *If we allow our obsession with job creation to undermine the health of the environment, humanity will ultimately end up selling its birthright for a bowl of soup.*

sell (one's) birthright for a mess of pottage To exchange something of great, important, or fundamental value for some financial gain that proves to be of little, trivial, or no value but which appears to be attractive or valuable on first reckoning. An allusion to Esau in Genesis 25:29–32, who sells to Jacob his birthright to his family's estate for a bowl of

lentil stew (pottage). *If we allow our obsession with job creation to undermine the health of the environment, humanity will ultimately end up selling its birthright for a mess of pottage.*

sell (one's) body To have sexual intercourse or perform sexual acts for money; to prostitute oneself. *Things had become so desperate for Jacob that he even considered selling his body just to earn enough to eat each day.*

sell sawdust to a lumber mill See [\(someone\) could sell sawdust to a lumber mill](#).

sell (something) for a mess of pottage To exchange something of great, important, or fundamental value for some financial gain that proves to be of little, trivial, or no value but which appears to be attractive or valuable on first reckoning. An allusion to Esau in Genesis 25:29–32, who sells to Jacob his birthright to his family's estate for a bowl of lentil stew (pottage). *The convenience of the Internet age has also brought an unprecedented level of access to people's personal information, leading some to believe that we've sold our right to privacy for a mess of pottage. If we allow our obsession with job creation to undermine the health of the environment, humanity will ultimately end up selling its future for a mess of pottage.*

sell wolf tickets To threaten or try to intimidate someone with threats of violence or menacing, boastful words. *There's this guy in the bar, drunk off his head, going around selling wolf tickets to anyone who'll listen. He's going to get himself knocked out if he's not careful. If he tries to sell you wolf tickets, don't rise to it—I know for a fact that he carries a knife and would be all too happy to put it to use.*

sell woof tickets To threaten or try to intimidate someone with threats of violence or menacing, boastful words. *There's this guy in the bar, drunk off his head, going around selling woof tickets to anyone who'll listen. He's going to get himself knocked out if he's not careful. If he tries to sell you woof tickets, don't rise to it—I know for a fact that he carries a knife and would be all too happy to put it to use.*

seller's market A market in which demand is greater than supply, thus creating better conditions for sellers than for buyers. *Since I'm buying in a seller's market, I'm really nervous that I won't be able to find a house in my price range.*

send (a) mixed message(s) To communicate something that has, or seems to have, multiple, ambiguous, or contradictory meanings. *My ex-girlfriend has accused me of sending mixed messages about our relationship, as if I'm hinting that I want to get back together with her. I just think it sends something of a mixed message to be advertising a new production assistant position right after we went through a round of layoffs.*

send (a) mixed signal(s) To communicate something that has, or seems to have, multiple, ambiguous, or contradictory meanings. *My ex-girlfriend has accused me of sending mixed signals about our relationship, as if I'm hinting I want to get back together with her. I just think it sends something of a mixed signal to be advertising a new production assistant position right after we went through a round of layoffs.*

send a shiver down (someone's) spine To cause an intense feeling of excitement, exhilaration, nervousness, or fear in someone. *The way that sonata swells always sends a shiver down my spine. It sent a shiver down my spine when Dorothy gave me such an amorous look. Can we get out of here? This creepy old house is sending a shiver down my spine!*

send a shiver up (someone's) spine To cause an intense feeling of excitement, exhilaration, nervousness, or fear in someone. *The way that sonata swells always sends a shiver up my spine. It sent a shiver up my spine when Dorothy gave me such an amorous look. Can we get out of here? This creepy old house is sending a shiver up my spine!*

send a sow to Minerva To try to teach someone who is smarter or more of an expert than oneself. The phrase presents the ridiculous image of Minerva, the goddess of wisdom, being taught by a pig. *Is he really explaining his songwriting process, as if it's that complex, to a famous musician? Talk about sending a sow to Minerva!*

send owls to Athens To do or undertake something redundant, pointless, or futile. It refers to the city of Athens in the time of Ancient Greece, where silver coins were minted with the image of an owl (which were abundant in the city). Thus, to bring either owls or silver to Athens would be a useless venture. *Creating a business to export olive oil to Italy is like sending owls to Athens! His plans to improve the economy by increasing taxes would simply be sending owls to Athens.*

send shivers down (one's) spine To cause an intense feeling of

fear, nervousness, exhilaration, or excitement in someone. *Can we get out of here? This creepy old house is sending shivers down my spine! The way that sonata swells always sends shivers down my spine. It sent shivers down my spine when Dorothy gave me such an amorous look.*

send shivers up (someone's) spine To cause an intense feeling of excitement, exhilaration, nervousness, or fear in someone. *The way that sonata swells always sends shivers up my spine. It sent shivers up my spine when Dorothy gave me such an amorous look. Can we get out of here? This creepy old house is sending shivers up my spine!*

send (someone) to an early grave 1. To do things or act in a way that is likely to result in one's premature death. *You're going to send yourself to an early grave if you keep drinking as much as you do now.* 2. To do things or act in a way that is likely to result in someone's premature death. *The stress of John's job is going to send him to an early grave.*

send the helve after the hatchet To make hasty, careless decisions; to discard something after encountering a setback. The image alludes to throwing away the handle ("helve") of a hatchet after the blade has broken off. *Come on, I'm sure we can fix it—don't send the helve after the hatchet. My little brother always gives up at the slightest problem, no matter how many times we remind him not to send the helve after the hatchet.*

a serpent in (one's) bosom Someone whom one has befriended, taken care of, or treated well but proves to be traitorous, untrustworthy, deceitful, or ungrateful. (A less common variant of "a viper in one's bosom." Used especially in the phrase "nourish/nurse/nurture a serpent in one's bosom.") *Well, it turns out that Margaret was quite a serpent in my bosom. I put my neck on the line to get her a job in our company, and then she turns around and tries to get me fired! I thought our love was not only mutual but indestructible; and yet, I have nursed a serpent in my bosom all these years: my darling husband has cast me out and run off with a younger woman.*

serpent in our bosom See [nurture a serpent in \(one's\) bosom](#).

serpent's tongue 1. A tendency to speak maliciously. A: "He has such a serpent's tongue that I hate to be around him." B: "Of course you do—who wants to be verbally attacked all the time?" 2. A nickname for a fossilized shark's tooth. *I think they call a shark's tooth a serpent's tongue because of how the root is forked.*



serve a purpose To fit or satisfy the necessary requirements; to be useful for or fit to achieve some aim, goal, or purpose. *Well, it isn't very flashy, but this old truck ought to serve a purpose somewhere on the ranch. I hope that my lessons served a purpose in my students' lives.*

serve (one) right To be or deliver the appropriate or deserved consequence(s) for one's improper actions. *It serves John right that Dave threw him out of his party last night. He was acting like such a jerk! My girlfriend broke up with me after she found out I had been cheating on her. Serves me right, I suppose. You tripped while making fun of those kids? Serves you right!*

serve (one) the same sauce To treat one the same way that one has treated you—usually poorly. *Of course she's not invited to the dinner party! She didn't invite me to her last soiree, so I'm serving her the same sauce.*

serve (someone's) purpose To fit or satisfy someone's requirements; to be useful for or fit to achieve someone's aim, goal, or purpose. *Well, it isn't a very pretty car, but it should serve our purpose just fine. Child: "But mom, I want a smartphone!" Mother: "Nonsense, the cell phone you already have serves your purpose just fine."*

serve the purpose To fit or satisfy the necessary requirements; to be useful for or fit to achieve some aim, goal, or purpose. *Well, it isn't a very pretty car, but it should serve the purposes of our mission. Child: "But mom, I want a smartphone!" Mother: "Nonsense, the cell phone you have serves the purpose just fine."*

serve two masters To simultaneously tend to or support or devote oneself to two different—often conflicting—responsibilities, pursuits, ideas, or people. It comes from the Biblical phrase, "No man can serve two masters." *You need to decide if you are married to your wife or to your work because you simply cannot serve two masters.*

set a high/low bar To establish an expected, required, or desired (but ultimately constrictive) standard of quality. *A: "At this point, I'm willing to go out with just about any guy, so long as he isn't living in his parents' basement." B: "Don't you think you're setting a bit of a low bar?" While you shouldn't take just any job you can get after college, be sure not to set too high a bar for an entry level job, or you may have trouble landing one at all.*



set a spell To sit down, relax, and socialize for a while at one's leisure. (A rural, colloquial variant of "sit for a spell.") *This saloon is a great place to set a spell and catch up with old friends. Well hey there, honey! Now you come in here and set a spell, we haven't seen you in a dog's age!*

set aback See [set \(someone\) aback](#).

set afire To light (something) on fire. *Do they know how the building was set afire? The trash can was probably set afire by some punk kids looking for trouble on a Friday night.*

set at odds To be in conflict. *Why are our parents suddenly set at odds? Did someone mention politics?*

set at rest See [set \(something\) at rest](#).

set back the clock To revisit, recount, return to, or recreate a time or era from the past. *The purpose of this conference is to set back the clock by analyzing remains of early human and trying to gain insight into their way of life. The governor is bent on setting back the clock and returning us to the ethics of the 1950s. I'd love to set back the clock to when I was a kid. It was such a happy, carefree time in my life.*

set by the ears See [set \(someone\) by the ears](#).

set clock ahead See [set the/\(one's\) clock\(s\) ahead](#).

set clock back See [set the/\(one's\) clock\(s\) back](#).

set great store by (something or someone) To have much faith, confidence, or belief in someone or something; to very seriously care about, appreciate, or respect someone or something. *It is important that one sets great store by one's friends, for it is to them one must turn when life becomes difficult. My brother is not one to set great store by obeying social rules or etiquette.*

set in cement See [set \(something\) in cement](#).

set in cement Firmly or permanently established; not subject to change; unalterable. *The healthcare law looks promising, but we'll have to wait until it's set in cement before we know exactly what it will do.*

set in concrete See [set \(something\) in concrete](#).

set in (one's) ways Inflexible; unwilling to change. *Grandma will never*

retire—she's been a teacher for 50 years and is totally set in her ways. You'll never convince him to change, he's too set in his ways now.

set it straight See [set \(something\) straight](#).

set it to rights See [set \(something\) to rights](#).

set no store by (something or someone) To have no faith, confidence, or belief in someone or something; to not care about, appreciate, or respect someone or something. *I, however, set no store by promises of the afterlife, so I have learned to enjoy my time here to the utmost. I'm afraid my brother should be kept off the list of guests, as he sets no store by obeying social rules or etiquette. My wife sets no store by me ever since she caught me cheating on her.*

set no store in (something or someone) To have no faith, confidence, or belief in someone or something; to not care about, appreciate, or respect someone or something. *I, however, set no store in promises of the afterlife, so I have learned to enjoy my time here to the utmost. I'm afraid my brother should be kept off the list of guests, as he sets no store in obeying social rules or etiquette. My wife sets no store in me ever since she caught me cheating on her.*

set (one) straight To correct one's attitude, belief, or behavior; to make sure one understands something correctly. *I had to set Stephen straight after I realized that he'd been operating the machinery wrong this whole time. Helen told me she thought the moon landing was faked, so I had to set her straight!*

set (one) wise slang To tell one something that one does not know; to inform someone about something of which they are ignorant. *We need to set those freshmen wise—they can't keep coming into the senior hallway! Everyone thought that Jen had dumped me, but I was quick to set them wise!*

set (one's) cap at (someone) dated To try to attract, secure, or win someone as a romantic partner or spouse. Said especially (though not exclusively) of a woman in pursuit of a bachelor. *Well, if he insists on remaining so inhospitable, then I shall simply set my cap at a man with a greater sense of charm and decency. The ladies of this town shall all be setting their caps at Mr. Rutherford, now that his inheritance has left him quite wealthy. But don't you find it rather unseemly for a man of his age and station to set his cap at a girl who's barely of voting age?*



set (one's) cap for (someone) dated To try to attract, secure, or win someone as a romantic partner or spouse. (Said especially (though not exclusively) of a woman in pursuit of a bachelor.) *Well, if he insists on remaining so inhospitable, then I shall simply set my cap for a man with a greater sense of charm and decency. The ladies of this town shall all be setting their caps for Mr. Rutherford, now that his inheritance has left him quite wealthy. Don't you find it rather unseemly for a man of his age and station to set his cap for a girl who's barely of voting age?*

set (one's) hand to 1. To sign something, such as a document. *As soon as you set your hand to these papers, you'll be the proud owner of a brand new car! I would never set my hand to such an unfavorable contract—I think my signature was forged.* **2.** To do or attempt (something). *I'm pretty good at any sport I set my hand to, except golf—my swing is still terrible despite lots of practice.*

set (one's) heart at rest To calm one's worries or fears. *I can always count on my mom to set my heart at rest when I'm wracked with anxiety. Bill was really worried about his grades until his report card finally came and set his heart at rest.*

set (one's) (own) house in order To put into order or resolve one's own personal problems or business affairs. *The president and his administration sorely need to set their house in order, or they may not live to see a second term in office. Jim should go about setting his own house in order before he starts criticizing how I live my life!*

set (one's) shoulder to the wheel To make a sustained, concentrated, and vigorous effort; to work very hard and diligently. *After I was nearly expelled in my first year of college, I decided to stop fooling around, set my shoulder to the wheel, and get as much out of my degree as I could. I know that the new deadline is tight, but if everyone sets their shoulders to the wheel, I know we can get it done in time!*

set (one's) teeth on edge 1. To greatly irritate or annoy one, especially to the point of affecting one's nerves. *Nothing sets my teeth on edge like seeing these cyclists run every red light in town! I don't know what it is about Terry, but there's something about his demeanor that just sets my teeth on edge.* **2.** To cause one to be upset, nervous, or uncomfortable. *Please don't tell me about your surgery, it sets my teeth on edge hearing about*

medical procedures.

set (one's/someone's) back up To be or become angry, hostile, defensive, or irritable, or to cause such a feeling in someone else. *John started setting his back up when his parents brought up the subject of college again. Election season always sets my dad's back up. Few things set my back up like hearing about a poacher killing an endangered animal.*

set (one's/someone's) mind to rest To assuage or relieve someone's or one's own worry, anxiety, dread, fear, etc. *I know you're anxious to hear how your father is doing after the surgery, so let me set your mind to rest: he's going to make a full recovery. I'm trying to set my mind to rest about these debts, but I just can't get it out of my head.*

set (oneself) up for a letdown To set one's expectations so high that one will inevitably be disappointed by the outcome. (Sometimes hyphenated as "let-down.") *I know you're really excited for this movie to come out, but I think you're setting yourself up for a letdown. John was so convinced that his relationship with Mary was perfect that he set himself up for a let-down in the long run.*

set pulses racing To be very thrilling, exhilarating, or exciting. *You could feel it in the air that the singer's performance was setting pulses racing. She has an intense, smoldering stare that sets pulses positively racing.*

set sail To embark on a journey on water in a boat (not necessarily one with sails). *We're about to set sail, so take care of any unfinished business in the port now or forever hold your peace! We only set sail a month ago, but it feels like we've been at sea for years now.*

set (someone) aback To startle, astonish, shock, or disconcert someone. (A less common variant of "take someone aback.") *It set us all aback a bit to learn that John was moving to England next month. I'm sure the news sets everyone aback, but please believe me that this is in the best interest of the company.*

set (someone) by the ears To cause (someone, generally a group of two or more people) to engage in a squabble, dispute, or altercation. *The entire town was set by the ears when it was announced that a giant megastore would be replacing many of its local shops and grocery marts. Jake likes to set his classmates by the ears as a means of getting attention.*

set (someone or something) loose To make free or give up control of something or someone; to release or discharge something or someone, as from confinement. *Due to a lack of evidence, the suspects were set loose by police. Samantha was suspended for setting mice loose throughout the school.*

set (someone or something) (up) on a pedestal To believe or behave as if someone or something is perfect, extraordinarily wonderful, or better than others. *I know it's easy to be smitten with a romantic partner, but I don't think it's healthy for one to set the other up on a pedestal. Stephen has been setting classic literature on a pedestal ever since college, so he gets really judgmental of other genres he deems to be inferior.*

set someone's back up See [set \(one's/someone's\) back up](#).

set someone's cap at See [set \(one's\) cap at \(someone\)](#).

set someone's cap for See [set \(one's\) cap for \(someone\)](#).

set someone's mind to rest See [set \(one's/someone's\) mind to rest](#).

set (someone's) pulse racing To excite, thrill, or exhilarate someone. *You could feel it in the air that the singer's performance was setting everyone's pulse racing. Her quick, sultry glances from across the room set my pulse racing.*

set (something) at rest To resolve, satisfy, or conclude something; to pacify, calm, or settle something. *We've been arguing over this will for nearly a year now. Can't we just set this all at rest? I hope this explanation will help finally set these questions at rest. News of the EU bailout has set the turbulent markets at rest, at least for the time being.*

set (something) in cement To establish something firmly or permanently; to make something unalterable or not subject to change. *The healthcare law looks promising, but we'll have to wait until Congress sets it in cement before we know exactly what it will do.*

set (something) in concrete To establish something firmly or permanently; to make something unalterable or not subject to change. *The healthcare law looks promising, but we'll have to wait until Congress sets it in concrete before we know exactly what it will do.*

set something loose See [set \(someone or something\) loose](#).



set something on a pedestal See [set \(someone or something\) \(up\) on a pedestal](#).

set (something) straight To straighten something out or make something properly arranged; to fix, correct, or make amends for something. *We still need to set a few details straight in this contract before I'm ready to sign it. I've got to set my marriage straight before I can think of doing anything else.*

set (something) to rights To restore something to its proper, natural, or original state or condition. *I never worry about keeping my hotel room tidy, because I know they'll send someone to set it to rights once I leave. I'm going to have to spend the entire weekend setting this contract to rights after the intern mangled it.*

set store by (something or someone) To have faith, confidence, or belief in someone or something; to care about, appreciate, or respect someone or something. *It is important that one sets store by one's friends, for it is to them one must turn when life becomes difficult. My brother is not one to set store by obeying social rules or etiquette.*

set store in (something or someone) To have faith, confidence, or belief in someone or something; to care about, appreciate, or respect someone or something. *I, however, have set store in the promise of the afterlife, so I choose to lead my life piously and devoutly. I'm afraid my brother should be kept off the list of guests, as he's not one to set great store in obeying social rules or etiquette. It's important to have close friends in life that you may set store in when times are tough.*

set straight See [set \(one\) straight](#).

set teeth on edge See [set \(one's\) teeth on edge](#).

set the bar (high/low) To establish an expected, required, or desired standard of quality. (Often said of a standard that is constrictive in being either too low or too high). *A: "At this point, I'm willing to go out with just about any guy, so long as he isn't living in his parents' basement." B: "Don't you think you're setting the bar a little low?" While you shouldn't take just any job you can get after college, be sure not to set the bar too high for an entry level job, or you may have trouble landing one at all. I hear that the new restaurant around the corner really sets the bar for exquisite seafood.*

set the heather alight To do wonderful or exciting things; to cause a great or remarkable sensation in the world; to be extremely exciting, popular, famous, renowned, etc. (Often used in the negative to indicate the opposite. Said especially in Scotland.) Primarily heard in UK. *I wouldn't be too concerned with what he thinks of you. For all his money and education, he's hardly setting the heather alight, is he? When she was a child, Janet dreamed of setting the heather alight as a famous actress.*

set the heather on fire To do wonderful or exciting things; to cause a great or remarkable sensation in the world; to be extremely exciting, popular, famous, renowned, etc. (Often used in the negative to indicate the opposite. Said especially in Scotland.) Primarily heard in UK. *I wouldn't be too concerned with what he thinks of you. For all his money and education, he's hardly setting the heather on fire, is he? As a girl, Janet dreamed of setting the heather on fire as a famous actress.*

set the Thames alight To do wonderful or exciting things; to cause a great or remarkable sensation in the world; to be extremely exciting, popular, famous, renowned, etc. (Refers to the Thames river in London. Often used in the negative to indicate the opposite.) Primarily heard in UK. *I wouldn't be too concerned with what he thinks of you. For all his money and education, he's hardly setting the Thames alight, is he? When she was a child, Janet dreamed of setting the Thames alight as a famous actress.*

set the Thames on fire To do wonderful or exciting things; to cause a great or remarkable sensation in the world; to be extremely exciting, popular, famous, renowned, etc. (Refers to the Thames river in London. Often used in the negative to indicate the opposite.) Primarily heard in UK. *I wouldn't be too concerned with what he thinks of you. For all his money and education, he's hardly setting the Thames on fire, is he? When she was a child, Janet dreamed of setting the Thames on fire as a famous actress.*

set the world alight To do wonderful or exciting things; to cause a great or remarkable sensation in the world; to be extremely exciting, popular, famous, renowned, etc. (Often used in the negative to indicate the opposite.) *I wouldn't be too concerned with what he thinks of you. For all his money and education, he's hardly setting the world alight, is he? As a girl, Janet dreamed of setting the world alight as a famous actress.*

set the world on fire To do wonderful or exciting things that cause a

great or remarkable sensation in the world; to be extremely popular, famous, renowned, etc. (Often used in the negative to indicate the opposite.) Primarily heard in US. *I wouldn't be too concerned with what he thinks of you. For all his money and education, he's hardly setting the world on fire, is he? As a girl, Janet dreamed of setting the world on fire as a famous actress.*

set the/(one's) clock(s) ahead To advance the time on one's clock(s) ahead by one hour to account for the beginning of daylight saving time. *Don't forget to set your clock ahead tonight or you'll end up oversleeping tomorrow! I hate having to set the clocks ahead every spring, it's such an antiquated custom.*

set the/(one's) clock(s) back To adjust the time on one's clock(s) back by one hour to account for the end of daylight saving time. *Don't forget to set your clock back tonight. We get to sleep in a little bit tomorrow! I hate having to set the clocks back every fall, it's such an antiquated custom.*

set their hand to See [set \(one's\) hand to](#).

set their heart at rest See [set \(one's\) heart at rest](#).

set their house in order See [set \(one's\) \(own\) house in order](#).

set their shoulder to the wheel See [set \(one's\) shoulder to the wheel](#).

set them aback See [set \(someone\) aback](#).

set them by the ears See [set \(someone\) by the ears](#).

set them wise See [set \(one\) wise](#).

set themselves up for a let-down See [set \(oneself\) up for a letdown](#).

set to rights See [be set to rights](#).

set tongues (a-)wagging To be a source of gossip or idle speculation. *Just when the dust of his previous scandal had begun to settle, the governor committed a new faux pas to set tongues a-wagging across the country. Being such a media celebrity means that anything one does, no matter how banal, is enough to set tongues wagging.*

set your back up See [set \(one's/someone's\) back up](#).

set your cap at See [set \(one's\) cap at \(someone\)](#).



set your cap for See [set \(one's\) cap for \(someone\)](#).

set your mind at rest See [set \(something\) at rest](#).

set your mind to rest See [set \(one's/someone's\) mind to rest](#).

settle a score (with someone) To get vengeance (on someone) for a past wrong or grievance; to punish someone for causing one harm or misfortune in the past. *The former champion entered the competition looking to settle a score with the young player who dethroned him in the previous tournament. After five years in hiding from the law, Hofstadter decided it was time to return to town and settle a score.*

settle accounts **1.** To pay or receive money owed. The phrase can be used by the debtor or the debtee. *I need to settle accounts with Dean now, before I owe him even more money! Thanks for settling accounts with me, I really needed the money this month.* **2.** To avenge a misdeed. *Now that she thinks I started that rumor about her, I'm worried about how she is going to settle accounts with me. Oh, I'll use my fists to settle accounts with him after school!*

settle an old score (with someone) To get vengeance on someone for a past wrong or grievance; to punish someone for causing one harm or misfortune in the past. *The former champion entered the competition looking to settle an old score with the young player who dethroned him two years prior. After five years in hiding from the law, Hofstadter decided it was time to return to town and settle some old scores.*

settle on (something) To come to a decision about something; to determine or agree on something, especially after a prolonged debate or decision-making process. *Have you kids settled on an idea for your school project yet? It took some time, but Sarah and I finally settled on an appropriate price for the house.*

settle the score (with someone) To get vengeance (on someone) for a past wrong or grievance; to punish someone for causing one harm or misfortune in the past. *The former champion entered the competition looking to settle the score with the young player who dethroned him in the previous tournament. After five years in hiding from the law, Hofstadter decided it was time to return to town and settle the score.*

settle upon (something) To come to a decision about something; to

determine or agree upon something. (A more formal version of "settle on something.") *Well, gentlemen, if we're settled upon the terms of the agreement, then let us sign the contract without any further ado. It took some time, but Sarah and I finally settled upon an appropriate price for the house.*

seven-day wonder A person or thing that generates interest for only a short amount of time. *The band's biggest fear was becoming a seven-day wonder, soon to be forgotten when the next big sound hit the airwaves.*

several bricks short of a (full) load A pejorative phrase meaning not very intelligent or of questionable mental capacity. This expression can appear in many different forms and variations (e.g., "a few sandwiches short of a picnic," "one card shy of a full deck," etc.). *He says he's going to start a business selling bees as pets—I think he may be several bricks short of a load. The new manager is nice enough, but he's several bricks short of a full load, if you ask me.*

several cards short of a (full) deck A pejorative phrase meaning not very intelligent or of questionable mental capacity. This expression can appear in many different forms and variations (e.g., "a few sandwiches short of a picnic," "one brick short of a load," etc.). *He says he's going to start a business selling bees as pets—I think he may be several cards short of a deck. The new manager is nice enough, but he's several cards short of a full deck, if you ask me.*

sewer rat A common brown rat, so-called because it is often found in sewers. *Why are you screaming? Haven't you ever seen a sewer rat before? Walk faster, there are sewer rats in here!*

sex kitten A physically and sexually attractive young woman. *With some new clothes and makeup, I bet she would be quite a sex kitten.*

sex object One who is valued or regarded as a source of sexual pleasure. *She was tired of being treated like a sex object, so she began dressing more conservatively and demanded more respect from the men within her social circle.*

sex on a stick vulgar slang An extremely sexually attractive person. *Well, he's not exactly sex on a stick, but he's a kind, decent, and funny man, and he knows how to treat me right.*

sex on legs vulgar slang An extremely sexually attractive person. *Well,*



he's not exactly sex on legs, but he's a kind, decent, and funny man, and he knows how to treat me right.

the sex talk An informal lecture or conversation about reproduction and sexual intercourse, especially as given by parents to their children. *I know it can be embarrassing and awkward having the sex talk with your kids, but it's important for them to know that they can come to you if they have any questions or concerns about sex as they enter puberty.*

sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll A phrase used to indicate a wild, hedonistic lifestyle. *Being a touring musician is not as exciting as it seems—it's definitely not all sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll.*

sext **1.** noun A sexually-explicit text message, often including a photo. *I was mortified when my mom saw the sext my boyfriend had sent me.* **2.** verb To send someone such a message. *I was mortified when my mom caught me sexting my boyfriend.*

sexual congress Sexual intercourse, especially between a man and a woman. *As there was no hard evidence that sexual congress occurred outside of marriage, the judge was obliged to uphold the prenuptial agreement during the divorce proceedings.*

sexual minority A phrase said of one whose sexual orientation is not completely heterosexual. It is typically used as an adjective (i.e. "sexual minority males"). *When I worked in the counseling center, many of my patients were sexual minority teenagers.*

sexual relations Sexual intercourse or activity between two or more people. *As there was no hard evidence that sexual relations occurred outside of marriage, the judge was obliged to uphold the prenuptial agreement during the divorce proceedings. I hear Jim got fired for having sexual relations with his secretary.*

sexual tension A tension, awkwardness, or underlying unease in the relationship of two people resulting from a strong mutual sexual attraction between them that has not been consummated. *Just ask Chuck out already—I'm sick of being around you two and witnessing all your sexual tension. I can just feel the sexual tension every time Matt and I are together.*

shacked up **1.** Living or sharing accommodations with someone while having a (usually casual) sexual relationship with them. *I haven't seen my*

sister in weeks. I hear she's shackled up with some guy from Oklahoma these days. I was shackled up for a while with a woman I met downtown, but I've been on my own for the last couple of months. 2. Temporarily sharing accommodations with someone. A: "Do you have a place to stay while you're in town for the wedding?" B: "Yeah, I'm shackled up with my brother and his fiancée for the weekend."

shade slang Subtle insults or expressions of disapproval. *I was just checking my phone for a second when Joe totally threw shade at me, saying, "Some of us don't need to be glued to our phones every minute of the day." My mom is the queen of shade. She loves to say, "Is that really what you're going to wear?"*

shadow of (one's) former self Someone or something that is now weaker or inferior than previously, often due to negative circumstances. *After suffering from a prolonged illness, Sharon was a shadow of her former self. Many of the town's residents moved away, leaving it a shadow of its former self.*

a shadow of (one's) former self A person whose personality has changed dramatically to become decreased in vivacity in some way, often following some traumatic event. *Ever since Tim was in that accident, he's been a shadow of his former self. She's so quiet now, like a shadow of her former self. Does anyone know what happened to the bubbly girl we once knew?*

shady past A dubious, suspicious, or potentially immoral or illegal past history. *Investigators have begun looking into the shady past of the bankrupt company's CEO. I don't know, John, I wouldn't go out with a guy who has a shady past like that.*

shaggy dog story A long-winded anecdote that has a silly or anticlimactic ending. *The old man was known for telling shaggy dog stories that made people groan and scratch their heads when he reached the ending.*

shake hands with the unemployed slang Of a man, to urinate. Primarily heard in Australia. *I'll be right back, I have to shake hands with the unemployed.*

shake in (one's) boots To tremble with fear. Usually used sarcastically. *My brother is so strong and scary-looking that people shake in their boots when he threatens them. Ooh, I'm really scared of you! I'm*

shaking in my boots, you frighten me so!

shake in (one's) boots To tremble with fear or nervousness. Often used sarcastically. *My brother is so strong and scary looking that he leaves people shaking in their boots when he threatens them. Ooh, I'm really scared of you! I'm shaking in my boots, you frighten me so!*

shake in (one's) shoes To be very nervous or afraid, often visibly so. *That poor kid is shaking in his shoes up there on stage. I may seem confident when I'm leading a training seminar, but I'm really shaking in my shoes most of the time.*

shake like a leaf To tremble violently with fear or nervousness. *My brother is so strong and scary looking that he leaves people shaking like a leaf when he threatens them. I was shaking like a leaf when I went up to deliver my speech in front of all those people.*

shake like an aspen leaf To tremble. Aspen leaves have long, flat stalks that are easily blown by the wind. *I may seem confident when I'm leading a training seminar, but I'm really shaking like an aspen leaf most of the time. It's so cold in here that the poor girl is shaking like an aspen leaf.*

shake on it To confirm an agreement with someone by shaking hands. *I can't believe he broke his promise to me after we shook on it and everything! I agree to the terms of this deal, so let's shake on it.*

shake the pagoda tree dated To obtain or earn money very quickly and readily, especially in colonial India during its time as part of the British Empire. A pun referencing the *pagoda*, a gold coin formerly issued in various dynasties of southern India, and the *Plumeria rubra*, a deciduous plant commonly called the "pagoda tree." *By securing illegal inside deals with politicians and local business authorities, Sir Fleetwood looked to shake the pagoda tree for everything it was worth.*

shaken up Greatly startled, shocked, or upset. *I was very shaken up after the car accident. I couldn't even speak properly to the police for about an hour. I remained shaken up for most of the day after hearing about my grandfather's death.*

sham Abraham obsolete To feign mental or physical illness or distress, so as to avoid work. Used especially among seamen. "Abraham men" were a class of beggars who would roam the country pretending madness so that



strangers might take pity on them and offer them alms. *It came to light that the boatswain had shammed Abraham, under the pretenses of consumption or some such wasting illness, so that he might remain at shore and drink up the profits from his previous voyage. He tore off his clothes and raved like a lunatic, but I could tell by the clarity in his eye that he was shamming Abraham to avoid conscription into the local militia.*

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a shame An unfortunate situation. The term is used either in consolation or ironically. *I heard that things didn't work out between you two, that's a real shame. You only have two yachts after the third one sunk? Aw, what a shame!*

shank's mare One's legs and feet, used for walking; travel by foot. A reference to the shank—the lower leg between the knee and the ankle—and the use of ponies or horses for travel. (Also seen as "shanks' mare.") *My bicycle fell apart three miles away from home, so I had to use shank's mare to go the rest of the way. Unfortunately, with the sedentary lifestyle many lead today, shank's mare has largely become an obsolete mode of travel.*

shank's nag One's legs and feet, used for walking; travel by foot. Also "shanks' nag." A reference to the shank—the lower leg between the knee and the ankle—and the use of ponies or horses for travel. *My bicycle fell apart three miles away from home, so I had to use shank's nag to go the rest of the way. Unfortunately, with the sedentary lifestyle many lead today, shank's nag has largely become an obsolete mode of travel.*

shank's pony One's legs and feet, used for walking; travel by foot. Also "shanks' pony." A reference to the shank—the lower leg between the knee and the ankle—and the use of ponies or horses for travel. *My bicycle fell apart three miles away from home, so I had to use shank's pony to go the rest of the way. Unfortunately, with the sedentary lifestyle many lead today,*

shank's pony has largely become an obsolete mode of travel.

shark bait 1. slang A person swimming or surfing alone in the ocean. *We sat on the beach with our drinks, watching the foolish shark bait going into the water alone for an evening swim.* **2.** (Hawaii slang) A very pale beachgoer, especially a tourist. (Supposedly because pale skin is attractive to sharks.) *We don't hang out in this part of town too often in the summer, as it gets overwhelmed with shark bait this time of year.* **3.** A particularly naïve or gullible person who is an ideal target for a scam, graft, or con. *He'd been in the game of scamming people for so long that he could spot shark bait from a mile away. Don't you dare wear that fanny pack out in town. We'll look like shark bait to the locals!*

shark baiter A person swimming or surfing alone in the ocean. Primarily heard in Australia. *We sat on the beach with our drinks, watching the foolish shark baiter going into the water alone for an evening swim.*

sharp cookie A particularly smart, witty, or clever person. *Dan: "I'm having a heck of a time doing my taxes, I just don't understand it at all." Steve: "You should get in touch with my uncle, he's one sharp cookie!" We're always looking to hire sharp cookies like you.*

sharp practice Underhanded, deceitful, cunning, or particularly sneaky practice, especially in business, that is technically within the scope of the law but which may be considered immoral or unethical. *The investment banking sector has been tightly reined in by the government after the sharp practice that went unchecked for so many years and cost so many people their life savings.*

shed a tear To cry or weep, especially from grief; to grieve or mourn in general. *Everyone in the room was shedding tears by the end of the ceremony. Their relationship had soured so much over the years that John didn't shed a tear when he heard of his brother's death.*

she'd better be going See [\(one had\) better be going](#).

she'd better get moving See [\(one had\) better get moving](#).

she'd better get on her horse See [\(one had\) better get on \(one's\) horse](#).

she'd better keep quiet about it See [\(someone had\) better keep quiet about it](#).

she'd better keep still about it See [\(someone had\) better keep still about it](#).

shed (some) light on (something) To reveal information or details about something; to clarify or help people understand something. *We've hired a private investigator to help shed light on the clandestine dealings of the organization. These documents we've uncovered shed some light on how the late author's final book was meant to end.*

shed (some) light upon (something) To reveal information or details about something; to clarify or help people understand something. (A more formal version of "shed (some) light on something.") *We've hired a private investigator to help shed light upon the clandestine dealings of the baron. These documents we've uncovered shed some light upon how the late author's final book was meant to end.*

shelf life The length of time that something is viable or useful. *Milk has a very short shelf life, as it tends to expire quickly. I'm hoping that this product will have a very long shelf life and be useful for years to come.*

she'll be apples Everything will be fine; things will get better; don't worry about it. Primarily heard in Australia. *Don't worry about the presentation. She'll be apples, considering how hard you've worked! A: "Things have felt really rocky between me and John lately." B: "She'll be apples, mate. I'm sure it's just the stress of his final exams that's making things hard at the moment."*

she'll be right(, mate) Everything will be OK; things will get better; don't worry about it. Primarily heard in Australia. *Dave: "I'm just really worried that something's going to go wrong at the conference." Jim: "I know she'll be right, with how hard you've worked!" Sarah: "Things have felt really rocky between me and John lately." Janet: "She'll be right, mate. I'm sure it's just the stress of his final exams that's making things hard at the moment."*

shell game 1. A game in which an object is placed under one of three cups or shells, which are then moved around. The person playing the game must guess the final location of the object. *Don't play any of those stupid shell games at the carnival, they're impossible to win! 2.* By extension, a method of deception that involves hiding or obscuring the truth. Primarily heard in US. *The appliance salesman played a shell game and switched the refrigerator I agreed to purchase with a used model. A Ponzi scheme is a*

type of shell game that always fails because it relies on money from new investors in order to pay old investors.

she'll rue the day See [rue the day \(that something happened\)](#).

shepherd's delight See [red sky at night, shepherd's delight](#).

shepherd's warning See [red sky in the morning, shepherd's warning](#).

she's all in See [be all in](#).

she's apples Everything is, or is going to be, fine or OK; it's grand, don't worry about it. Primarily heard in Australia. *Dave: "I hope my speech is OK. I just found out I'm the keynote speaker at the conference!" Jim: "I'm sure she's apples, Dave. With how hard you've worked on it, there's no way it isn't!" A: "And how's my old truck working out for you, Daniel?" Daniel: "She's apples, Grandpa, thank you again for letting me have it!"*

she's on See [you're on!](#).

shift (the) deckchairs on the Titanic To partake in or undertake some task, activity, or course of action that will ultimately prove trivial or futile in its possible effect or outcome. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *For all his blustering about overhauling the education system, the prime minister might as well have been shifting the deckchairs on the Titanic for all the good these proposals will do. You're applying for arts council funding? Why don't you just shift deckchairs on the Titanic while you're at it?*

shifty-looking Having or of an untrustworthy, dubious, or deceptive appearance. *There are always a bunch of shifty-looking characters around this part of town at night, so let's not linger! I didn't feel great about the deal when John's shifty-looking business partner came along to sign the papers.*

ship slang To support a romantic pairing of certain fictional characters, as in a TV show or movie. It is likely a shortened form of the word "relationship." *Be honest—who do you ship on Game of Thrones?*

shipper slang One who hopes for and supports a romantic pairing of certain fictional characters, as in a TV show or movie. It is likely a shortened form of the word "relationship." *Meredith and Alex shippers really bug me. She's meant to be with McDreamy!*

ships in the night People, especially those who live together, who do not see very much of each other or are not in the same place at the same time



very often. (A shortened version of "ships that pass in the night.") *Ever since Georgina started managing the restaurant at night, she and I have been ships in the night. We've had a guy renting our spare room for the last two months. We were worried it would feel crowded, but he works so much that we're like ships in the night with him.*

ships that pass in the night People, especially those who live together, who do not see very much of each other or are not in the same place at the same time very often. *Ever since Georgina started managing the restaurant at night, she and I have been ships that pass in the night. We were worried it would feel crowded with someone renting our spare room, but he works so much that we're like ships that pass in the night with him.*

shirt-lifter An offensive term for a homosexual male. *Mary was furious at Jason for referring to her gay friend as a shirt-lifter.*

shirtless Not wearing a shirt; bare-chested. Typically said of a man. *I can't help but blush when I see a buff, shirtless guy running through the neighborhood.*

shit a brick rude slang To be very scared or nervous. The plural ("shit bricks") is also commonly used. *Of course I shit a brick when I woke up to the sounds of an intruder in my house! My brother is so strong and scary-looking that people shit bricks when he threatens them.*

shit-eating grin rude slang A facial expression denoting arrogance, smugness, or self-satisfaction. Primarily heard in US. *I really wanted to wipe that shit-eating grin off his face after he won the poker game.*

shit (one's) pants **1.** rude slang Literally, to defecate while still wearing one's clothing. *I need you to pull over the car right now, or else I'm going to shit my pants!* **2.** rude slang By extension, to be very surprised. *When I saw that the magazine had published my letter to the editor, I practically shit my pants!*

shit (one)self **1.** rude slang Literally, to defecate while still wearing one's clothing. *I need you to pull over the car right now, or else I'm going to shit myself!* **2.** rude slang By extension, to be very surprised. *When I saw that the magazine had published my letter to the editor, I practically shit myself!*

the shit out of vulgar slang To a huge or great degree; very much. *I swear, if that punk looks over at us like that again, I'm going to go over there*

and beat the shit out of him! Don't sneak up on me like that, you scared the shit out of me!

shit stain 1. rude slang A stupid person. *Don't listen to a fool like him, he's just a shit stain.* 2. rude slang Literally, a mark left by excrement. *We need to rip up these carpets—they're covered in shit stains from grandpa's dog.*

shit-stirrer rude slang An instigator who exacerbates a tense or otherwise difficult situation. Primarily heard in UK. *Ryan is a shit-stirrer who always tries to encourage guys to fight. If you want a drama-free party, don't invite Kaitlin—she's such a shit-stirrer.*

shit where you eat See [don't shit where you eat](#).

shits a brick See [shit a brick](#).

shitshow rude slang A chaotic or disastrous situation. *When one of our friends turns 21, the night usually ends up being a shitshow, and we're all hungover the next morning. None of us were prepared for the boss's questions, and the meeting became a real shitshow.*

shitstorm rude slang A violent and/or chaotic situation. *The coup has created a shitstorm for everyone in that country. Once people started throwing punches in the bar, we knew we had to get out of that shitstorm.*

a shiver down (one's) spine A shudder felt down one's back, due to either fear, anticipation, nervousness, or excitement. *I felt a shiver down my spine at the thought of my exam tomorrow.*

shiver me timbers An exclamation of surprise. The phrase originated with sailors (as "shiver one's timbers" meant to destroy one's ship) and is usually used today in cartoonish portrayals of pirates. *Well, shiver me timbers—I didn't think you were getting into town until tomorrow! You got cast as a pirate in the play? I bet you have one line—"Shiver me timbers!"*

a shiver ran down (one's/someone's) spine Said when one has experienced an intense feeling of fear, panic, dread, shock, exhilaration, or excitement. *A shiver ran down John's spine when he overheard the managers discussing the money he'd stolen from the company safe. A cold shiver ran down my spine at the thought of having to work for another minute in that awful restaurant. When they announced that Sarah would have the chance to meet a movie star as a part of her prize, a shiver ran down her spine.*

a shiver ran up (one's/someone's) spine Said when one has

experienced an intense feeling of fear, panic, dread, shock, exhilaration, or excitement. *A shiver ran down John's spine when he overheard the managers discussing the money he'd stolen from the company safe. A cold shiver ran down my spine at the thought of having to work for another minute in that awful restaurant. When they announced that Sarah would have the chance to meet a movie star as a part of her prize, a shiver ran down her spine.*

a shiver went down (one's/someone's) spine Said when one has experienced an intense feeling of fear, panic, dread, shock, exhilaration, or excitement. *A shiver went down John's spine when he overheard the managers discussing the money he'd stolen from the company safe. A cold shiver went down my spine at the thought of having to work for another minute in that awful restaurant. When they announced that Sarah would have the chance to meet a movie star as a part of her prize, a shiver went down her spine.*

a shiver went up (one's/someone's) spine Said when one has experienced an intense feeling of fear, panic, dread, shock, exhilaration, or excitement. *A shiver went up John's spine when he overheard the managers discussing the money he'd stolen from the company safe. A cold shiver went up my spine at the thought of having to work for another minute in that awful restaurant. When they announced that Sarah would have the chance to meet a movie star as a part of her prize, a shiver went up her spine.*

shoe (one's) mule To steal or misappropriate funds. The phrase refers to blacksmiths who did not shoe one's animal even after accepting payment. *I entrusted him with a lot of money, so I'm going to be livid if I find out that he's trying to shoe my mule.*

shoe the goose To attempt a futile or pointless task. *You'd have better luck shoeing a goose than getting those flowers to grow on such rocky soil. A: "I'm busy fixing this cassette player right now." B: "You're busy shoeing the goose, more like! Who needs a cassette player these days?"*

shoestring budget A budget or allotment of resources that is very meager, sparse, or just enough to suit its purpose. *Unfortunately, due to government cutbacks following the recession, our department has had to produce the same levels of work on a shoestring budget. I did all sorts of traveling with just a shoestring budget when I was in college. You learn very quickly how to make the most of what you have!*

shoo-in Someone or something that is predicted to easily win a competition. *Julia is a shoo-in for this year's spelling bee—she's the best speller in the whole town.*

shook slang Frightened, startled, or upset. Similar in usage to "shook-up." *Ooh, the season finale of that show had me shook! I hope my favorite character doesn't die.*

shook hands with the unemployed See [shake hands with the unemployed](#).

shook in her shoes See [shake in \(one's\) shoes](#).

shook like an aspen leaf See [shake like an aspen leaf](#).

shook on it See [shake on it](#).

shook the pagoda tree See [shake the pagoda tree](#).

shoot for the stars To set one's goals or ambitions very high; to try to attain or achieve something particularly difficult. *My parents always taught me to shoot for the stars when I was growing up—that I could be anything I set my mind to! With all that money, you could do whatever you want. Shoot for the stars, kiddo!*

shoot off at the mouth 1. To speak without discretion; to speak too loudly or freely, especially about sensitive topics or information. *We would have gotten away with our plan if your dumb cousin hadn't started shooting off at the mouth all over town. I figured it went without saying that I didn't want to talk about my divorce at Daniel's wedding, but you just had to go and shoot off at the mouth like that!* 2. To be annoyingly or overbearingly talkative, especially in a bragging or boastful manner. *There's some guy at the other end of the bar shooting off at the mouth about how far he can throw a football.*

shoot off (one's) face To speak at an unwelcome time or in an inappropriate manner. *You have no solutions and are only adding negativity to the situation, so quit shooting off your face! I'm sorry, but a dinner party is not the place for him to shoot off his face about politics.*

shoot (one's) cuffs To flaunt something. Displaying one's ornate or elaborate cuffs was a common practice among medieval noblemen. *I know you're happy about your promotion, but try not to shoot your cuffs, OK?*

shoot (someone) a dirty look To look at someone in an angry, contemptuous, or disapproving manner. *I started telling him about Janet's run-in with the law, but when she shot me a dirty look, I shut my trap. I must have done something really offensive last night because Mike keeps shooting me dirty looks.*

shoot the messenger See [don't shoot the messenger](#).

shoot through like a Bondi tram To hastily depart, abscond, or flee; to pass quickly through or by a place. An allusion to the tram lines that ran in and out of Bondi, New South Wales, until 1960. Primarily heard in US. *After Joey found out I was pregnant, he shot through like a Bondi tram back to Perth. All of a sudden, a string of cars started shooting through town like Bondi trams, followed shortly thereafter by a couple of police cars.*

shoot through (to somewhere) To hastily depart, abscond, or flee (to some place), especially so as to avoid doing or dealing with something unpleasant or unwanted. Primarily heard in US, New Zealand. *After Joey found out I was pregnant, he shot through to Sydney as soon as he had enough money for a ticket. Many young people would rather shoot through rather than face the consequences of their actions.*

the short and the long of it The essential or most important point being made; the plain truth of the matter. *There are a lot of reasons I don't want to go, but the short and the long of it is that I don't want to see my ex-boyfriend there. Bob, the short and the long of it is that we aren't satisfied with your performance in work lately.*

short-arse rude slang A short person. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *You're such a short-arse, you can't even reach that low shelf!*

a short fuse A tendency to become angered, enraged, or upset very quickly or easily; a short temper. *I'm usually a pretty calm person, but whenever I start driving I find I have such a short fuse.*

short hairs A euphemism for pubic hair. Typically used in the phrase "have by the short hairs," which indicates one's control over another. *Did you see that poor intern running around earlier? The boss really has him by the short hairs.*

short haul 1. adjective (typically hyphenated and used before a noun) Of, covering, or requiring only a short distance or period of time. *I've found that*

it's actually cheaper to fly into Seattle and then catch a short-haul flight up to British Columbia from there. **2.** noun A rather short distance. *The bus will take us most of the way to grandma's house, and then it's just a short haul from the station.* **3.** noun A short length or period of time. *Congress approved funding to cover the country's debt for the short haul, but a more permanent solution will have to be reached before the December 31 deadline.*

short leash A phrase that highlights one's lack of independence or autonomy due to being strongly controlled by another. *George has been on a short leash with his husband ever since he gambled away their life savings at a poker match. Everyone feels like they're on a short leash at the office ever since that new manager took over.*

short of a length In cricket, a short delivery from the bowler to the batsman. *Quit pitching the ball short of a length—that's how they're getting so many hits!*

short on looks Homely; rather plain or unattractive; not aesthetically pleasing. *Janet's date was a little short on looks, but she said he was very nice and a true gentleman. So this is our new back garden. It's short on looks at the moment, but once I get the weeds cleared away and some flowers planted, it will be better in no time.*

short run **1.** adjective (typically hyphenated and used before a noun) Of, covering, or limited to only a short or immediate period of time. *This sort of short-run planning is fine while the company is being set up, but you need to start setting some long-term goals and strategies.* **2.** noun A short length of time; an immediate or limited period in which to act or effect change. *Congress approved funding to cover the country's debt for the short run, but a more permanent solution will have to be reached before the December 31 deadline. This minimum wage increase may have a negative effects on businesses in the short run, but they will be dwarfed by the benefits down the line.*

short sharp shock A fast, severe punishment. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *He needs a short sharp shock to persuade him to change his ways and give up that life of crime.*

short-sheet To make a bed by doubling up the sheets. Typically done as a trick to prevent one from fully stretching out in bed. *Whenever the team goes on a road trip, someone's bed inevitably gets short-sheeted. Come on, we're*

going to short-sheet my brother's bed before he gets home!

the short straw The least favorable, desirable, or fortunate outcome in a given selection. *I got the short straw when it came to cleaning up after our shift last night. Our team was given the short straw and had to come in over the weekend to work on the revised proposal.*

short strokes See [be in the short strokes](#).

short strokes The last or final stages (of something). Said especially of that which has been long, arduous, or tedious. *Now that we finally got the server online and the app stable, we're in the short strokes of making it available to users. We'll be in the short strokes once the moving van arrives with the last of our stuff from the old house.*

short temper A tendency to become angered, enraged, or upset very quickly or easily. *I'm usually a pretty calm person, but whenever I start driving, I find I have such a short temper. That short temper of yours is going to get you into trouble one of these days.*

shot See [be shot](#).

shot across the bow A warning. It refers to a warning shot from a ship, and can take the form of words or actions. *Her sharp retort was a shot across the bow, letting her boyfriend know that she would not tolerate his bad attitude.*

a shot in the dark **1.** A guess or estimate with very little or no assurance as to its accuracy. *Well, this is just a shot in the dark, but I'm going to say that the answer to the question is 52.* **2.** An attempt that is not expected to succeed or has very little chance of working. *It was really just a shot in the dark when I tried to fix our washing machine, but I was actually able to get it working again on my first try!*

a shot in the locker A remaining chance to attempt something. *You can't give up on your grade now—you still have a shot in the locker with your extra credit assignment!*

shotgun approach In business, a marketing strategy in which a wide and nonselective population or demographic is reached or advertised to. *We don't yet have much brand recognition in the market, so we're going with a shotgun approach to reach as many potential customers as we can.*

shotgun cottage (chiefly Southern United States slang) A one-story

house in which each room is in a straight alignment with the others, connected by a continuous hallway running from the front to the back of the residence. *When our whole family goes to stay in my grandmother's shotgun cottage in New Orleans, it always feels like we're all right on top of one another.*

shotgun house (chiefly Southern United States slang) A one-story house in which each room is in a straight alignment with the others, connected by a continuous hallway running from the front to the back of the residence. *When our whole family goes to stay in my grandmother's shotgun house in New Orleans, it always feels like we're all right on top of one another.*

shotgun hut (chiefly Southern United States slang) A one-story house in which each room is in a straight alignment with the others, connected by a continuous hallway running from the front to the back of the residence. *When our whole family goes to stay in my grandmother's shotgun hut in New Orleans, it always feels like we're all right on top of one another.*

shotgun marriage A marriage that happens quickly due to an unplanned pregnancy. *We knew it was a shotgun marriage when Frank's new wife had a baby five months after the wedding.*

shotgun shack (chiefly Southern United States slang) A one-story house in which each room is in a straight alignment with the others, connected by a continuous hallway running from the front to the back of the residence. *When our whole family goes to stay in my grandmother's shotgun shack in New Orleans, it always feels like we're all right on top of one another.*

shotgun wedding A wedding that happens quickly due to an unplanned pregnancy. *After finding out she was pregnant, Gina and Tom had a shotgun wedding.*

shoulder to cry on One who provides comfort to another during a difficult time. *Janine needed a shoulder to cry on after she lost her job, so she came over to my apartment.*

shout (one's) head off To shout or yell very loudly and lengthily. *Suzy shouted her head off when I told her she couldn't have an ice cream cone. The stadium was packed with fans shouting their heads off for the popular band. Don't bother listening to the crazies who stand on street corners and shout their heads off at passersby.*

shout (something) from the rooftop(s) To share some news or information publicly and with as many people as possible. *I was ready to shout that we'd be having a baby from the rooftops, but my wife wanted to wait for a while before we made the news public. I know you want to shout it from the rooftop that you came in first in your class, but you should have a bit of modesty about it.*

shouting match A bitter argument in which two or more people shout at one another, often simultaneously. *At first I thought we were just going through a rough patch in our relationship, but lately it seems like every night Janet and I get into a shouting match with each other. It might be time to end things.*

shove it/something up (one's) ass A rude, vulgar invective expressing disdain, contempt, disgust, or anger to someone (about something). Primarily heard in US. *I've taken enough of the boss's crap—he can shove this job up his ass! Bill: "You're acting like a fool, Dave. You need to sober up and get your life in order." Dave: "Ah, shove it up your ass, Bill! You don't know what's best for me!"*

shove over To move one's position so as to make more space available for another person. *I wish this car ahead of us would just shove over a tiny bit so we could pass him! Tell John to shove over so we can fit everyone at the table.*

shove (something)/it up your arse A rude, vulgar invective expressing disdain, contempt, disgust, or anger to someone. Primarily heard in UK. *I've taken enough of the boss's crap, he can shove this job up his arse! Shove it up your arse, Bill! You don't know what's best for me!*

show a/the white flag To show a sign of surrender or defeat; to yield or give in. *After the prosecutors brought forward their newest evidence, the defendant showed the white flag and agreed to the plea bargain. We've been in negotiations for weeks, but it looks like the other company might finally be ready to show a white flag.*

show (a/the) white flag To offer a sign of surrender or defeat; to yield or give in. *After the prosecutors brought forward their newest evidence, the defendant showed the white flag and agreed to the plea bargain. We've been in negotiations for weeks, but it looks like the other company might finally be ready to show a white flag.*

show in bad light See [in a bad light](#).

show (one's) butt (chiefly Southern United States slang) To act in a rude, obnoxious, or aberrant manner; to misbehave or act foolishly; to make a scene. *My Mammaw says that we can go down to the mall on our own, but she said not to show our butts or we'll be grounded! You need to start controlling how much you drink when we're out. You were showing your butt in front of all your colleagues!*

show (one's) cards To make one's plans, intentions, ideas, or resources known to others, especially those previously hidden or kept secret. (A variant of "show one's hand"; both phrases refer to displaying the cards one has in one's hand during a card game.) *In business negotiations, it's important that you don't show your cards right away, or you might risk losing out on the best deal possible. Pressure from the IRS is forcing the notoriously secretive CEO to show his cards regarding his company's tax profile and offshore accounts.*

show (one's) hand To make one's plans, intentions, ideas, or resources known to others, especially those that were previously hidden or kept secret. (Also expressed as "show (one's) cards"; both phrases refer to displaying one's cards ("hand") during a card game.) *In business negotiations, it's important that you don't show your hand right away, or you might risk losing out on the best deal possible. Pressure from the government is forcing the notoriously secretive CEO to show his hand regarding his company's tax profile and offshore accounts.*

show (one's) horns To reveal one's evil or malicious nature. The devil is typically depicted with horns. *I thought I could trust Eric until he showed his horns by spreading rumors about me. Jill definitely sabotaged my last two relationships. She might seem nice, but she always shows her horns eventually.*

show (one's) (true) colors To reveal what one really believes, thinks, or wants; to act in accordance with one's real personality, temperament, or disposition. Primarily heard in US. *Dave said all along that he only wanted this deal because it was in the company's best interest, but he showed his true colors once he realized that he wouldn't get any special commission for his efforts. It's only in times of crisis that your friends will really show their colors.*

show (one's) (true) colours To reveal what one really believes, thinks, or wants; to act in accordance with one's real personality, character, or disposition. Primarily heard in UK. *Dave said all along that he only wanted this deal because it was in the company's best interest, but he showed his true colours once he realised that he wouldn't get any special commission for his efforts. It's only in times of crisis that your friends will really show their colours.*

show (one's) (true) stripes To reveal what one really believes, thinks, or wants; to act in accordance with one's real personality, character, or disposition. (A less common variant of "show one's (true) colors/colours.") *Dave said all along that he only wanted this deal because it was in the company's best interest, but he showed his true stripes once he realized that he wouldn't get any special commission for his efforts. It's only in times of crisis that your friends will really show their stripes.*

show (someone) the back of (one's) hand **1.** To strike someone with the backside of one's open hand. *Son, I'll show you the back of my hand if you ever speak to your mother that way again.* **2.** To reject, snub, or rebuke (someone); to display contempt, scorn, or rejection (to or for someone). *I'll show the back of my hand to anyone who says I'm not a good parent. He pleaded to be forgiven by his wife, but she merely showed him the back of her hand.*

show (someone) what (one's) made of To demonstrate one's true talent, fortitude, ability, courage, or worth (to someone). *No one thinks you stand a chance in this match, but you go out there and show them what you're made of! This could be the biggest trial of my career. Time to go show what I'm made of!*

show-stopper The most exceptional or memorable performance or item among others; a stand-out. *Yeah, the opening act was a real show-stopper—the headlining band was disappointing in comparison! All the pieces in the designer's collection were excellent, but the wedding dress was a real show-stopper.*

show the cloven hoof To reveal one's evil or malicious nature. The devil is typically depicted with cloven hooves. *I thought I could trust Eric until he showed the cloven hoof by spreading rumors about me. Jill definitely sabotaged my last two relationships. She might seem nice, but she always*

shows the cloven hoof eventually.

show the flag To stand up for, support, or defend someone or something. *A number of people from the actor's hometown are arriving into New York to show the flag at his debut performance on Broadway. My country is often a target for insults or gibes abroad, so whenever I go traveling I make a point of showing the flag for it.*

shown the ropes See [be shown the ropes](#).

shrinking violet A negative term for a very shy person. *After years of being seen as nothing more than a shrinking violet, Christine decided to overcome her fears and start talking to strangers.*

shudder to think See [I shudder to think](#).

shut down **1.** verb To cease business operations for any length of time (often permanently). *I loved that restaurant, so I'm very disappointed that it shut down. That shop always shuts down for two weeks in the summer to accommodate the owner's vacation.* **2.** verb To force a business to cease operations. In this usage, a noun or pronoun is often used between "shut" and "down." *After a thorough investigation, the police were finally able to shut the shop down for money laundering.* **3.** verb To turn off a computer or other machine. In this usage, a noun or pronoun is often used between "shut" and "down." *Everyone, be sure to shut down your computers before you leave the office today. Mom sent me to shut down the dryer because it was too noisy.* **4.** verb To reject, strongly discourage, or prevent one from continuing with one's course of action. In this usage, a noun or pronoun is often used between "shut" and "down." *Man, I tried to talk to that pretty girl, and she totally shut me down! The judge shut down that line of questioning right quick. This tenacious defense has completely shut down the defending champions.* **5.** noun A period during which operations cease (usually temporarily). In this usage, the phrase is often written as one word. *Congress was able to reach a compromise to avoid a government shutdown.*

a shut mouth catches no flies It is better to keep one's mouth shut (not say anything) than to engage in idle chatter (and potentially say something inappropriate). *I would suggest that we all just sit quietly until tea time commences—a shut mouth catches no flies, after all. Keeping in mind that a shut mouth catches no flies, I made sure not to say anything out of turn during the meeting.*

shut (one's) eyes and think of England **1.** Typically of a woman (specifically a wife), to endure unwanted or unpleasant sexual intercourse—as out of a sense of duty or obligation—by distracting oneself with more pleasant thoughts. Refers to alleged advice for wives in the 19th and early 20th centuries that placed unwanted sexual activity as the price of the security of marriage. Primarily heard in UK. *It's horrible to think that women who were not attracted to their husbands, but who depended on the security of their marriage, were once told to simply shut their eyes and think of England to satisfy their husband's desires.* **2.** By extension, to endure any unpleasant or unwanted task or experience by thinking of one's duty, the benefits of the experience, or by distracting oneself with more pleasant thoughts. Primarily heard in UK. *Whenever I have to have a tooth filled at the dentist, I just shut my eyes and think of England.*

shut the door in (someone's) face **1.** Literally, to close a door (i.e., to a house or room) abruptly, rudely, and/or forcefully when someone is about to enter or is standing in the doorway. *I was so mad at Paul for the way he spoke to me earlier that I shut the door right in his face when he tried to get back in the apartment last night.* **2.** By extension, to remove, withdraw or deny very abruptly or rudely an opportunity or one's support from someone. *This economy is so bad right now. Every business in town shut the door in my face when I asked about getting a job. The board of directors has shut the door in Wilkinson's face after rumors of his alleged embezzlement began to circulate.*

shut your gob An imperative to be quiet or cease talking immediately. Can be rude, aggressive, or jocular depending on the context. *Shut your gob, Bobby—no one asked for the opinion of a dork like you! A: "So, where do you think we can sell these stolen goods?" B: "Shut your gob! Don't you have enough sense not to talk about that in public?" Dave: "Wow, that Cadillac has seen better days. How much did you pay for that little gem?" Bill: "Ah, shut your gob, Dave. I think it looks just fine."*

shut your mouth An imperative to be quiet or cease talking immediately. Can be rude, aggressive, or jocular depending on the context. *Shut your mouth, Bobby—no one asked for the opinion of a dork like you! A: "So, where do you think we can sell these stolen goods?" B: "Shut your mouth! Don't you have enough sense not to talk about that in public?" Dave: "Wow, that Cadillac has seen better days. How much did you pay for that*

little gem?" Bill: "Ah, shut your mouth, Dave. I think it looks just fine."

shut your pie hole An imperative to be quiet or cease talking immediately. Can be rude, aggressive, or jocular depending on the context. *Shut your pie hole, Bobby—no one asked for the opinion of a dork like you!* A: "So, where do you think we can sell these stolen goods?" B: "Shut your pie hole! Don't you have enough sense not to talk about that in public?" Dave: "Wow, that Cadillac has seen better days. How much did you pay for that little gem?" Bill: "Ah, shut your pie hole, Dave. I think it looks just fine."

shut your trap An imperative to be quiet or cease talking immediately. Can be rude, aggressive, or jocular depending on the context. *Shut your trap, Bobby—no one asked for the opinion of a dork like you!* A: "So, where do you think we can sell these stolen goods?" B: "Shut your trap! Don't you have enough sense not to talk about that in public?" Dave: "Wow, that Cadillac has seen better days. How much did you pay for that little gem?" Bill: "Ah, shut your trap, Dave. I think it looks just fine."

shut your yap An imperative to be quiet or cease talking immediately. Can be rude, aggressive, or jocular depending on the context. *Shut your yap, Bobby—no one asked for the opinion of a dork like you!* A: "So, where do you think we can sell these stolen goods?" B: "Shut your yap! Don't you have enough sense not to talk about that in public?" Dave: "Wow, that Cadillac has seen better days. How much did you pay for that little gem?" Bill: "Ah, shut your yap, Dave. I think it looks just fine."

shy bladder Said to be possessed by one who has trouble urinating when others are present, as in a public restroom. *I have a shy bladder, so it takes me forever to pee in those crowded stadium bathrooms.*

sick as a dog See [\(as\) sick as a dog](#).

sick as a parrot See [\(as\) sick as a parrot](#).

sick in the head Crazy. *He's sick in the head if he thinks this plan is going to work. After yet another sleepless night, I'm starting to feel like I'm sick in the head!*

sick list A list of people who are ill or indisposed due to poor health. *Jim has been on the sick list for over a month now. If he doesn't get better soon, we're going to have to replace him!*

sick list See [on the sick list](#).

the sick man of (something or somewhere) Something or some place that is particularly unsound, untenable, or doomed to fail, especially among or in comparison to its peers. *Due in large part to several tumultuous years of indecision in its parliament, Greece has been the sick man of Europe since the global recession began. The banking giant, which once propped up the entire country, has now become the sick man of the economy in recent years.*

sick note A note from a doctor confirming one's sickness as a legitimate reason for absence from work or school. *Make sure to take your sick note to Human Resources before you start working today. I'll make sure my son has a sick note when he returns to school.*

a/one sick puppy Someone who thinks, speaks, or acts in an aberrant, perverse, sadistic, or gruesome manner. *You'd have to be a sick puppy to enjoy a movie as graphic and brutal as that. Whoever did this to these poor animals is one sick puppy, all right.*

side boob slang The side of a woman's breast when partially exposed or accentuated by her clothing. *Does this dress give me too much side boob?*

side effect 1. An unpleasant symptom experienced while taking a particular medication. Often plural. *Unfortunately, nausea is a common side effect with this drug. Ugh, I had so many side effects that I had to stop taking that medication.* 2. By extension, an unexpected result or consequence of something. *Having to drive my little sister all over the place is an annoying side effect of living at home again.*

side issue A topic related to, but less important than, the subject currently being discussed or considered. *While you make an intriguing point, I'm afraid we don't have to time to cover side issues like that in today's lecture. Try not to get lost in all the side issues related to this case as you do your research.*

side wall 1. A wall that forms the side of a building or other structure. *OK, class, line up at the side wall! At every school dance, Peggy found herself drawn to boys who leaned against the side walls and looked as if they had no interest in being there.* 2. The side of the tire on a motor vehicle. *A: "How will I know what kind of tires to get?" B: "Well, there's information printed on the side wall of a tire—you can look there to find out more about the ones you currently have."*



sigh of relief A feeling or display of relief that something particularly stressful, unpleasant, or undesirable has been avoided or completed. *Everyone in class heaved a sigh of relief after that horrible midterm exam was over. Investors in Europe had a big sigh of relief now that a Greek exit from the Euro has been avoided.*

a sight to behold An especially impressive, noteworthy, or remarkable person, event, or thing; something or someone who is very much worth seeing. *If you never go anywhere else in your life, make sure you see the Grand Canyon: it's a sight to behold. The new jazz singer is really a sight to behold. She's probably the best we've ever had at the club.*

sign of the times Something regarded, usually negatively, as emblematic of the current time period. *Nobody looks up from their mobile phones anymore. I guess it's just a sign of the times.*

sign (one's) life away To forfeit one's rights or control over some integral aspect of one's life, typically one's financial interests, as through some signed deal or agreement. *Because our financial portfolio was so bad, we basically had to sign our lives away to get approved for a mortgage with the bank. If you agree to this plea bargain, the government will have total control over your property, accounts, and future revenue—so think very carefully before you sign your life away.*

significance level In statistics, the point at which a null hypothesis is rejected. Also known as the "level of significance." *Who can identify the significance level in this problem?*

significant other A person with whom one is in a serious romantic relationship. Primarily heard in US. *Since Kelly didn't have a significant other, she attended her friend's wedding alone.*

silence means consent If you do not voice your objection to something, then it is assumed that you support it. *A: "Why did you think I would agree to punishing a student so harshly?" B: "Well, you didn't say anything when we originally discussed this plan! Silence means consent." Make sure to speak up when you disagree with something, because, for many people, silence means consent.*

silent as the dead See [\(as\) silent as the dead](#).

silent as the grave See [\(as\) silent as the grave](#).

silent partner Someone who is closely associated or involved with a business or corporation, typically through financial investment, so as to share in its risks and rewards without participating in its day-to-day operations and management. Primarily heard in US. *Dave's father agreed to be a silent partner when we started our company, leaving us to run it once it was set up. In an attempt to crack down on corruption, federal investigators have begun looking into various silent partners that might be financing the drug trade throughout the country.*

silk-stocking district A section of a city that is dominated by the upper-class. *Even if you had the money, you wouldn't want to live in a silk-stocking district—you'd be totally subject to the whims of your wealthy neighbors.*

silky smooth 1. Very smooth; having a texture that is likened to silk, which is valued for its smoothness. *What products do you use to make your hair so silky smooth? I just bought some silky smooth sheets, and now I never want to get out of bed! How did you get this chocolate mousse to be so silky smooth?* 2. Charming in speech and behavior. *Chad is so silky smooth that he always has a group of women swooning over him in any bar.*

silly goose See [\(you\) silly goose](#).

silly money An absurdly or extraordinarily large amount of money. *Ever since John got into investment banking, he's been making silly money! Part of the reason so many people are in debt is that going to the college costs silly money.*

silly season A period during which news outlets cover frivolous or less serious news stories, typically during the summer when fewer topics are generated. Primarily heard in UK. *I don't even buy the paper during the silly season because there's nothing worth reading about. You know it's the silly season when your assignment is to cover the circus.*

silver bullet Something that provides an immediate and extremely effective solution to a given problem or difficulty, especially one that is normally very complex or hard to resolve. The phrase is almost always used in a statement that such a solution does not exist. *There's no silver bullet that will solve the homelessness crisis in this country. The way to make progress is through deliberate, logical discussions around the issue.*

silver foil Thin sheets of aluminum that are typically used to cover food and keep it fresh. Primarily heard in UK. *Wrap those leftovers in silver foil so you can have them for lunch tomorrow.*

silver spoon A metaphor for ample wealth that has been passed down through inheritance. (Used primarily in the phrase "born with a silver spoon in (one's) mouth.") *We may both be wealthy now, but I never had a silver spoon growing up. I had nothing when I was young, and all of my fortune is down to my own hard work. Everyone who attends that university was born with a silver spoon in his mouth, so I just don't think it's the right place for me.*

silver surfer An elderly person who is a proficient user of the Internet. *My grandmother has become a real silver surfer since we got her new computer hooked up to the Internet. She even keeps in touch with her friends on social media!*

a silver tongue See [have a silver tongue](#).

silver tongue Oratory skills that are particularly eloquent, artful, seductive, and/or persuasive. *He might not have much experience in politics, but his silver tongue is bound to win over a great deal of voters.*

simple English Clear, straightforward, and uncomplicated English terminology. *Chronic atherosclerosis in the coronary arteries has stopped oxygen-rich blood from reaching the heart, leading to a myocardial infarction. In simple English, you've suffered a heart attack. I wish these software agreements would be written in simple English, rather than this legalese gobbledegook.*

simple English See [in simple English](#).

sine qua non A necessary, essential, or required element. The Latin phrase translates literally to "without which not." *Some consider a good education to be the sine qua non of a successful career.*

sing from the same hymn sheet To have the same understanding of something as someone else; to say the same things about something as other people, especially in public. Primarily heard in UK. *I think we should have a meeting with everyone who's involved in the project. That way, we'll all be singing from the same hymn sheet before we begin. Make sure everyone from the campaign is singing from the same hymn sheet before we*

release any kind of statement to the press.

sing from the same hymnbook To have the same understanding of something as someone else; to say the same things about something as other people, especially in public. Primarily heard in UK. *I think we should have a meeting with everyone who's involved in the project. That way, we'll all be singing from the same hymnbook before we begin. Make sure everyone from the campaign is singing from the same hymnbook before we release any kind of statement to the press.*

sing from the same songbook To have the same understanding of something as someone else; to say the same things about something as other people, especially in public. Primarily heard in UK. *I think we should have a meeting with everyone who's involved in the project. That way, we'll all be singing from the same songbook before we begin. Make sure everyone from the campaign is singing from the same songbook before we release any kind of statement to the press.*

sing from the same songsheet To have the same understanding of something as someone else; to say the same things about something as other people, especially in public. Primarily heard in UK. *I think we should have a meeting with everyone who's involved in the project. That way, we'll all be singing from the same songsheet before we begin. Make sure everyone from the campaign is singing from the same songsheet before we release any kind of statement to the press.*

sing in tribulation To succumb to torture and confess one's misdeeds. *I know he stole chickens from my farm, and he'll tell you all about it, once he's singing in tribulation!*

sing like a canary To inform against someone to the police or other authority about their criminal or illicit behavior. *I heard Joey Malone has been singing like a canary in the hopes of getting his sentence reduced. Let's make sure he's sleeping with the fishes before he gets the chance!*

sing off the same hymn sheet To have the same understanding of something as someone else; to say the same things about something as other people, especially in public. Primarily heard in UK. *I think we should have a meeting with everyone who's involved in the project. That way, we'll all be singing off the same hymn sheet before we begin. Make sure everyone on the campaign is singing off the same hymn sheet before we release any kind of*

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sing (someone's or something's) praises To speak very highly of something or someone; to enthusiastically endorse someone or something; to extol the virtues, benefits, or good qualities of someone or something. *Our manager has been singing the new developers' praises. I hope they're up to the job! Jeff sang his phone's praises right up until it froze on him all of a sudden last night.*

sing soprano To be able to sing in the soprano vocal range, which is the highest singing voice for women and boys. The soprano range starts at middle C and goes two octaves higher. *Who here can sing soprano? I can't believe they picked me to sing soprano on the harmony for that song—I'm so excited!*

sing the praises of (someone or something) To speak very highly of someone or something; to enthusiastically endorse someone or

something; to extol the virtues, benefits, or good qualities of someone or something. *Our manager has been singing the praises of the new developers she hired. I just hope that they're up to the job! Jeff was singing the praises of his smartphone all last week, until it froze on him all of a sudden last night.*

sing the same tune To have the same understanding of something as someone else; to say the same things about something as other people, especially in public. *I think we should have a meeting with everyone who's involved in the project. That way we can all be singing the same tune before we begin. Make sure everyone the campaign is singing the same tune before we release any kind of statement to the press.*

sinking fast Quickly worsening, deteriorating, or degenerating in state or condition, especially regarding a person's health. *We've got him on life support, but I'm afraid your father is sinking fast. You'll want to come in right away if you want to see him.*

sinking feeling A feeling of dread indicating that something bad has happened or is about to happen. *As soon as I met him, I got a sinking feeling that he had bad intentions. When I heard about the plane crash, I had a sinking feeling that my friends were on that flight.*

sinking ship A failing or floundering organization or entity. *After all of the recent layoffs, most consider the company a sinking ship.*

siphon the python vulgar slang Of a male, to urinate. (Here, "python" is a euphemism for the penis.) Primarily heard in Australia. *Excuse me a minute. After all those beers, I need to go siphon the python.*

siren song Something that is seductive, enticing, or appealing, but that is or may prove to be dangerous, destructive, or disastrous. Alludes to the Sirens of Greek mythology, beautiful sea creatures who lured sailors to their deaths with enchanting music and voices. *Even though most people see the risks of gambling, it's possible rewards remain a siren song to many. After his hit single brought the singer overnight fame and fortune, he was quickly lured by the siren song of drugs, alcohol, and promiscuous sexual activity.*

sisters before misters slang Said among female friends, as a reminder that their friendship is more important than relationships/interactions with men. *Come on, don't ditch us for that guy you just met! Sisters before misters!*

sit a spell To sit down, relax, and socialize for a while at one's leisure.



This saloon is a great place to sit a spell and catch up with old friends. Well hey there, honey! Now you come in here and sit a spell, we haven't seen you in a dog's age!

sit at (someone's) feet To be in a position of devotion or worship to someone; to pay homage or reverential attention to someone. *I've been sitting at the feet of the renowned professor ever since I heard his astounding lecture on quantum mechanics. My brother chose to sit at the saints' feet for the rest of his life, but I do not intend to pursue such a life of the cloth.*

sit at the feet of (someone) To be in a position of devotion or worship to someone; to pay homage to or be reverential to someone. *I've been sitting at the feet of my renowned professor ever since I heard his astounding lecture on quantum mechanics. My brother chose to sit at the feet of the saints for the rest of his life, but I do not intend to pursue such a life of the cloth.*

sit like piffy on a rock bun To be conspicuous but ignored or left out, especially from a group or activity. (A "rock bun" or "rock cake" is a type of hard cake with currants; what "piffy" refers to is unknown.) Primarily heard in UK. *I was excited to go with my wife to her awards ceremony, but I didn't know anyone there and ended up sitting like piffy on a rock bun. After Tommy hit one of the other boys in his class, he was left sitting like piffy on a rock bun during playtime.*

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sit on it An exclamation of frustration directed at another person. Popularized by the TV show *Happy Days*. *If he thinks he can call at this hour of the night, he can sit on it! Sit on it, Joe—I'm not helping you with this!*

sit tall in the/(one's) saddle To be or remain proud, stoical, or august in one's manner or composure. *Even after two years of a losing war, the general still sat tall in his saddle before his troops. I'll have nothing to do with your schemes or plot. One day, you're going to be locked up and lose*

everything, and I'll be sitting tall in the saddle when you do.

sit upon hot cockles To be impatient. *Quit sitting on hot cockles—you'll get your birthday present soon enough.*

sitting duck Something that is unprotected and vulnerable to an easy attack. *When my car broke down in a bad neighborhood, I felt like a sitting duck, just waiting to get robbed. We can't go into that area unarmed, we'd be sitting ducks!*

six and two threes A situation in which the difference between two options is negligible, irrelevant, or unimportant; a decision where each option each is as viable or acceptable as the other. *Well, we could take the highway to your mother's house, or we could cut through the city. It takes about the same amount of time, so it's six and two threes, really. John: "Would you rather have pepperoni or sausage on your pizza?" Bob: "Eh, six and two threes to me."*

six in one, (and) half a dozen in the other The difference between these two options is negligible, irrelevant, or unimportant; either option is fine or will work as well as the other. *Well, we could take the freeway to your mother's house, or we could cut through the city. It takes about the same amount of time, so it's six in one, and half a dozen in the other. John: "Would you rather have pepperoni or sausage on your pizza?" Bob: "Eh, six in one, half a dozen in the other."*

six of one, (and) half a dozen of the other The difference between these two options is negligible, irrelevant, or unimportant; either option is fine or will work as well as the other. *Well, we could take the freeway to your mother's house, or we could cut through the city. It takes about the same amount of time, so it's six of one, and half a dozen of the other. John: "Would you rather have pepperoni or sausage on your pizza?" Bob: "Eh, six of one, half a dozen of the other."*

six ways from Sunday Thoroughly or completely; in every possible way; from every conceivable angle. *Everyone had their money on the reigning champion, but he was beaten six ways from Sunday by the newcomer. We researched the case six ways from Sunday, but there didn't seem to be any way that we could win with the evidence at hand.*

six ways to Sunday Thoroughly or completely; in every possible way; from every conceivable angle. *Everyone had their money on the reigning*

champion, but he was beaten six ways to Sunday by the newcomer. We researched the case six ways to Sunday, but there didn't seem to be any way that we could win with the evidence at hand.

size queen slang One whose ideal sexual partner has a large penis. *Are you big enough for her? I hear she's a size queen.*

SJW An abbreviation for "social justice warrior," a derisive term for one who supports or upholds progressive views on social issues. The implication typically is that such a person is overzealous or disingenuous. *These SJW's want to control every aspect of our lives!*

skeleton at the feast One whose pessimistic outlook or behavior dampens the mood at a happy event. *Don't invite Chris to your engagement party—he's always so gloomy and will just be a skeleton at the feast.*

skeleton crew The bare minimum amount of employees necessary to keep an office, business, service, etc., running at a basic level. *We can't have a restaurant that is completely closed during the slow season, so we keep a skeleton crew on board to serve the few customers who decide to come in. The rigs will have a skeleton crew keeping them running until the company finishes handing over its business to the new owners.*

skeleton in (the/one's) closet An embarrassing or shameful secret. Primarily heard in US. *If you've got a skeleton in the closet, it will probably be exposed during this campaign. He didn't believe me when I said that I didn't have any skeletons in my closet.*

skeleton in (the/one's) cupboard An embarrassing or shameful secret. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *If you've got a skeleton in the cupboard, it will probably be exposed during this campaign. He didn't believe me when I said that I didn't have any skeletons in my cupboard.*

skiddoo st. See [23 Skidoo Street](#).

the skids 1. The framework that is attached to the side of a ship when loading or unloading cargo. *The last of the boxes are on the skids now.* 2. slang A period of trouble or decline. *The team started the season so well, but they've really hit the skids now. I think Marissa and I are going to break-up soon, we're on the skids.*

skim the surface (of something) To do, engage with, or understand something to only a minimal or superficial degree. *I know you feel*

like you know everything about philosophy now, but this introductory course only skims the surface. Jack never felt satisfied devoting his time and attention to one thing, so instead he's skimmed the surface of a number of hobbies and interests.

skimp and save To reduce or limit one's spending in order to save money. *I'd love to go out to dinner with you, but I'm really skimping and saving right now. I'm sorry, honey, but your father and I can't afford to buy you a new bike right now—you'll have to work more hours and skimp and save.*

skin an eel by the tail To do something in an ill-advised way. *Why are you skinning an eel by the tail? You know you can't back out of the driveway until you clear all that snow out of the way!*

skin in the game A personal investment, usually monetary, in the pursuit of some goal or achievement, especially in business and finance. *If you want to find a company that is truly motivated to succeed, find one where all the executives have skin in the game.*

skin in the game See [have skin in the game](#).

skin the bear at once To address an issue directly. Primarily heard in US. A: *"Jen means well, but she can be a little blunt."* B: *"Yeah, she tends to skin the bear at once." This is a big problem to tackle, so let's skin the bear at once, gentlemen—there's no time to waste.*

skip a beat 1. To slow down, pause, or lose one's place, especially when faced with a potential distraction or disruption. Typically used in the negative. *The boss didn't skip a beat during the meeting when his son-in-law staggered in, reeking of booze. You can't fluster my mother. No matter how you try to shock or annoy her, she never skips a beat.* 2. Of the human heart, to flutter, often from nervousness or excitement. *I swear, my heart skipped a beat the first time I saw my wife. My heart skips a beat every time I'm called into my boss's office.*

skip a beat See [not skip a beat](#).

skip town To leave town secretly and/or hastily. *You can't just skip town every time you end a relationship. I think Adam skipped town—no one has seen or heard from him in weeks.*

skirt chaser Someone, typically a man, who very actively, persistently,

and/or aggressively pursues sexual relations with women. *After my brother's girlfriend broke up with him, he started drinking heavily and turned into quite a skirt chaser.*

skittles party drug slang A party in which the guests bring prescription drugs, which are then mixed and taken in combination. *I'm worried that my brother went to a skittles party last night because one of my medications is suddenly missing.*

skive off To absent oneself or leave early from school or work when one would normally be required to be there; to play truant. Primarily heard in UK. *I was so restless and bored at work that I decided to just skive off after lunch without telling anyone. Hey, Jim and I are planning on skiving off from school on Friday, do you want to come with us? That's the last time you skive off class, mister! From now on, I'm dropping you off to school every morning!*

skive (something) To absent oneself or leave early from something (usually school or work) when one would normally be required to be there; to play truant. Primarily heard in UK. *I was so restless and bored at work that I decided to just skive it after lunch without telling anyone. Hey, Jim and I are planning on skiving from school on Friday, do you want to come with us? That's the last time you skive class, mister! From now on, I'm dropping you to school every morning!*

skunk at a garden party Someone or something that is unwelcome or unpleasant. *Running into my ex at that important networking event was like encountering a skunk at a garden party.*

slack-jawed **1.** With one's mouth hanging open, as due to surprise or dim-wittedness. *I had to clear away the people who were standing slack-jawed on the side of the road, staring at the car wreck.* **2.** Moronic; very slow or dim-witted. *I tried asking for directions at the gas station, but there was just some slack-jawed yokel working behind the counter.*

slag (someone) (off) **1.** To criticise or upbraid someone in a harsh, insulting, and abusive manner. Primarily heard in UK, Ireland. *I wish the boss would offer some constructive criticism instead of just slagging us when something goes wrong. Each night, I can hear the woman next door slagging off her husband.* **2.** To tease, mock, or ridicule someone. Primarily heard in UK, Ireland. *Ah, don't take everything so personally, I'm only slagging you! It*

took me a while to get used to the way Sarah's family slags each other off all the time.

slang off See [sling off at \(someone\)](#).

slanging match A bitter argument or dispute in which each side hurls numerous insults, accusations, or verbal abuse at one another. Primarily heard in UK. *At first, I thought we were just going through a rough patch in our relationship, but lately, it seems like every night Janet and I get into a slanging match with each other. It might be time to end things.*

slap in the face A set phrase used to describe words or actions that have offended or otherwise upset someone. *It was a real slap in the face when she got promoted over me, especially after the amount of work I did on that last project.*

slap on the back An expression of approval or praise. *Brett's boss gave him a slap on the back after he completed the project early and under budget.*

slap on the wrist A mild punishment or warning. *Bill hasn't been late to school that many times, so just give him a slap on the wrist for his tardiness. Most people are outraged that the corporation only received a slap on the wrist after breaking so many regulations.*

slash A type of fan fiction that explores a sexual and/or romantic relationship between two characters (usually male) that are not romantically involved in the source material. The name comes from the slash (/) that typically separates the two characters' names in the story's title or description. *Dean and Castiel are my favorite characters on Supernatural, so yeah, I've read Destiel slash.*

slash fic A type of fan fiction that explores a sexual and/or romantic relationship between two characters (usually male) that are not romantically involved in the source material. The name comes from the slash (/) that typically separates the two characters' names in the story's title or description. *Dean and Castiel are my favorite characters on Supernatural, so yeah, I've read Destiel slash fic.*

a slave to See [be a slave to \(something\)](#).

slay slang To succeed at something in a particularly impressive or dominant way. *She's definitely getting the promotion after she slayed that presentation for the CEO. Did you see that band's halftime performance? They slayed it!*

sledge-hammer argument A strong argument that eliminates all opposition. *I really want to win the debate next week, so I'm preparing a real sledge-hammer argument.*

sleep a wink See [not sleep a wink](#).

sleep at the switch See [be sleeping at the switch](#).

sleep at the wheel See [be sleeping at the wheel](#).

sleep like a baby To experience a very deep and restful sleep; to sleep soundly. *I can't believe you finished a triathlon! You're going to sleep like a baby tonight. I have to set numerous alarms for the morning because I sleep like a baby every night!*

sleep like a log To experience a very deep and restful sleep; to sleep soundly. *I can't believe you finished a triathlon! You're going to sleep like a log tonight. I have to set numerous alarms for the morning because I sleep like a log every night!*

sleep like a top To experience a very deep and restful sleep; to sleep soundly. *I can't believe you finished a triathlon! You're going to sleep like a top tonight. I have to set numerous alarms for the morning because I sleep like a top every night!*

sleep rough To sleep outside at night, usually because one has no home or shelter. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *The government's aim is to have the number of people sleeping rough halved in five years' time. I slept rough for a couple of years after my house was repossessed. It's not something I would wish on anyone.*

sleep with the fishes gangster cliché To be murdered and have one's body disposed of in a river, lake, or ocean. *Don't worry, boss, that no-good snitch will be sleeping with the fishes before sunrise.*

sleep with the fishes See [be sleeping with the fishes](#).

sleeping at the switch Failing to attend to one's responsibilities or duties; inattentive to that which is important or for which one is responsible. *Johnson was supposed to make sure the paperwork went through before the deadline, but it looks like he was sleeping at the switch. Our goalkeeper is such a nincompoop. We would have won that match if he hadn't been sleeping at the switch!*



sleeping partner Someone who is closely associated or involved with a business or corporation, typically through financial investment, and therefore shares in its risks and rewards, but does not participate in its day-to-day operations and management. Primarily heard in UK. *Dave's father agreed to be a sleeping partner when we started our company, leaving us to run it once it was set up. In an attempt to crack down on corruption, federal investigators have begun looking into various sleeping partners that might be financing the drug trade throughout the country.*

sleeping policeman slang A bump, ramp, or hump in the road that is intended to cause cars to reduce their speed, especially in residential areas. Primarily heard in UK. *There was a real problem of cars speeding around the tight corners near our housing estate, so the local council agreed to install a number of sleeping policemen in and around the area.*

sleepy head A playful name for one who is tired. *Get up, sleepy head, or else we'll be late! You're clearly dozing off, so why don't you go to bed, sleepy head?*

sleeveless errand A futile task. *Studying for this class is a sleeveless errand. I'll never get an A—why should I even try? We like to haze the new chefs by sending them on some sleeveless errand. Usually we have them go to the market for oyster bones.*

slice of life A realistic portrayal of life in a film, play, or other artistic medium. *I heard that play is a slice of life about a youth struggling with depression.*

slice of the action A part of the profits or success from an activity. *Once Sarah heard that Mel was starting a new software company, she decided she wanted a slice of the action and asked to be his business partner.*

slice of the cake A portion of the money or profits that are being shared by everyone involved in generating them. *The employees applauded when the boss announced that everyone was getting a slice of the cake in the form of a holiday bonus.*

slice of the pie A portion of the money or profits that are being shared by everyone involved in generating them. Primarily heard in US. *The employees applauded when the boss announced everyone was getting a slice of the pie in the form of a holiday bonus.*

slide into (one's)/the DMs slang To successfully flirt with someone via direct message (DM) on social media. *If you're trying to slide into your crush's DMs, don't use a cheesy pick-up line. A: "I just slid into the DMs and asked her out on a date." B: "Wow, I can't believe that actually worked!"*

slide off To slip along the surface of something and fall off. *All of the toppings slid off my ice cream sundae before I could take a single bite! Be careful, or that stack of books will slide right off the table.*

slime ball One whose behavior offends or repulses others. *I can't believe how poorly he treated that waitress. What a slime ball!*

sling off at (someone) 1. To tease, mock, or ridicule someone. Primarily heard in Australia, New Zealand. *Ah, don't take everything so personally, I'm only slinging off at you! It took me a while to get used to the way Sarah's family slings off at each other off all the time.* 2. To criticise or upbraid someone in a harsh, insulting, and abusive manner. Primarily heard in Australia, New Zealand. *I wish the boss would offer some constructive criticism instead of just slinging off at us when something goes wrong. I'm so glad the neighbours moved. Every night, the wife slung off at her husband, and it was incredibly irritating to listen to.*

slip beneath the/(someone's) radar To go unnoticed or undetected (by someone). *With so many different amendments to the bill being made, the Democrats were able to slip some healthcare funding beneath the radar. As the manager of this office, it's inexcusable that you allowed embezzlement by an employee to slip beneath your radar.*

slip into something more comfortable A set phrase usually said seductively to a prospective sexual partner. *Why don't you pour the wine while I slip into something more comfortable?*

slip of the pen An unintentional mistake in one's writing, such as incorrect spelling, word choice, or meaning. *Whoops, I meant to tell my mother that she was welcome to call over next Monday, but I actually wrote "next month" instead. Oh well, she'll understand that it was just a slip of the pen. Now take your time while writing these test essays—you don't want a few slips of the pen to be the reason you get a lower grade!*

slip of the tongue A small mistake made when speaking. *I accidentally called John by his brother's name. It was just a slip of the tongue.*



slip one over on (someone) To con, deceive or take advantage of someone; to make a fool of or hoodwink someone. *My little brother always thinks he can slip one over on me, but I'll be the one to get the last laugh next time! Beware of these street vendors selling tacky souvenirs. They're usually just trying to slip one over on you.*

slip through the cracks To go unnoticed or undealt with; to be unintentionally neglected or ignored, especially in a corporate, political, or social system. *With other issues like drug addiction and unemployment taking priority for the government, the welfare of children in the foster system very often slips through the cracks. We were all so busy drawing up the contracts for this new deal that the appreciation dinner we'd promised to our interns simply slipped through the cracks.*

slip under the/(someone's) radar To go unnoticed or undetected (by someone). *With so many different amendments to the bill being made, the Democrats were able to slip some healthcare funding under the radar. As the manager of this office, it's inexcusable that you allowed embezzlement by an employee to slip under your radar.*

slippery slope A situation in which some behavior or action will eventually lead to a worse form of the same behavior or action, or a disastrous outcome. *Eating that piece of cake is a slippery slope that could lead to you completely abandoning your diet. Verbal abuse is often a slippery slope that leads to physical abuse.*

slop bowl dated A bowl or other receptacle into which the dregs and leftovers of tea or coffee are collected from drinkers' cups (i.e., so that they may be refilled with a fresh drink). *Tabitha, will you please come take the slop bowl away and empty it? It's becoming conspicuously full.*

sloshed to the gills Thoroughly inebriated; drunk to the point of incoherence, senselessness, or the loss of self-control. *I hate being in New Orleans during Mardi Gras—an appalling number of people are sloshed to the gills!*

slot (someone or something) in To make time for someone or (to do) something between other previously arranged engagements or appointments. *I know that the masseuse is particularly busy on Saturday, but I may be able to slot you in sometime after lunch. I'm trying to slot in a yoga class on Monday between my two major business meetings. I find that it*

really helps keep me calm and focused.

slough of despond A state of severe depression. The phrase originated in John Bunyan's 17th-century novel *A Pilgrim's Progress*. *I started going to therapy once I felt myself slipping into the slough of despond.*

slow as molasses See [\(as\) slow as molasses](#).

slow as molasses in January See [\(as\) slow as molasses in January](#).

slow but sure Slow or incremental but yielding steady, dependable progress. *It's going to be slow but sure writing my thesis, as I have to balance my part-time job with my research. A: "Hey, how's the new novel coming along?" B: "It's been slow but sure."*

slow march 1. A slow but steady progression toward a particular end. *We know now that Gladys has been on a slow march toward death—her condition is terminal. I'm afraid that, without any changes, the company is on a slow march toward bankruptcy.* **2.** A slower-paced, rhythmic piece of music originally used to accompany marching soldiers. *We're rehearsing a slow march for the concert on Sunday.*

slower than molasses Exceptionally slow or sluggish; not fast at all. *This old laptop my dad gave me is a piece of junk. It's slower than molasses! Come on, Becky, you're slower than molasses back there! Pick up the pace and keep up with the group.*

slower than molasses in January Exceptionally slow or sluggish; not fast at all. *This old laptop my dad gave me is a piece of junk. It's slower than molasses in January! Come on, Becky, you're slower than molasses in January back there! Pick up the pace and keep up with the group.*

slowly but surely At a slow or incremental pace but making steady, dependable progress. *I've been writing my thesis slowly but surely—it will probably take me all year to finish it, but it's getting there! A: "Hey, how's the new novel coming along?" B: "Ah, slowly but surely!"*

slowpoke Someone who moves or does things in a particularly slow or sluggish manner; someone who is or has been dawdling. *We're never going to finish our project by the deadline with this slowpoke weighing us down! Hurry up, slowpoke! We're not going to wait all day for you to catch up with us.*

slug away (at something) To continue trying or working diligently

(at something); to plug away (at something). *I'm really not very good at math, but I've got to keep slugging away if I want to get into an engineering program. John's been slugging away at the new project, but I don't think he's enjoying it very much.*

a sly dog Someone who, through cunning, devious, or dishonest means, achieves a fortuitous outcome. *What a sly dog, he managed to get a copy of the test so he could memorize the answers ahead of time!*

small arms Firearms that are small enough in size to be easily carried and fired by one person. *The resistance has no access to large weapons, so they are relying on small arms.*

a small cog in a large machine Someone or something that is functionally necessary but of small significance or importance within a larger operation or organization. *I'm tired of working in this thankless IT support job. I don't want to be just a small cog in a large machine anymore!*

a small cog in a large wheel Someone or something that is functionally necessary but of small significance or importance within a larger operation or organization. *I'm tired of working in this thankless IT support job. I don't want to be just a small cog in a large wheel anymore!*

small fortune A large amount of money. *I had to spend a small fortune to get my car repaired after the transmission started slipping.*

a small frog in a big pond Someone or something within a larger operation or organization who is of less importance or less qualified than those around him, her, or it. *This thankless IT support job is really getting old. Ever since I started here, I've just been a small frog in a big pond.*

the small matter of (something) Said in reference to a rather large or important issue that has not yet been completed or addressed. A: *"Thank you for your services, Jennings. My valet will show you out."* B: *"Thank you, sir. However, there is still the small matter of my pay for the last three months."*

small wonder Not a surprising or unexpected thing at all. *You drank an entire bottle of bourbon by yourself? Small wonder that you feel as bad as you do this morning. Considering the massive legal team they can afford to hire, it's a small wonder that few people are able to successfully sue the corporation for its questionable practices.*



small wonder See [\(it's\) small wonder](#).

smart aleck One who makes jokes and uses sarcasm in an attempt to seem witty, but instead is deemed annoying. Also seen as "smart alec." *I'd had enough of that smart aleck's wisecracks, so I left the party early.*

smart-arse rude slang One who makes jokes and uses sarcasm in an attempt to seem witty, but instead is deemed annoying. Primarily heard in UK. *OK, smart-arse, are you going to help me, or just stand there mocking me all night?*

smart-ass rude slang One who makes jokes and uses sarcasm in an attempt to seem witty, but instead is deemed annoying. Primarily heard in US. *OK, smart-ass, are you going to help me, or just stand there mocking me all night?*

smart bomb A bomb with a guidance system that navigates it to its target. *The military adopted the use of smart bombs to reduce collateral damage.*

smart cookie A clever and intelligent person. *Don't underestimate Cindy's intelligence—she's one smart cookie!*

smart mouth **1.** One who is sarcastic and/or speaks to others with disrespect. Primarily heard in US. *How dare you talk to me like that? I didn't raise you to be a smart mouth!* **2.** The tendency to speak in such a way. *Since when did you get such a smart mouth? Don't talk back.*

smart-mouth (someone) To talk to someone in an irritatingly sarcastic, flippant, and/or witty manner. *Don't smart-mouth me, son, or I'll whoop your backside! Mary got in trouble for smart-mouthing the teacher.*

smarty pants **1.** One who obnoxiously and frequently attempts to assert perceived superiority in intelligence; a know-it-all. *Don't be such a smarty pants. You don't know everything.* **2.** One who makes jokes and uses sarcasm in an attempt to seem witty, but instead is deemed annoying; a smart aleck. *OK, smarty pants, are you going to help me, or just stand there mocking me all night?*

smash (something) to smithereens To break or destroy something into tiny, fragmentary pieces. "Smithereens," first appearing in English in 1829 as "smiddereens," is likely derived from the Irish word "smidirín" or "smidiríní," meaning "fragment." *The demolition crew brought*

in the wrecking ball, which smashed the house to smithereens in a matter of hours. The typhoon's gale-force winds have been smashing the village to smithereens over the last few days.

smash the teapot To resume drinking alcohol after a time of sobriety. The "teapot" here is likely a reference to the term "teetotaler"—one who does not drink alcohol. A: *"But Paul's been sober for years. Has he really smashed the teapot?"* B: *"Yes! I saw him drunkenly stumbling out of the pub last night."*

smashed to smithereens See [be smashed to smithereens](#).

the smell of an oily rag A very meager, slim, or frugal amount of resources, especially money or fuel. As in the phrases "live off/on the smell of an oily rag" or "run off/on the smell of an oily rag," respectively. Primarily heard in Australia, New Zealand. *I spent a year travelling abroad, and I lived on the smell of an oily rag to get by. This trusty little car may not look like much, but she runs on the smell of an oily rag.*

smell of the lamp To show the signs of arduous, overwrought effort, and to lack freshness or vitality as a result. (Said especially of academic or literary work.) *His thesis is meticulously crafted, but the paragraphs are so dry and calculated, and the paper lacks any flourish or style. As a whole, it rather smells of the lamp to me.*

the smell of the lamp Signs of arduous, overwrought effort, with an absence of freshness or vitality as a result. (Said especially of academic or literary work.) *His thesis is meticulously crafted, but the paragraphs are so dry and calculated, and the paper lacks any flourish or style. As a whole, it has the smell of the lamp about it.*

smell test A hypothetical pass/fail "test" that gauges the moral acceptability or trustworthiness of someone or something. *The new pro-drilling bill that's being put through Congress doesn't pass the smell test, and many are suspicious that Big Oil has been responsible for its inception.*

smoke pole A handgun. *After he pulled a smoke pole on me, I gave him all my money.*

smoke the peace pipe (with someone) To reach an agreement or understanding (with someone); to resolve a dispute or stop fighting (with someone). Alludes to the calumet used by certain Native American tribes for

ceremonial purposes, such as a covenant or peace treaty. *In a surprise turn of events, it seems that the environmentalist group is looking to smoke the peace pipe with the largest lobbying body of the oil industry. I don't understand why there has been so much tension between you. You need to both sit down like rational adults, smoke the peace pipe together, and get on with your lives.*

smoking gun Indisputably incriminating evidence. Likened to a gun that is still smoking after having been fired. *A smoking gun was revealed in the form of emails documenting the man's involvement in the money laundering scheme. So far the prosecutor has presented only circumstantial evidence, but she's expected to reveal a smoking gun against the defendant soon.*

smooth as a baby's bottom See [\(as\) smooth as a baby's bottom](#).

smooth as silk See [\(as\) smooth as silk](#).

a snake in (one's) bosom Someone whom one has befriended, taken care of, or treated well but proves to be traitorous, untrustworthy, deceitful, or ungrateful. (Used especially in the phrase "nourish/nurse/nurture a snake in one's bosom.") *Well, it turns out that Margaret was quite a snake in my bosom. I put my neck on the line to get her a job in our company, and then she turns around and tries to get me fired! I thought our love was not only mutual but indestructible; and yet, I have nursed a snake in my bosom all these years: my darling husband has cast me out and run off with a younger woman.*

snake in the grass One who feigns friendship with the intent to deceive. *Did you hear that Daria's best friend stole money from her bank account? What a snake in the grass.*

snake oil salesman Someone who sells, promotes, or is a general proponent of some valueless or fraudulent cure, remedy, or solution. (Can also be formed as "snake oil saleswoman" if referring to a woman, or "salesperson" to be gender neutral.) *I find it hard to believe anyone would fall for those snake oil salesmen on TV selling holistic medicines and therapies. A lot of people have been swayed by the presidential candidate's plan for economic growth, but if you ask me, she sounds like a snake oil saleswoman.*

snakes and ladders A children's board game in which players try to reach the finish while encountering ladders that move them quickly forward, and snakes that force them back near the start. *My little sister loves to play snakes and ladders, but I find it so frustrating because I always seem to land*

on snakes!

snatch defeat from the jaws of victory To fail, lose, or be defeated despite the appearance that one would be victorious, especially due to a mistake, error, or poor judgment. (An ironic reversal of the more common "snatch victory from the jaws of defeat.") *We were ahead by nearly 20 points with less than half the quarter remaining—how on earth did we manage to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory like that? The candidate has led in the polls right up to election day, but with that unfortunate remark last night, he may well have snatched defeat from the jaws of victory.*

snatch (someone) from the jaws of death To rescue someone at the last moment from near or certain death. *Thankfully, the EMTs arrived to the crash in time to snatch the woman and her child from the jaws of death.*

snatch victory from the jaws of defeat To win, succeed, or be victorious at the last moment, despite the apparent likelihood of failure or defeat. *They were down by nearly 20 points with less than half of the last quarter remaining, but through sheer skill and perseverance they managed to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat. The candidate has been behind in the polls right up to election day, but with that unfortunate remark by his opponent last night, he may end up snatching victory from the jaws of defeat.*

snatched from the jaws of death See [be snatched from the jaws of death](#).

sneaky Pete slang Cheap, low-quality wine. Primarily heard in US. *I can't drink sneaky Pete anymore, that stuff is disgusting! Is he drunk on sneaky Pete already?*

sneck posset archaic A rejection, refusal, or cold reception; a closed door (as on a visitor). Primarily heard in UK. *After receiving a veritable sneck posset from his wealthy distant relations, Milton set to drinking in the town's tavern for want of any other recourse.*

sniff test **1.** The act of questioning the viability of an idea or course of action. *Josh thinks he has a solid plan, but it doesn't pass the sniff test for me—I don't see how it will be profitable.* **2.** In medicine, a test of the phrenic nerve in which the patient must sniff forcefully. *Next, we're going to do a sniff test so that I can see exactly how your phrenic nerve is functioning.* **3.** In medicine, a way to recognize bacterial vaginosis (which presents with a

fishlike odor). *I've only done a sniff test so far, but I think that patient has bacterial vaginosis.* **4.** The act of smelling something to determine whether or not it has a fresh odor. *These leftovers pass the sniff test, so I'll heat them up for lunch. You can't wear that shirt again without washing it—it definitely doesn't pass the sniff test!*

snipe hunt **1.** A practical joke in which the victim is sent on a hunt for a fictitious animal called a snipe. *When I was in the Cub Scouts, the youngest members were always sent out on a snipe hunt by the counselors on the night of our first big campout.* **2.** By extension, any hunt, search, or quest for something that is fictitious, non-existent, elusive, or illusory. *The president has pledged to make universal healthcare a reality, but I think he's really just on a snipe hunt.*

snot-nosed **1.** slang Arrogant and snobbish. *I was already bored, but now that we have a snot-nosed tour guide, I'm leaving. Did you hear how judgmental he was about our choice of wine? What a snot-nosed jerk.* **2.** slang Young and inexperienced. *I've been in this job 20 years, and now some snot-nosed kid right out of college is going to tell me what to do? No way!*

snow job A form of manipulation that involves lying or flattery to persuade someone. *He laid the compliments on her so thick, it was surprising that she couldn't see that it was nothing more than a snow job.*

snow on the mountain Silver, grey, or white hair on one's head, as due to aging. *Sure, there's a bit of snow on the mountain, but I still lead as adventurous a life as I ever have!*

snow on the roof Silver, grey, or white hair on one's head, as due to aging. *Sure, there's a bit of snow on the roof, but I still lead as adventurous a life as I ever have!*

snowball effect A situation in which the results or consequences of an action grow at an increasingly faster rate over time. *Once the video game hit the market, word of mouth caused a snowball effect that made it the most popular and top grossing game of all time. She ignored her debt for so long that now, she's experiencing a snowball effect that threatens to crush her financially.*

a snowflake See [\(special\) snowflake](#).

snowman A figure made out of snow. It typically consists of three



mounds of snow stacked on top of each other and is often adorned with clothing and other decorations. *The kids are outside building a snowman with buttons for eyes and a carrot for a nose.*

snuff movie A film that shows the actual murder or death of a person. *Although snuff films are illegal, they are still widely circulated on the black market.*

snuggle bunny A term of affection for a romantic partner or child. *I'm so glad you're home, my snuggle bunny! I miss you so much when you're away on business.*

so-called **1.** A phrase used to emphasize that a name or term for someone or something is commonly used. *Next, we'll be reading the so-called master of English literature, William Shakespeare.* **2.** A phrase used to indicate the speaker's doubt about the appropriateness of the term being used to describe a person or thing. *Oh, now my so-called best friend calls me. Where was she three weeks ago when I was in the hospital? My so-called smartphone has suddenly lost all ability to send a text.*

so far as See [\(in\) so far as](#).

so forth See [and so forth](#).

so long as **1.** Considering the fact that; seeing as; because. *Hey, so long as you're going to the shop, would you mind picking me up a pack of gum? I suppose I might as well do a bit of work on my thesis so long as I've got the apartment to myself.* **2.** If it is the case that; provided that. *Hey, so long as you get your homework finished and handed in on time, I don't care what kind of music you listen to. Okay, you can have one cookie before dinner so long as you don't spoil your appetite!*

so no pressure See [no pressure](#).

so on See [and so on](#).

so on and so forth See [and so on and so forth](#).

so quiet you could hear a pin drop Extremely quiet and still. *After the boss's outburst, the meeting room was so quiet you could hear a pin drop. Waiting to see what happened next in the play, everyone in the audience stayed so quiet you could hear a pin drop.*

so still you could hear a pin drop Extremely quiet and still. *After*

the boss's outburst, the meeting room was so still you could hear a pin drop. Waiting to see what happened next in the play, everyone in the audience stayed so still you could hear a pin drop.

so there childish An exclamation added to a statement for emphasis or as an expression of defiance. *The teacher said she liked my project the best, so there! Oh yeah? Well, I'm going to eat all of my Halloween candy before dinner, so there!*

so what A rhetorical question meant to express that one is indifferent to or finds no importance in what's being discussed. *So what if you don't finish high school? Plenty of people drop out and go on to have great lives. John: "You've got a lot of great qualities; any woman would be mad not to think you're a catch!" Dave: "So what? Sarah was the only girl for me, and now she's gone forever."*

soak (one) to the skin To make someone extremely or completely wet, especially through their clothing. *Jane soaked the other kids to the skin with the garden hose. I hope they get home soon, or that rain is going to soak them to the skin!*

soak (someone or something) through To make someone or something extremely or thoroughly wet, especially through multiple layers. *Jane soaked my books through when she sprayed me with the garden hose on my way home from school. I hope the kids get home soon, or that rain is going to soak them through!*

soak (someone) to the bone To make someone extremely or completely wet, especially through their clothing. *Jane soaked the other kids to the bone with the garden hose. I hope the kids get home soon, or that rain is going to soak them to the bone!*

soaked through Extremely or completely wet, especially through one's clothing. *I can't believe you pushed me into the pool! Now I have to walk home soaked through! The kids let themselves get soaked through out in the rain, and now one of them is coming down with a cold!*

soaked to the bone Extremely or completely wet, especially through one's clothing. *I can't believe you pushed me into the pool! Now I have to walk home soaked to the bone! The kids let themselves get soaked to the bone out in the rain, and now one of them is coming down with a cold!*

soaking wet Completely drenched. *Mom's soaking wet because she got caught in that storm while she was out taking a walk. I accidentally left my car windows open, and now my seats are soaking wet.*

soap plant Any plant that produces a lather that can be used for cleansing. Examples include the California soap plant, the soapberry, and the soapwort. *My mom makes all-natural soap out of soap plants.*

soapbox orator One who makes an impassioned, impromptu speech. (Soapboxes were once commonly used as makeshift platforms for such speeches.) *It seems like there's a soapbox orator on every corner in this city. Sorry, I couldn't hear you over that soapbox orator who's ranting about the government.*

soapy Sam One who is slick and persuasive, especially in speech. The phrase originally referred to Samuel Wilberforce, a 19th-century Bishop of Oxford, who was known for such qualities. *This guy is a real soapy Sam—the townspeople believe his every word, even though he has never delivered on a single promise.*

sob story A sad story told in an attempt to generate sympathy for the storyteller. *Don't come in tomorrow without your final project. I don't want to hear any sob stories about how you forgot it at home.*

a sobering thought A thought or idea which is dispiriting, depressing, or traumatic. *It's a sobering thought when you consider how many people go without clean water every day.*

social climber A person who tries to elevate their social status, often through the calculated use of friendships and relationships. *Based on his circle of friends, it's obvious that he is nothing more than a social climber.*

social justice warrior One who actively supports and promotes equality and fair treatment among different social classes. *Once Betsy got to college, she became a real social justice warrior and decided to pursue a career in law as a way to bring about societal change.*

social justice warrior A derisive term for one who supports or upholds progressive views on social issues. This phrase typically implies that such a person is overzealous or disingenuous. Often abbreviated SJW. *These social justice warriors want to control every aspect of our lives!*

the social ladder The hierarchical structure or makeup of a culture,

society, or social environment. *Miss Dumfey hopes to improve her standing on the social ladder with a marriage to the baron. It's always hard for high school freshmen to find their place on the social ladder. Mary's had a chip on her shoulder from being raised in a trailer park, so climbing the social ladder has been her only aim since leaving home.*

socialized medicine A system of national healthcare that is funded by taxes and provided to people by the government. *Ever since I got sick, my medical expenses have been so outrageous that I'm thinking of moving to a country that has socialized medicine.*

sod all Nothing whatsoever; very little or nothing of consequence. Primarily heard in UK. *I'm trying to get going on this research project, but I've done sod all so far! A: "What did you talk about with your old classmates at the reunion?" B: "Sod all, really. They're quite a boring bunch, after all these years."*

soft fire makes sweet malt One's impatience can ultimately ruin a project. When malt is prepared, it is burned, but if it is burned too much, it will not have its desired sweetness. *You keep messing up your drawing because you are rushing—soft fire makes sweet malt, after all.*

soft life A life that is typified by or filled with ease and comfort, without requiring any hard work, sacrifice, or unpleasantness. *After such a soft life under the wings of his parents, James was totally unprepared to have to work for a living.*

soft mick A non-specific military term used for emphasis. *It's colder than soft mick out here today! That idea is as stupid as soft mick.*

soft power The ability of a nation or other political entity to reach a desired outcome by non-violent methods (such as diplomacy, negotiation, foreign aid, etc.) and without the use or threat of force (i.e. military action). (The opposite of hard power.) *Many of the top military brass have stated their belief that the nation's interests are best served through maintaining traditional hard power in combination with so-called soft power methods, such as diplomacy.*

soft sawder obsolete Ostentatious flattery or sycophancy, especially for the purpose of cajoling or coaxing someone (to do something). *The wheedling clerk poured on the soft sawder thick into Ms. Meriwether's ear, deftly convincing her to invest on his behalf.*

soft shoe **1.** noun A style of tap dance that uses soft-soled shoes, as opposed to ones with hard metal soles. This phrase can refer to an actual choreographed dance or to a shuffling movement that vaguely resembles it. *Thank goodness my sister finally does the soft shoe now—I was so sick of listening to her bang around in her hard tap shoes! Once I realized the boss was on a call, I did a soft shoe back out of her office.* **2.** verb To perform such a dance or movement. *Thank goodness my sister finally soft shoes now—I was so sick of listening to her bang around in her hard tap shoes! Once I realized the boss was on a call, I soft shoed back out of her office.* **3.** verb By extension, to do something carefully and skillfully. *Once the boss made it clear that we were not going to accept the settlement, I soft shoed onto our alternatives.*

softly-softly adjective Cautious, tentative, gradual and careful, especially to an overbearing degree. (Also written "softly, softly.") *I just wish his parents weren't so softly-softly with him all the time. The kid needs to learn how to be a bit more brazen and independent! I think we should take things a bit softly, softly at this stage in development.*

softly, softly approach A calm and thoughtful method for dealing with a problem. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *When dealing with unmotivated teens, the softly, softly approach doesn't always work—sometimes you have to do something to get their attention. Many parents use the softly, softly approach when trying to calm their toddlers' tantrums.*

softly, softly, catchee monkey A slow and careful way of resolving an issue, typically when dealing with a deceptive or otherwise challenging person or thing. *Don't you worry, we'll lull that crook into a false sense of security and then trap him—softly, softly, catchee monkey.*

soil (one's) hands To partake in especially underhanded, illicit, or illegal work or activities. *The public can't be allowed to think that I, a senate hopeful, would ever soil my hands with a tax-evasion scheme such as that.*

soldier of fortune **1.** A soldier who serves the person or organization paying them, rather than their country; a mercenary. *Although the nation only had a small population, it boosted the size of its army by hiring soldiers of fortune.* **2.** A person who seeks adventure or military engagement for money, pleasure, or fame. *The novel depicts a soldier of fortune who risks his life for notoriety.*

solitary wasp A type of wasp that does not live in a social colony. *My sister is an entomologist currently studying the behavior of solitary wasps.*

some kind of **1.** An expression used when the speaker is uncertain of what they are describing. *There was some kind of noise outside, can you please go and investigate?* **2.** An expression used to emphasize that something is superlative. *That's some kind of car you've got there, Gus!*

some measure **1.** A certain degree or extent; somewhat. *While hard work and perseverance will take you far, success also depends in some measure on good fortune.* **2.** A little; a small amount of something. *Our team had some measure of success this year, and I know we'll do even better next year.*

some people have all the luck An expression of mild envy at another's fortune and/or frustration for one's own misfortune. *I can't believe Susie won both raffles—some people have all the luck. I've been unemployed for a year, and you got a new job in a matter of weeks. Geez, some people have all the luck.*

some people! An expression of disgust over the way certain people act, behave, or function in society. *A: "So then this guy, drunk out of his mind, starts peeing in the bushes as he's talking to the cops." B: "God, some people! I wish jerks like that were banned from buying booze."*

some pumpkins dated Someone or something that is particularly great, special, wonderful, etc. *Did you see Tracey's new car? Boy, it's some pumpkins, huh? I've started seeing this amazing guy from Belgium. He's some pumpkins!*

some punkins dated Someone or something that is particularly great, special, wonderful, etc. (A variant of "some pumpkins.") *Did you see Tracey's new car? Boy, it's some punkins, huh? I've started dating this amazing guy from Belgium. He's some punkins!*

(some score) from the East German judge An imaginary and exaggeratedly low score for some event, action, statement, or attempt deemed to be a failure or inadequate in some way. It is a reference to judges from the former country of East Germany, who were often seen as giving unfairly low scores to competitors from other countries during international sporting events. *I'd say that pitiful retort would only get you 2 out of 10 from the East*

German judges, my friend.

somebody up there is looking out for me **1.** I am or was extremely fortunate or lucky. (Refers to the idea of good fortune being bestowed upon one by a higher power.) *Somebody up there is looking out for me, because I just won \$500 on the first lottery ticket I ever bought! I can't believe he walked away from that car accident with just a few scrapes. Somebody up there is looking out for him, all right!* **2.** Someone in a position of power, authority, or influence is treating me with partiality. *Wow, I'm up for a promotion already? I guess somebody up there is looking out for me!*

somebody up there loves me **1.** I am extremely fortunate or lucky, judging from some recent development. *Somebody up there loves me, because I just won \$500 on the first lottery ticket I ever bought! I can't believe I walked away from that car accident with just a few scrapes. Somebody up there loves me, all right!* **2.** Someone in a position of power, authority, or influence is giving me preferential treatment. *Wow, I'm up for a promotion already? I guess somebody up there loves me!*

somebody's heart's desire See [\(one's\) heart's desire](#).

somebody's strong suit See [be \(someone's\) strong suit](#).

someone after my own See [a person after \(one's\) own](#).

(someone had) better keep quiet about it (Someone had) better not say anything about a particular issue or situation. "Someone" can be used in the phrase itself, especially when the listener already knows who the speaker is talking about. *A: "I think Jake knows that we doctored the numbers in that report." B: "Well, someone had better keep quiet about it then." Better keep quiet about it so that the boss doesn't suspect anything.*

(someone had) better keep still about it (Someone had) better not say anything about a particular issue or situation. "Someone" can be used in the phrase itself, especially when the listener already knows who the speaker is talking about. *A: "I think Jake knows that we doctored the numbers in that report." B: "Well, someone had better keep still about it then." Better keep still about it so that the boss doesn't suspect anything.*

someone puts someone's pants on one leg at a time See [\(one\) puts \(one's\) pants on one leg at a time](#).

someone puts someone's trousers on one leg at a time See

[puts \(one's\) trousers on one leg at a time \(just like everybody else\).](#)

someone up there is looking out for me 1. I am or was extremely fortunate or lucky. (Refers to the idea of good fortune being bestowed upon one by a higher power.) *Someone up there is looking out for me, because I just won \$500 on the first lottery ticket I ever bought! I can't believe he walked away from that car accident with just a few scrapes. Someone up there is looking out for him, all right!* 2. Someone in a position of power, authority, or influence is treating me with partiality. *Wow, I'm up for a promotion already? I guess someone up there is looking out for me!*

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someone will rue the day See [rue the day \(that something happened\)](#).

someone's better half See [\(one's\) better half](#).

someone's other half See [\(one's\) other half](#).

someone's salad days See [salad days](#).

someone's stripes See [\(one's\) \(true\) stripes](#).

someone's true colours See [\(one's\) true colours](#).

something awful Terribly. The phrase is used as an adverb to emphasize just how bad or intense something is. *Thank you for taking out the trash—it sure smelled something awful! My ankle has hurt something awful ever since I slipped on the ice.*

(something) be damned Said of something that is ignored or disregarded by someone else, to the dismay of the speaker. "Be damned" is a set phrase. *Apparently, they are firing all of their best photographers, quality be damned! These new politicians say whatever they want, and decency be damned.*



something to do with See [to do with](#).

(something) will get (someone) nowhere Something, typically a certain behavior, will not help someone progress or succeed in any way. *Look, we can sit here arguing over who screwed up all day long, but pointing fingers at each other will get us nowhere. Being the teacher's pet will get you nowhere when the midterm exam rolls around.*

(something) won't get (someone) anywhere Something, typically a certain behavior, will not help someone progress or succeed in any way. *Look, we can sit here arguing over who screwed up all day long, but pointing fingers at each other won't get us anywhere. Being the teacher's pet won't get you anywhere when the midterm exam rolls around.*

son of a gun **1.** A mean or unpleasant man. *Julie's ex-husband was such a mean son of a gun, it's no wonder she divorced him.* **2.** An emphatic expression of affection for a man one considers daring, mischievous, or tough. *That son of a gun really pulled through for us when we needed him!* **3.** An inanimate object that is problematic. *My car broke down, and I can't figure out how to fix the son of a gun!*

son of Belial An evil person. "Belial" is a demon or another name for Satan. The phrase originated in the Bible. *Eric spread horrible rumors about me, so he's the son of Belial as far as I'm concerned!*

son of thunder A speaker who attracts listeners by using an impassioned, often aggressive, delivery. The phrase originated in the Bible. *I can't listen to that son of thunder bluster about his idiotic worldview anymore. A son of thunder has everyone mesmerized in the town square right now.*

song and dance **1.** A long and elaborate explanation or presentation. Primarily heard in US. *The whole song and dance to introduce the keynote speaker lasted longer than her speech!* **2.** A long and elaborate explanation told with the intent to deceive someone or justify something. *When I questioned her about her tardiness, she gave me some song and dance about her car breaking down.*

soon forgotten See [long absent, soon forgotten](#).

a sop to Cerberus A bribe. Taken from the ancient Greek and Roman custom of leaving gifts with corpses so that Cerberus (guardian of the gates

of hell) would pass them by. *What is this money, a sop to Cerberus so that I won't tell the authorities what you've done?*

a sore loser Someone who complains, becomes upset, or otherwise reacts very negatively when they fail or lose at something competitive. *Don't be such a sore loser, Jim. I know you pride yourself on your racquetball skills, but I beat you fair and square.*

sore point A topic that makes one angry or uncomfortable. *Whatever you do, don't mention his ex-wife—his divorce is really a sore point with him.*

sore spot A topic that makes one angry or uncomfortable. *Whatever you do, don't mention his ex-wife—his divorce is really a sore spot with him.*

a sorry state See [in a sorry state](#).

a sorry state (of affairs) A particularly unfortunate, unpleasant, and/or upsetting situation or set of circumstances. *Their company has been in a sorry state ever since Jonathan took over. It's a sorry state of affairs when you can no longer be sure how you'll feed your children each night.*

sought a knot in a bulrush See [seek a knot in a bulrush](#).

the soul of discretion Someone who can be trusted to keep information private. *Don't worry, my sister is the soul of discretion—she won't tell anyone about our engagement before we do.*

sound as a barrel In good health. *Yes, I was sick a few weeks ago, but I'm as sound as a barrel now.*

sound the alarm 1. Literally, to activate an alarm. *I think I see smoke coming from the warehouse. Someone run upstairs and sound the alarm!* 2. To alert other people about something dangerous, risky, or troublesome. *A number of top economic advisors tried to sound the alarm before the economic crash, but no policy makers seemed to heed their warnings.*

sounding board A person or group with whom one discusses an idea, plan, or suggestion in order to evaluate its strengths, acceptability, feasibility, practicality, etc. *My friend John and I really know each other's skills and interests, so whenever one of us has an idea for a new project, we use the other as a sounding board.*

sour cherry A tart variety of cherry. *I can't stand sour cherries, so these better be sweet ones!*

sour note A particularly unfortunate, unpleasant, or disagreeable topic of news, information, or conversation. *News of my father's passing hit quite a sour note before my graduation ceremony. The CEO's speech at the Annual General Meeting ended on quite a sour note when he announced that there would be company-wide pay cuts and layoffs.*

sour stomach An unpleasant sensation that typically includes gastrointestinal symptoms like nausea, indigestion, and bloating. The phrase can be used with or without an article preceding it. *Bill has a sour stomach now after eating all that spicy food at dinner. I have sour stomach a lot, so I always keep antacids with me.*

sow a/the seed of doubt (in someone's mind) To cause someone to have doubts, worries, or concerns (about something); to introduce someone to a doubtful or worrisome idea. *The candidate was doing very well in the polls six months ago, but it seems that this smear campaign has been effective in sowing a seed of doubt in the minds of voters. Recent economic turbulence in the Eurozone has sown the seed of doubt about the strength of the economy's recovery. Jim's suspicious behavior sowed a seed of doubt in Jenny's mind about his fidelity.*

sow dragon's teeth To do something that inadvertently leads to trouble. The phrase refers to Cadmus, a figure in Greek mythology who killed a dragon and, on instructions from Athena, sowed (planted) its teeth. The soldiers that grew from the teeth fought each other until only a few remained. A: *"Why did you invite Joe, my sworn enemy, to this party?"* B: *"Listen, if I had known that I would be sowing dragon's teeth by inviting Joe, I never would have done it!"* I guess I sowed dragon's teeth when I complained about my neighbors being too loud because now they won't talk to me.

space cadet A person considered out of touch with reality. *I tried having a serious conversation with her, but she's such a space cadet that I gave up after a few minutes of hearing her ramble on about my aura.*

spaghetti western A usually low-budget cowboy film set in the American West but filmed in a European country, especially Italy. A: *"What kind of movie do you want to watch tonight?"* B: *"How about a spaghetti western?"*

Spanish flag A nickname for the California rockfish, due to its red and

white markings. *I caught a Spanish flag while I was out on the boat today.*

spank the monkey slang Of men, to masturbate. A: *"Why is he all embarrassed today?"* B: *"Oh, his crush walked in on him spanking the monkey. How horrifying is that?"*

spare at the spigot and spill at the bung To be frugal with trivial matters and reckless with more significant ones. The phrase describes the incongruity of turning off water at the spigot but leaving the bung, or stopper, off the reservoir. A: *"Dad never lets us turn the heat up in the winter because it's too expensive, yet he ignores any problem around the house until it becomes a major repair."* B: *"I know, he always spares at the spigot and spills at the bung." I know you like to spare at the spigot and spill at the bung, but you would save so much money in the long run if you got a new car, instead of repairing all these nagging issues.*

spare (someone's) blushes To keep from making someone feel embarrassed or awkward. *However, due to your family's great service to the crown, we will spare your blushes and not create a public scandal around this debacle. I tried sparing her blushes when she asked me to prom by saying I had no intention of going with anyone.*

spare tire 1. A layer of excess fat around one's midsection. *I think I need to lay off the junk food, because this spare tire of mine is getting a bit out of hand.* **2.** An unhelpful, unnecessary, unproductive, or unwanted person in a group. *There are a few spare tires on this project who are really holding back our progress. Ever since John's girlfriend started hanging out with us, it's left me feeling like a spare tire.*

spare tyre 1. A layer of excess fat around one's midsection. Primarily heard in UK. *I think I need to lay off the lager, because this spare tyre of mine is getting a bit out of hand.* **2.** An unhelpful, unnecessary, unproductive, or unwanted person in a group. Primarily heard in UK. *There are a few spare tyres on this project who are really holding back our progress. Ever since John's girlfriend started hanging out with us, it's left me feeling like a spare tyre.*

spark plug One who energizes others with one's ideas and positive personality. Primarily heard in US. *Kelly was the spark plug the company needed to get their new project off the ground.*

spark spread The income made by selling electricity, after the cost of

the fuel used to produce the electricity has been subtracted. *We need to analyze the spark spread, to determine if the electrical plant can stay open.*

spat in the wind See [spit in\(to\) the wind](#).

spat out the dummy See [spit \(out\) the dummy](#).

speak a mile a minute To speak in a very quick or hurried manner; to talk very fast. *When the boss gets excited, she starts speaking a mile a minute, and I can never follow everything she's trying to say!*

speak by the card To speak with accuracy and exactness. The "card" in this now-obsolete phrase might have referred to a sea chart, which was considered very precise. *I always trust a man who speaks by the card—it inspires great confidence.*

speak daggers To speak harshly or maliciously, so as to hurt the listener. *I can't stand to be around my mother these days—she's always speaking daggers because she's so miserable. I will speak daggers to my enemy when I see him at the debate.*

speak for (one)self 1. An imperative to express one's opinion as one's own, and not represent it as being indicative of anyone else's. The phrase is said when there is disagreement. A: *"We just love traveling."* B: *"Speak for yourself—I think it's exhausting."* 2. To express oneself, as opposed to letting others speak for oneself or remaining silent. *She needs to speak for herself—I'm not a mind-reader!*

speak in circles To talk about something in an indirect or confusing way that is hard for the listener to follow. *As journalists, we need to ask the important questions and keep these politicians from speaking in circles.* A: *"What's new with Mary?"* B: *"I have no idea because she spoke in circles the whole time."*

speak of the devil An acknowledgment of a person who has arrived just as or after they were being discussed. (A shortening of the longer proverb, "speak of the devil, and he is sure to/shall/will appear.") A: *"Hey everyone, sorry I'm late!"* B: *"Well, speak of the devil! We were just speaking talking something funny you were saying the other day."*

speak of the devil, and he appears An acknowledgment of a person who has arrived just as or after they were being discussed. John: *"Hey everyone, sorry I'm late!"* Dave: *"Well, speak of the devil, and he appears!"*

We were just talking about something funny you said the other day."

speaking of the devil, and he is sure to appear An acknowledgment of a person who has arrived just as or after they were being discussed. *John: "Hey everyone, sorry I'm late!" Dave: "Well, speaking of the devil, and he is sure to appear! We were just talking about something funny you said the other day."*

speaking of the devil, and he shall appear An acknowledgment of a person who has arrived just as or after they were being discussed. *John: "Hey everyone, sorry I'm late!" Dave: "Well, speaking of the devil, and he shall appear! We were just talking about something funny you said the other day."*

speaking of the devil, and he will appear An acknowledgment of a person who has arrived just as or after they were being discussed. *John: "Hey everyone, sorry I'm late!" Dave: "Well, speaking of the devil, and he will appear! We were just talking about something funny you said the other day."*

speaking out of both sides of (one's) mouth To try to maintain contradictory positions or beliefs in an attempt to please the most people. *We all know that you've been speaking out of both sides of your mouth about the merger, so please, just tell us the truth. Will there be layoffs or not? I don't trust that candidate—he still hasn't committed to a clear course of action and is always speaking out of both sides of his mouth.*

speaking out of turn To say something erroneous, foolish, or impudent at an inappropriate time, or to speak when one does not have the authority to do so. *I hope I'm not speaking out of turn, but I think we'd see a higher profit margin if we took better care of our employees' benefits. If you speak out of turn in my class, you can expect detention!*

speaking softly and carrying a big stick A phrase popularized by US President Theodore Roosevelt that encourages one to attempt peaceful negotiations while also being armed and ready for battle. *Because that group is violent and unpredictable, I think you need to speak softly and carry a big stick when you deal with them.*

speaking well for 1. To show support or vouch for someone. *I can speak well for Ted, I've known him for years.* **2.** To act as proof of something. *I think she would make a great model—her grace and poise speak well for her.*

spear carrier 1. An actor with a minor part in a production. *I know*

you're disappointed to just be a spear carrier in the play, but if you do well in this role, maybe you'll get a bigger one next year. **2.** By extension, a subordinate, especially one who has an unimportant role in some group or thing. *Adam's just a spear carrier, we can make this decision without him. Have one of those spear carriers get me a cup of coffee!*

special delivery 1. A postal service by which letters or packages are delivered outside of the scheduled mail delivery times for an extra fee. *I sent that parcel by special delivery so that you would get it in time for your birthday.* **2.** A phrase said humorously when giving something to someone, especially if the item is unappealing. *A: "Special delivery: here's the report you need to work on!" B: "Gee, thanks."*

special measures 1. A designation given to a public establishment, such as a school or hospital, that is in need of improvement. Often used in the phrase "in special measures." Primarily heard in UK. *My son's school is currently in special measures, so he's transferring to a different one next year.* **2.** Steps that must be taken, however unusual or extreme, to bring about some outcome. *Oh, I will take special measures to ensure that the neighbors' dog stops barking, even if I have to buy him a muzzle myself! Don't worry, we took special measures to make sure that nobody finds us in here—we have furniture blocking all the doors.*

special needs Pertaining to one who has a mental or physical disability. *I teach special needs kids, and I love it.*

(special) snowflake A derisive term for a person (often a young person) who acts or is judged to act entitled to special treatment or opportunities. *Generations of students before you have read this book with no gripes about its content, and you will too—you're not special snowflakes.*

spectator sport 1. A sport that is watched by an audience, such as football or baseball. *My favorite spectator sport is ice hockey, what's yours?* **2.** By extension, something other than sports that people watch without participating in. *The Democratic and Republican National Conventions turn the presidential election into a spectator sport. Gym class is not a spectator sport! Stand up and start participating.*

speech is silver, but silence is golden An expression that values silence over speech. *I would be careful around all those reporters if I were you. Remember: speech is silver, but silence is golden.*

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speed freak A drug user who abuses or is addicted to an amphetamine, especially methamphetamine (also known as "speed"). *This state is a thoroughfare for methamphetamine to the rest of the country, so it's little wonder that there are so many speed freaks here.*

speedhead Someone who abuses or is addicted to an amphetamine, especially methamphetamine. (Also written as "speed head.") *This state is a thoroughfare for methamphetamine to the rest of the country, so it's little wonder that there are so many speedheads here.*

Speedy Gonzales slang A nickname for one who does things quickly. It comes from the Looney Tunes character of the same name. *Slow down, Speedy Gonzales, I can't keep up with you!*

spend like a sailor (on (shore) leave) To spend excessively, extravagantly, or wastefully. *Now don't go spending like a sailor on shore leave just because you got a bit of a tax refund from the government. The local council has been spending like sailors on this new tram project, while other existing public transport goes into disrepair. Every time my husband's paycheck comes through, he goes out to the pubs and spends like a sailor on leave!*

spend money like a drunken sailor To spend money freely and frivolously. *Because I've been spending money like a drunken sailor, I don't have enough to pay my rent this month.*

spick and span Totally clean and/or organized. *I plan to spend the day cleaning so that this place is spick and span when my mother-in-law arrives.*

spill (one's) seed slang To ejaculate. *Think about something other than spilling your seed for once!*

spin doctor One who manipulates information, often by attempting to present negative news as being somehow positive. *The campaign's spin doctors somehow made the candidate's poor performance in the debate look*

like a sign that he was the more relatable candidate.

spine-tingling Thrilling or scary. *My brother loves spine-tingling movies, but I don't enjoy watching anything scary.*

the spirit of the law The intended meaning of a law by those who wrote it, as opposed to a literal interpretation thereof. *It's quite apparent that the CEOs of these companies, while technically acting legally, have violated the spirit of the law in order to further their own profits at the expense of their clients and employees.*

spit feathers slang To be thirsty. *Come on, man, I'm spitting feathers here—can't we stop for a drink?*

spit in(to) the wind To do something totally pointless, fruitless, or futile; to waste one's time doing something that will not or cannot come to pass. *To be perfectly honest, I feel like voting is just spitting in the wind, so I don't even bother. My mom and dad spent years spitting in the wind trying to get my brother to take his studies seriously; in the end, he dropped out anyway to pursue a career in music.*

spit (out) the dummy To have a childish overreaction or angry outburst to a negative situation or outcome; to act in a bad-tempered manner, likened to a temper tantrum of a child. "Dummy" here refers to a plastic teat used to soothe teething infants (also called a "pacifier" in the U.S. or a "soother" elsewhere), which they may spit when in the middle of a tantrum. Primarily heard in Australia. *John spat the dummy when I told him I'd sold his old comic book collection. Don't go spitting out the dummy just because Cheryl got the promotion instead of you.*

spitstick A small chisel, often used for engraving. *You'll need to use a spitstick to put the finishing touches on it.*

spitting distance Close proximity or a short distance, as to or away from some desired thing, person, goal, or objective. Used especially in the phrase "in/within spitting distance." *A victory was within spitting distance for the home team, but a late penalty kick robbed them of their prize. My grandmother's house is rather old and a bit spooky, but it's in spitting distance of the ocean, so it was always a favorite summer destination when we were kids.*

the spitting image of (someone) One who looks exactly like



someone else. *Wow, you are just the spitting image of your mother! I was about to call you by her name.*

spitting in the wind See [be spitting in\(to\) the wind](#).

splice the mainbrace nautical To issue and partake in an extra ration of alcoholic spirits, especially rum or grog, amongst members of crew aboard a sea vessel. (The mainbrace, also spelled "main brace," is a brace attached to the main yard on sailing ships. "Splicing the mainbrace" was originally the very difficult job of repairing this brace, one which earned the repairman an extra ration of spirits; eventually, this euphemistic secondary meaning became the primary one.) *As part of the celebrations for her Diamond Jubilee, the Queen gave the order to all in the Royal Navy to splice the mainbrace as a gesture of good cheer.*

Spock ears slang Very noticeable, pointy ears that resemble those of the character Spock from *Star Trek*. *I need to get some Spock ears to add to my costume. He has huge Spock ears, so you'll spot him from a mile away.*

spoiled for choice Having an abundance of suitable or ideal options from which to choose, such that it may be difficult to make a decision. Primarily heard in US. *Between video games, television, and the Internet, kids these days are being brought up spoiled for choice when it comes to their entertainment. Our hotel was right in the midst of the city's finest restaurants, so whenever we wanted something to eat, we were spoiled for choice.*

spoil for choice Having an abundance of suitable or ideal options from which to choose, such that it may be difficult to make a decision. Primarily heard in UK. *Between video games, television, and the Internet, kids these days are being brought up spoilt for choice when it comes to their entertainment. Our hotel was right in the midst of the city's finest restaurants, so whenever we wanted something to eat, we were spoilt for choice.*

spoken out of turn See [speak out of turn](#).

spoken word A type of poetry that is read aloud in a performance. *I'll be reading some of my spoken word poetry tonight at the coffee house, if you want to stop by.*

spoon-feed (someone) 1. Literally, to insert food into another person's mouth. *The nurses had to spoon-feed my mother after her stroke. No, my*

daughter is off the bottle now—we're spoon-feeding her. **2.** By extension, to help someone excessively (usually to the recipient's detriment). *Her students are lazy because she always spoon-feeds them the answers. The actress got so flustered in front of the camera that we had to spoon-feed her the lines. How unprofessional!*

a spoonful of sugar helps the medicine go down Something good makes something bad more tolerable. *I'm going to put on some fun background music while I work on this boring project because a spoonful of sugar helps the medicine go down.*

sporting blood **1.** A natural love of or enthusiasm for sports or athletics. *The sporting blood running through this town means the people here show an unmatched enthusiasm and loyalty for all of their local teams.* **2.** An adventurous, risk-taking, and/or thrill-seeking personality or disposition; exceptional competitiveness; readiness to accept a challenge. *This business isn't meant for the timid. Only those with sporting blood have a real chance at success. I'm not one to stand up to bullies, but my brother has sporting blood and backs down from no one.*

sporting chance A very good possibility (of achieving success). *I've seen him practice, and there's a sporting chance he'll win the competition.*

spot check **1.** noun An inspection that is random and/or occurs only for a limited time. *Because I've gotten reports that some of you are abandoning your posts early, there will be spot checks for the foreseeable future.* **2.** verb To make such an inspection. *Because I've gotten reports that some of you are abandoning your posts early, I will be spot checking you all for the foreseeable future.*

spot on (hyphenated is used before a noun) Exactly right; perfectly accurate. *Mr. Lynch's analysis of the company is spot on, if you ask me. I suggest we follow whatever advice he offers. Yes, those directions you gave me were spot on, thank you! Mark does a spot-on impression of our teacher—you have to hear it!*

spot on the mark Exactly right; perfectly accurate. *Mr. Lynch's analysis of the company is spot on the mark, if you ask me. I suggest we follow whatever advice he offers. Yes, those directions you gave me were spot on the mark, thank you!*

spread far and wide To disseminate or be disseminated on a large

scale, especially to a large number of people. *Well, that rumor about me has sure spread far and wide—even the teachers know about it! The government wants to keep this scandal a secret, which means we need to make sure it spreads far and wide. Western commercial culture has spread far and wide, and you can now find fast food restaurants in every corner of the globe.*

spread it on thick To exaggerate, aggrandize, or overstate some emotional experience, response, or appeal, such as blame, praise, flattery, excuses, etc. *Jim carries on as though flattering the boss will get him a promotion, so he's always spreading it on thick for her. OK, Bob, I think Mary understands the trouble she's in, no need to spread it on so thick.*

spring fever A feeling of often restless excitement or exuberance coinciding with the onset of warmer spring weather. *It's hard enough keeping control of a class full of young children throughout the year, but it's particularly difficult once spring fever starts to spread. It's wonderful seeing the city touched by spring fever, coming alive again after the deadening winter.*

a spring in (one's) step A happy, energetic, and excited mood or manner, as indicated by the carefree way one walks. *Joe's been walking with a spring in his step ever since he found out he was getting a promotion. I bet you'll have a spring in your step after I tell you this bit of good news!*

spring to mind To suddenly or immediately appear, materialize, or come to the forefront in one's mind. *A: "What would you like to have for dinner?" B: "I'm not sure, nothing's really springing to mind." When it comes to crime thrillers, he's not a writer who springs to most people's minds, but his books are edgy, brilliant page turners.*

spring up like mushrooms To increase in number suddenly and rapidly (as mushrooms often do). *Even though I'm constantly tending to my garden, the weeds just spring up like mushrooms nonetheless. I thought I only had a transmission problem, but other issues with the car are now springing up like mushrooms.*

springes to catch woodcocks Traps to ensnare fools. (The woodcock was once regarded as synonymous with foolishness or stupidity.) The phrase was perhaps most famously used in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. *I know you're desperate to have a boyfriend, but you're just laying springes to catch woodcocks right now by spending so much time at dive bars. You won't find*

the right man that way!

spur-of-the-moment Occurring very suddenly, impulsively, and/or without preparation beforehand; impromptu or capricious. *You've got to stop making these spur-of-the-moment decisions about your business, or you'll end up running it into the ground! It's totally out of my character to take a spur-of-the-moment trip like this, but I just needed to get out of the city for a while.*

squad One's group of close friends. *I'm going to the party tonight with my squad.*

squad goals The aspirations, desires, or values of one's group of close friends, often illustrated in an image posted on social media that is captioned with the phrase as a hashtag. *Check out this selfie of Jenny and her friends at the library. She hashtagged it with "squad goals." See you all bright and early tomorrow at the protest! #squadgoals*

square meal A wholesome, nutritious meal. *The hot lunch program at school provides square meals for underprivileged children.*

square one The very first stage of something; the initial starting point. (Especially in the phrase "back to square one.") *We'll have to start again at square one if the government pulls our funding on this project. Yet another relationship down the tubes. I guess I'm back to square one yet again!*

square peg One who acts or thinks differently than most people. Typically used in the phrase "a square peg in a round hole." *The young girl who had a love of math and science often felt like a square peg in a round hole when surrounded by her peers. When the man in the fancy suit walked into the biker bar, it was obvious that he was a square peg.*

a square peg in a round hole A person who does not fit in or is not comfortable with others or in a particular situation; someone who is unsuited to a certain task, position, situation, or group of people. *It only took three months to realize I was a square peg in a round hole at the firm. I guess I just don't buy into the whole corporate hierarchy of modern business. John was a bit of a square peg in a round hole throughout high school, but when he went to college he found all sorts of people he could relate to.*

square rod A measure of land equal to roughly 25 square miles. *I need a measurement of the available land in square rods, please.*

squash (someone or something) (in) like sardines To fit

many people or things very tightly or snugly into a small space. *We didn't want to take more than one car, so Jeff squashed us like sardines in his little sedan for the four-hour drive to Moab. Having a concert in our friends café was such a good idea! Sure, we had to squash people in like sardines, but everyone had a great time. I wish you would just let us buy you a bigger backpack! It makes my own back hurt watching you squash those books like sardines into your little shoulder bag.*

squashed (in) like sardines Very tightly or snugly packed together, especially in a small space. *We didn't want to take more than one car, so we had to drive for about four hours squashed like sardines in Jeff's little sedan. Having a concert in our friends café was such a good idea! Sure, we were squashed in like sardines, but everyone had a great time.*

the squeaking wheel gets the grease The people who complain or protest the loudest are the ones who receive the most attention from others. *My sister makes a point of writing letters of complaint to businesses whenever she has an issue with their service, and nine times out of ten, she's rewarded with some kind of discount or gift. I guess it's true, the squeaking wheel gets the grease.*

the squeaky wheel gets the oil The people who complain or protest the loudest are the ones who receive the most attention from others. *My sister makes a point of writing letters of complaint to businesses whenever she has an issue with their service, and nine times out of ten, she's rewarded with some kind of discount or gift. I guess it's true, the squeaky wheel gets the oil.*

squint like a bag of nails To squint one's eyes severely. *She definitely needs glasses—she's been squinting like a bag of nails all day.*

a stab in the back A betrayal; an act of treachery. *It felt like a stab in the back to hear that Paul was going out with my ex-girlfriend. The campaign coordinator's mid-race shift of allegiance will be quite a stab in the back for the incumbent president.*

a stab in the dark 1. A guess or estimate with very little or no assurance as to its accuracy; a wild guess. *Well, this is just a stab in the dark, but I'm going to say that the answer to the question is Countess Constance Markievicz.* 2. An attempt (at something) which is not expected to succeed or has very little chance of working. *It was really just a stab in the dark when I tried to fix our washing machine, but I was actually able to get it working*

again on my first try!

stack the cards (against someone or something) To make surreptitious arrangements that result in an unfair advantage over someone or something else. (Likened to fixing a deck of playing cards in one's favor during a card game.) *Of course, simply by virtue of his being the boss's son, Jeremy has stacked the cards against the rest of us for an early promotion. The mega corporation has been accused of trying to stack the cards with billions of dollars spent putting political pressure on members of congress.*

stack the deck (against) (someone or something) To make arrangements that result in an unfair advantage over someone or something. (Likened to fixing a deck of playing cards in one's favor during a game.) *By dating the boss's daughter, Jeremy has stacked the deck against the rest of us for an early promotion. The mega corporation has been accused of trying to stack the deck by spending millions to influence members of congress.*

stack Z's To get some sleep. *We've got a pretty long layover before our next flight, so I'm going to try to stack some Z's at the gate. A: "Where's Jeff?" B: "Upstairs stacking Z's. It's been a hard week for him."*

stag night A groom's outing with his male friends before his wedding; a bachelor party. *Mark knew that his stag night had gotten out of control when the police arrived.*

stag party A groom's outing with his male friends before his wedding; a bachelor party. *Mark knew that his stag party had gotten out of control when the police arrived.*

stage-door Johnny A man who spends a lot of time at a theater so as to seek the romantic attention, favor, or company of an actress. *Ms. Gabler is such a stunning beauty that she always has some stage-door Johnny or another waiting for her after the curtain falls each night.*

staircase wit A perfect witty remark, retort, or rejoinder that occurs to one after the fact or too late to be used. *I was on the bus home long after being tongue-lashed by my boss when I thought of the perfect things to say that would take him down a few pegs. Ah, this staircase wit, it always comes to me when I can do nothing about it!*

the stake Execution by being burned alive while tied to a large wooden stake. *The township found her guilty of witchcraft and sentenced her to the*

stake.

stalking horse **1.** A political candidate who attempts to supplant the current party leader, solely to gauge how much support the incumbent has. *He doesn't actually want to be elected—he's just a stalking horse who's trying to see how fractured our party really is.* **2.** Something that conceals a person's true intentions. *I'm afraid that this deal is just a stalking horse for a more nefarious long-term plan.*

stand behind (someone or something) **1.** Literally, to stand or position oneself to the rear of someone or something. *Okay, Jake, you stand behind Samantha here in line. I think that's my blind date standing awkwardly behind the statue across the square.* **2.** To guarantee, ensure, or show one's steadfast support of someone or something, or for someone's or something's worth, ability, performance, etc. *I'm very grateful to my husband, who always stood behind me during the inquest. If your own employees won't stand behind your new software, how can you expect uptake by the public?*

stand by (one's) guns To remain determined, resolute, or steadfast in one's opinion, belief, or perspective; to refuse to be persuaded by someone else into believing or doing something one does not agree with. (A less common variant of "stick to one's guns." Both phrases allude to a soldier remaining and firing their gun(s) at an enemy, even when the situation might be dangerous or hopeless.) *The prosecution is going to try and trip you up with your statement and your alibi, but so long as you stand by your guns, there's nothing to worry about. I really admire Jess for standing by her guns during college and not submitting to the peer pressure of those around her to drink or do drugs.*

stand fast To remain determined, stalwart, and unyielding, as in one's position or opinion. *Though it may be hard, we must stand fast in our pledge to environmental reform.*

stand firm To remain determined, stalwart, and unyielding, as in one's position or opinion. *Though it may be hard, we must stand firm in our pledge to environmental reform.*

stand from under dated, naval To be wary of and, if necessary, flee from something that is falling or threatening to fall from above. *That captain shouted at all the hands on deck to stand from under, as the wind stripped the guy-wires from off the masts.*

stand (in) back of (someone or something) 1. Literally, to stand or position oneself to the rear of someone or something. *OK, Jake, you stand back of Samantha here in line. I think that's my blind date standing awkwardly in back of the statue across the square.* 2. To guarantee, ensure, or show one's steadfast support of someone or something; to show such support or guarantee for someone's or something's worth, ability, performance, etc. *I'm very grateful to my husband, who always stood back of me during the inquest. If your own employees won't stand in back of your new software, how can you expect the public to adopt it?*

stand in (one's) own light To harm, hinder, or tarnish one's own reputation, opportunities, or advantages, as through foolish or reproachable actions; to be a hindrance or encumbrance to one's own success or ambitions. *My little brother has had all the opportunities in the world growing up, but he's always been the one standing in his own light, what with all the legal trouble he gets himself into.*

stand in (someone's) shoes To see or understand things from someone else's position or perspective; to empathize with someone. *I used to resent my dad for the placid way he was with our domineering mother, but once I grew up a bit and stood in his shoes for a while, I came to have a greater appreciation for what he must have been going through. If you encounter a bully, try standing in their shoes—they're probably deeply unhappy and redirect that feeling onto others.*

stand in the gap To assume a position of active, resolute defense (for or against something). From Ezekiel 22:30: "And I sought for a man among them that should make up the hedge and stand in the gap before Me for the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found none." *We are all called to stand in the gap to defend what we know in our hearts to be morally correct and essential.*

stand on (one's/its) own To be able to function independently of other people or things; to have value independent of other related entities. *Now that you're 18, you're expected to stand on your own and make good choices without your parents telling you what to do. I think the honors program is now capable of standing on its own, as it drew more applications than several other programs on campus. I think the sequel really stands on its own as a film—you don't need to see the first movie to appreciate it.*

stand on the shoulders of giants To make discoveries, insights, or progress due to the discoveries or previous work of great minds that have come before. *Though this is indeed an exciting discovery toward curing cancer, we have stood on the shoulders of giants to reach this point today.*

stand still for (something) To accept, tolerate, endure, or put up with something. (Often used in the negative to indicate the opposite.) *Do you really think the boss will stand still for this outrageous plan of yours? The people of this country will not stand still for the persecution administered by the despots and corrupt politicians in government.*

stand stock still To not move at all. *You kids need to stand stock still out here until the firemen are done investigating the building, OK? I didn't want my grandmother to catch me rooting through her jewelry box, so when I heard her in the hallway, I leaped into the closet and stood stock still.*

stand the sight of (someone or something) To tolerate, accept, or endure someone or something. (Most often used in a negative formation.) *I don't know how you stand the sight of that horrible receptionist every day. He's just so mean and unpleasant! I can't stand the sight of my mother-in-law, but there are a few occasions each year where I can't avoid having to spend time with her. I absolutely cannot stand the sight of shellfish. Just being near it is enough to make me gag!*

stand the test of time **1.** To work, function, or endure for a very long time. *As computer technology improves, it's ironically getting harder and harder to find a piece of equipment that can stand the test of time.* **2.** To be particularly popular or well regarded for a long period of time. *Of all the cast members, hers was the only career that stood the test of time.*

standard-bearer **1.** A military member who carries the flag of their unit. *The soldier marched proudly, flag in hand, as the standard-bearer of his unit.* **2.** The widely-accepted leader of a cause, movement, or ideology. *She rose above her contemporaries to become the standard-bearer of the women's rights movement.*

standard fare A common occurrence. *Smashed instruments are standard fare at a rock concert. Arguments are standard fare for the Smith family at Thanksgiving, believe me.*

standing on (one's) head With very little or no difficulty; in a



relaxed, carefree, or effortless manner. *It took me a little while to get used to this job, but now I could do it standing on my head! You should ask Johnny for help—he does this level of math standing on his head.*

Standing Rock A shorthand reference to the Standing Rock Sioux tribe in North Dakota. The phrase gained popularity amidst opposition to the Dakota Access Pipeline and its planned use of Native American grounds in North Dakota. *There are more protests planned today in support of Standing Rock.*

Starbs slang A shortening of the name of the coffee shop "Starbucks." *Sorry I'm late, I stopped at Starbs on my way here. But on the plus side, I got you a caramel macchiato!*

stare (something/someone) in the face **1.** Literally, to make direct and uninterrupted eye contact with someone. *She just walked up to the boss, stared him in the face, and asked for a raise! I could never do that!* **2.** To confront a situation or issue directly. *The suffragettes stared injustice in the face and won the right to vote.*

start from where you are Don't worry about making changes in order to start doing something—simply begin doing it. *Don't worry about being inexperienced at yoga, just start from where you are.*

start (off) with a clean slate To start (something) again with a fresh beginning, especially unencumbered by mistakes or regrets from the past. *After that fiasco in Texas, I'm looking forward to starting off with a clean slate in Oregon. I know things have not been great between us, but I'm willing to forget what happened and start with a clean slate.*

start over with a clean slate To start (something) again with a fresh beginning, especially unencumbered by mistakes or regrets from the past. *After that fiasco in Texas, I'm looking forward to starting over with a clean slate in Oregon. Things got so screwed up with the project that we had to scrap it about halfway through and start over again with a clean slate.*

start the ball rolling To set something, often a process, in motion; to begin. *I think it will be easier to become comfortable driving now that I've started the ball rolling with driving lessons. I'll start the ball rolling with the icing while you mix the batter.*

start tongues (a-)wagging To be a source of gossip, slander, or idle



speculation. *Just when the dust of his previous scandal had begun to settle, the governor did something new to start tongues a-wagging across the country. Being such a media celebrity means that anything one does, no matter how banal, is enough to start tongues wagging.*

starting price **1.** The price of an item as stated at the start of an auction. *The starting price for this piece is \$100. Is there a bid for \$100?* **2.** In horse racing, the last odds offered by a bookmaker before the start of a race. *You better find out the starting price because the race is going to start shortly.*

starvin' Marvin slang A humorous phrase applied to one who is hungry. *I'm starvin' Marvin here, can we please stop for lunch soon?*

state of affairs A current situation or set of conditions. *It's been a sad state of affairs around here since our grandma got sick. I'd like to start this meeting by going over the company's financial state of affairs.*

stay at home **1.** adjective A phrase used to describe a parent who cares for their children instead of having a traditional job outside of the home. In this usage, the term is often hyphenated and is typically used in the phrases "stay-at-home mom" and "stay-at-home dad." *I never thought I would miss working in an office, but being a stay-at-home mom is utterly exhausting. Once my niece was born, my brother became a stay-at-home dad.* **2.** adjective A phrase used to describe one who prefers to spend time at home, as opposed to going out and/or engaging in social activities. *I've never been one to party or travel—I'm just a stay at home girl.* **3.** noun One who tends to stay home, as opposed to going out. *Why do I have to be the stay at home all the time? I like to travel, too, you know!*

stay-at-home mom A mother who forgoes employment outside of the home in order to care for her children and the household. *Being a stay-at-home mom is just as much hard work as going to an office every day.*

stay hungry To remain determined, competitive, motivated, and active in one's hopes, ambitions, or goals; to keep oneself from becoming complacent or self-satisfied with less than one might potentially achieve. *You've got a lot of skill, kid, and you're one of the best fighters in the city—but you've got to stay hungry and never lose sight of the biggest prizes out there! It was hard staying hungry after finding such success with my first novel. I just found I wasn't as driven to write when I'd already garnered so much praise and recognition.*

stay in touch **1.** To maintain contact with another person, especially at intervals so as to remain up to date with each other's lives. *My old high school friends and I tried staying in touch after we graduated, but we all started drifting apart once college got underway. Now, make sure you stay in touch, OK? I want to hear all about your time in Paris!* **2.** An informal parting phrase, used especially with a person one isn't likely to see again anytime soon. *OK, Deborah, thank you for your audition. Stay in touch! It was so good to see you again, cousin Jeb—stay in touch!*

stay the course **1.** To persevere with as much determination, energy, or fortitude as one can until the end of a race, competition, or contest. *Despite an early setback in the first half, the home team stayed the course and managed to earn a draw.* **2.** To continue attempting or pursuing something difficult to its end or conclusion. *If you can't stay the course when things get a bit messy, then you just aren't cut out for this line of work.*

stay the distance **1.** To persevere with as much determination, energy, or fortitude as one can muster through to the end of a race, competition, or contest. *Despite an early setback in the first half, the American team stayed the distance and managed to earn a draw at the end of the match.* **2.** To continue attempting or pursuing something difficult to its end or conclusion. *If you can't stay the distance when things get a bit messy, then you just aren't cut out for this line of work.*

stay woke slang To be aware of the need for and committed to social justice. This usage of the term "woke" (particularly in reference to activism against black oppression) is thought to have originated in the mid-20th century US. Primarily heard in US. *We can't just protest today and then ignore these issues tomorrow—we have to stay woke.*

steady as she goes Describing someone or something that is progressing in a stable manner. This nautical phrase was originally used in reference to a ship that was sailing steadily. (Ships were traditionally assigned the female gender.) A: *"How's your new business coming along?"* B: *"Steady as she goes! We expect to break even the first year and then start making a profit."* *In the midst of all this social upheaval, I hope our government can stay steady-as-she-goes.*

steady hand on the tiller Full control over a situation. *I felt comfortable knowing that even during this difficult time, he had a steady*

hand on the tiller.

steady the ship **1.** To steer a ship so that it sails smoothly. *I'm really glad they've steadied the ship—those waves were making me so nauseous!* **2.** By extension, to restore calm and order to a situation. *I just recently got divorced, so I hope my mother moving in and helping with the kids will steady the ship. We just hired a new supervisor to steady the ship after this merger.*

steal a march on (someone or something) To gain an unexpected or surreptitious advantage over someone or something, as by accomplishing something before, or better than, someone else. *The retail business managed to steal a march on its competitors by signing an exclusive export agreement with Europe. John and I were both trying to win Courtney's heart, but he stole a march on me when he managed to get tickets to Courtney's favorite band.*

steal a march over (someone or something) To gain an unexpected or surreptitious advantage over someone or something, as by accomplishing something before, or better than, someone else. *The retail business managed to steal a march over its competitors by signing an exclusive export agreement with Europe. John and I were both trying to win Courtney's heart, but he stole a march over me when he managed to get tickets to see Courtney's favorite band.*

steal a march upon (someone or something) To gain an unexpected or surreptitious advantage over someone or something, as by accomplishing something before, or better than, someone else. *The retail business managed to steal a march upon its competitors by signing an exclusive export agreement with Europe. John and I were both trying to win Courtney's heart, but he stole a march upon me when he managed to get tickets to see Courtney's favorite band.*

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stealthing A slang term for the act in which a male removes a condom during sexual intercourse without his partner's knowledge or consent. *So-called "stealthing" is sexual assault, period.*

steely-eyed With or having a fierce intensity in one's expression. *The teacher fixed a steely-eyed gaze upon me when I started joking around during class. I could feel my ex-girlfriend staring at me, steely-eyed, from across the bar.*

steely-nerved Calm and unflappable under pressure. *I asked my brother to come to court with me because he is always steely-nerved in stressful situations. Gina needs to be steely-nerved to deal with all that rejection that comes with being an actress.*

step by step 1. Incrementally; in the proper sequential order. *Make sure you follow the instructions step by step—don't skip around or it won't turn out right.* 2. Slowly, carefully, and deliberately; without being careless or in a rush. *It is entirely possible for this project to succeed, we just need to proceed step by step. Major life changes like this can fluster anyone, so just take everything step by step.*

a step in the right direction An action or decision that is considered indicative of positive progress. *Enrolling in that degree program was a step in the right direction toward changing careers.*

step into dead men's shoes To take over the position or role of someone who has died. Derived from the proverb, "It's ill waiting for dead men's shoes." *With the economy as stagnant as it is, the only way to get a promotion these days is to step into dead men's shoes.*

step into (someone's) shoes To fill someone's position, especially one of power or authority. *I don't know who they're getting to step into Davidson's shoes, but I doubt they'll be anywhere near as good a manager as he was. I tell you, I wouldn't want to step into her shoes. Sure, the pay would be better, but I don't want all that stress!*

step on (someone's) toes To insult, offend, or upset someone, especially by getting involved in something that is their responsibility. *I want to help John out on his project, but I know it's his baby, so I don't want to step on his toes in any way. Look, you're going to have to step on a few peoples' toes if you want to get ahead in this business.*

step up (one's) game To improve in some way, usually so that one can perform as well as others. *Man, I really need to step up my game if I'm going to play basketball with all these young guys. Phil lost another case? He really needs to step up his game if he wants to stay at this firm.*

a stepping stone Some situation, circumstance, or experience that serves to assist one in reaching or progressing toward a goal or desired outcome. *While I wasn't paid during my internship with the law firm, it acted as a superb stepping stone to getting hired as a full-time legal assistant at another firm.*

stick a fork in (me/it/something) A phrase used to indicate that one or something is finished, complete, or no longer able to continue. Alludes to the practice of testing how thoroughly a piece of meat is cooked by piercing it with a fork. *Barbara: "Johnny, would you like any more of this cake?" Johnny: "No thank you, Barb. You can stick a fork in me, I'm done!" I'd say we just need one more week on the project, and then you'll be able to stick a fork in it!*

stick by (one's) guns To remain determined, resolute, or steadfast in one's opinion, belief, or perspective; to refuse to be persuaded by someone else into believing or doing something one does not agree with. (A less common variant of "stick to one's guns." Both phrases allude to a soldier remaining and firing their gun(s) at an enemy, even when the situation might

be dangerous or hopeless.) *The prosecution is going to try to trip you up with your statement and your alibi, but so long as you stick by your guns, there's nothing to worry about. I really admire Jess for sticking by her guns during college and not submitting to the peer pressure of those around her to drink or do drugs.*

stick in (one's) two penn'orth To share one's opinion, idea, or point of view, regardless of whether or not others want to hear it. ("Penn'orth" is a contraction of "pennies' worth.") Primarily heard in UK. *I find Jeff's husband a bit trying at times. He always has to stick in his two penn'orth, even when it's clear he knows nothing about what's being discussed. If I can just stick in my two penn'orth, I think the staff would really appreciate a bump in their pay, and productivity would increase as a result.*

stick in the mud Someone who is considered boring, often due to unpopular or outdated beliefs. *Sally was tired of being called a stick in the mud by her friends just because she refused to drink alcohol. Just because I don't like roller coasters doesn't mean I'm a stick in a mud—I like lots of other fun things!*

stick it to the man To show resistance to or fight back against the established doctrines of a person or body of authority, especially the government. *The IRS has been sending me tax refunds by mistake for years, but I've never said anything to them about it. It's my own private little way of sticking it to the man. The news reporter, under pressure from his bosses to only report the censored version of events, decided to stick it to the man and share the story in its entirety live on the air.*

stick it/(something) up your arse! A rude, vulgar invective expressing disdain, contempt, disgust, or anger to someone (about something). Primarily heard in UK. *I've taken enough of the boss's crap—he can stick this job up his arse! Bill: "You're acting like a fool, Dave. You need to sober up and get your life in order." Dave: "Ah, stick it up your arse, Bill! You don't know what's best for me!"*

stick it/(something) up your ass! A rude, vulgar invective expressing disdain, contempt, disgust, or anger to someone (about something). Primarily heard in US. *I've taken enough of the boss's crap—he can stick this job up his ass! Bill: "You're acting like a fool, Dave. You need to sober up and get your life in order." Dave: "Ah, stick it up your ass, Bill!"*

You don't know what's best for me!"

stick (one's) nose in(to) (something) To involve oneself in an intrusive or nosy manner into something that is not one's business or responsibility. *I wish my neighbors would quit sticking their noses in and just leave us alone! Liam, don't stick your nose into your brother's affairs—he can manage well enough on his own.*

stick (one's) oar in(to) (something) **1.** To offer or express one's opinion (on some matter), even though it was not asked for or desired. Primarily heard in UK. *I don't know why you feel you have to stick your oar into every dispute Terry and I are having. The members of the board are perfectly capable of arriving at a decision of their own accord, so I'll thank you for not sticking your oar in, Tom.* **2.** To involve oneself in an intrusive or nosy manner into something that is not one's business or responsibility. Primarily heard in UK. *I wish my neighbors would quit sticking their oars in and just leave us alone! Liam, don't stick your oar into your brother's affairs—he can manage well enough on his own.*

stick (one's) spoon in the wall **1.** To move into a new place of residence. The phrase refers to an outdated practice of hanging a pouch for small tools on the wall of one's home. *A: "Has she stuck her spoon in the wall?" B: "Yes, and she seems to be settling into her new place nicely."* **2.** To die. *Did you hear that Walter stuck his spoon in the wall? What a shame. I think the funeral is next Tuesday.*

stick to beat (someone or something) with Something, often a mishap or misdeed, that is used as an excuse for criticism. Primarily heard in UK. *Even the slightest mistake by Stan was enough to give the boss a stick to beat him with.*

stick up (one's) ass rude slang A rigid and uptight demeanor. *I can't believe Ms. Jones gave me a demerit for being a minute late! Ugh, she has such a stick up her ass! Tim's no fun, he always has a stick up his ass—why did you invite him to your party?*

sticking-place The issue or point that halts forward progress. *I have a feeling that this section of the contract will be a sticking-place, as neither of them wants to concede any funds to the other.*

sticking point A topic of discussion or debate that results in disagreement. *The subject of curfew is often a real sticking point between*

teenagers and their parents.

sticks and stones A shorthand way of referring to the phrase "sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me," a childish rebuttal to teasing or other harsh speech. A: *"There are some pretty unflattering rumors circulating about you now."* B: *"Oh, who cares? Sticks and stones."*

a sticky situation A particularly awkward, embarrassing, precarious, or difficult situation or circumstance. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *I found myself in a bit of a sticky situation when the boss saw me kissing his daughter at the movies. I'll be in quite a sticky situation if I arrive at the train station and don't have enough money for the tickets!*

a sticky wicket A particularly awkward or difficult situation or circumstance. (Generally used with *on*. Refers to the pitch, i.e., wicket, used in the game of cricket and the difficulty of playing on one after it has been wetted with rain.) Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *I found myself on a bit of a sticky wicket when the boss saw me kissing his daughter at the cinema. I'll be batting on a sticky wicket if I arrive at the train station and don't have enough money for the tickets!*

a stiff upper lip The ability to remain stoic during difficult situations. *Despite all of the hardships he faced, John always kept a stiff upper lip and didn't let anything bother him. The players were devastated after losing the championship, but their coach encouraged them to keep a stiff upper lip and focus on doing better next year.*

still in the game See [be still in the game](#).

sting in the tail A disappointing ending to something, such as a story, that is otherwise upbeat and positive. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *The movie began as a sweet, romantic love story, so the tragic ending was an unexpected sting in the tail.*

the stink eye A facial expression of unreserved disgust, contempt, disapproval, distrust, or general ill will. *Jonathan, I will not tolerate getting the stink eye from students during class. If you make that face at me again, you're going to the principal's office! Some guy across the bar has been giving me the stink eye since we came in. It must be something to do with my outfit.*

stir (one's) stumps 1. To start moving. "Stumps" are a slang term for



"legs." *You kids have been sitting around playing video games all day—it's time to get outside and stir your stumps!* **2.** To increase one's pace while doing some activity. *Stir your stumps! We've got to move faster if we want to finish our run before sundown.*

stir shit rude slang To cause trouble and conflict. *Quit stirring shit! I know you're the one spreading rumors about me! Somebody is bound to stir shit at Thanksgiving dinner—it happens every year.*

a stitch in time (saves nine) An action taken now will prevent problems later. *You should consider getting your car repaired now before you're left stranded on the side of the road—a stitch in time saves nine. I know it's a month away, but I already started preparing for the big dinner party. A stitch in time, you know.*

stock phrase A well-known, overused phrase; a cliché. *As this is a creative writing class, I don't want to see any stock phrases in your stories. Please rewrite this paragraph in your own words, instead of using stock phrases like "think outside the box."*

stole a march on See [steal a march on \(someone or something\)](#).

stole a march over See [steal a march over \(someone or something\)](#).

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stole the march upon See [steal the march upon \(someone or something\)](#).

stomping ground See [\(old\) stomping ground](#).

stone's throw A short distance away from something. *Brett wanted a shorter commute, so he moved to a house that is just a stone's throw away from his job.*

stooge **1.** A comedian who allows him or herself to be the object of another's jokes, ridicule, or slapstick. *I don't mind playing the stooge, so long as the audience laughs. But I am a little sick of all these pies in my face!* **2.** Someone who is manipulated or paid to do the bidding of a higher power or authority. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *The inspector was suspected*

of being nothing but a stooge of the company after he submitted positive reports that ignored serious safety issues. **3.** A criminal who is paid as a police informant. The term is a portmanteau of "stool pigeon," which originates from a hunting decoy involving a fake pigeon fastened to a stool in order to lure other birds for hunters. Primarily heard in US, South Africa. *I'd say he was probably killed by the gang. It had become well known that he was a stooge for the police for the last few years.*

stool pigeon An informant, especially a criminal working as a spy for law enforcement officers. *Although the criminal agreed to help the police in order to avoid prison time, he was afraid the other gang members would kill him if they discovered he was a stool pigeon.*

stoop labor Hard, physical labor requiring one to bend over, especially that which would be done on a farm. Primarily heard in US. *My grandfather has a permanent hunch in his spine from the stoop labor he had to do throughout his life. Every summer we send the children to my brother's farm. It's good for them to get out of the city for a while and do a little bit of stoop labor.*

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stoop to conquer To adopt a role, position, attitude, behavior, undertaking, etc., that is seen as being beneath one's abilities or social position in order to achieve one's end. *The wealthy congressman has to start taking advantage of more popular, mainstream entertainment platforms because the only way he can come back at this point is if he stoops to conquer.*

stop and smell the roses To become calm and reflect upon the finer or more enjoyable aspects of life, especially when one has become overworked or overly stressed. *You can't keep working these 80 hour workweeks, John! You have to stop and smell the roses, or else what is all that work even for?*

stop dead To immediately or suddenly come to a complete halt. *I don't*

know what happened. The engine was running fine a second ago, but then it just stopped dead! Both of us stopped dead when we heard the gunshot in the distance.

stop press News that is added to a publication shortly before or as it is printed. Primarily heard in UK. *We had to rush to get that stop press into today's paper.*

stop (someone) dead To make someone or something come to a complete halt immediately or very suddenly. *Hearing the gunshot in the distance stopped us both dead. Boy, Samantha could stop you dead with her smile!*

stop the lights An expression of disbelief or incredulity. (Sometimes used ironically or disingenuously.) The phrase comes from the catchphrase from the Irish game show *Quicksilver*. Primarily heard in Ireland. A: "My aunt Edna won the lotto!" B: "Stop the lights, that's incredible news!" A: "My uncle Pat once met President Reagan, you know." B: "Ah here, stop the lights. Your uncle Pat's never even been to America!" *Stop the lights, Jimmy's buying a round for everyone! I never thought I'd see the day!*

stop-watch critic A critic whose strict, traditional views prevent them from fully seeing or understanding that which is being analyzed. *You can't expect a stop-watch critic to understand your futuristic vision for your artwork.*

a stopped clock is right twice a day Even people who are usually wrong can be right sometimes, even if just by accident. From the idea that the stationary hands of a broken clock will still display the correct time at two points during the 24-hour cycle. *I know you're sick of Gran's lectures and think she's out of touch, but you can learn a lot from her. Just keep in mind that even a stopped clock is right twice a day!* A: "You know how I feel about the president, but even I think he's right this time." B: "Even a stopped clock is right twice a day."

storm clouds 1. Dark, ominous-looking clouds indicative of an impending storm. *Hurry back, there are storm clouds on the horizon.* 2. Figuratively, anything that suggests impending trouble. *I'm worried that all these visits by upper management mean that storm clouds are hovering over our department. The storm clouds of social upheaval are gathering over that country.*

a storm in a teacup A disproportionate reaction of anger, concern, or displeasure over some minor or trivial matter. *If you ask me, these protests are nothing but a storm in a teacup that's been stoked by a media campaign of misinformation. I really think you're making a storm in a teacup over this. It's just a tiny scratch on the car!*

a storm in a teakettle A disproportionate reaction of anger, concern, or displeasure over some minor or trivial matter. (A less common variant of "a tempest in a teacup/teapot.") *If you ask me, these protests are nothing but a storm in a teakettle that's been stoked by a media campaign of misinformation. I really think you're making a storm in a teakettle over this. It's just a tiny scratch on the car!*

a storm in a teapot A disproportionate reaction of anger, concern, or displeasure over some minor or trivial matter. (A less common variant of "a tempest in a teacup/teapot.") *If you ask me, these protests are nothing but a storm in a teapot that's been stoked by a media campaign of misinformation. I really think you're making a storm in a teapot over this. It's just a tiny scratch on the car!*

storm off To leave angrily. *When mom realized we weren't listening to her story, she stormed off. Don't just storm off—talk to me about how you're feeling.*

storm out of the blocks To begin something with great speed, energy, and/or intensity. *The home team stormed out of the blocks against their competition and were able to gain an early advantage. Reporters came storming out of the blocks with their questions as the disgraced senator exited the courtroom after the verdict.*

storm out of the traps To begin something with great speed, energy, and/or intensity. *The home team stormed out of the traps against their competition and were able to gain an early advantage. Reporters came storming out of the traps with their questions as the disgraced senator exited the courtroom after the verdict.*

storming mad Exceptionally or uncontrollably angry. *Chris's comments made me storming mad, so I had to go for a walk alone to settle down.*

stormy petrel One who enjoys conflict and is often associated with it; a troublemaker. The phrase refers to a seabird of the same name that was



thought to indicate bad weather. *Todd is just a stormy petrel, causing trouble everywhere he goes!*

stovepipe hat A tall hat, traditionally made of silk. *You will recognize Lord Edmund by his ever-present stovepipe hat.*

straight arrow An honest, ethical person who makes good decisions. Primarily heard in US. *Kristen was often mocked by her peers for being a straight arrow who always followed the rules and stayed out of trouble.*

straight away At once; immediately; without delay or hesitation. *When I walked in the room, I knew straight away that something bad had happened between my brothers. We'll be heading out straight away, just as soon as I find my keys.*

(straight) from central casting (sometimes capitalized as Central Casting) Having, fitting, or conforming to well-established stereotypical traits or characteristics of a given type of person, character, group, situation, or style. The phrase is a reference to Central Casting, a California-based casting company that specializes in hiring for roles as extras, body doubles, and for bit parts. *My grandfather looks like a cowboy from central casting, with his boots, Stetson hat, and mouth full of chewing tobacco. It was a campy, schlocky B-movie, complete with pointless romance, cheesy special effects, and an alien monster straight from Central Casting.*

straight off At once; immediately; without delay or hesitation. *When I walked in the room, I knew straight off that something bad had happened between my brothers. When we land, we'll be catching the next flight straight off—there is no layover.*

(straight) out of central casting (sometimes capitalized as Central Casting) Having, fitting, or conforming to well-established stereotypical traits or characteristics of a given type of person, character, group, situation, or style. The phrase is a reference to Central Casting, a California-based casting company that specializes in hiring for roles as extras, body doubles, and for bit parts. *My grandfather looks like a cowboy out of central casting, with his boots, Stetson hat, and mouth full of chewing tobacco. It was a campy, schlocky B-movie, complete with pointless romance, cheesy special effects, and an alien monster straight out of Central Casting.*

straight out of the chute Immediately. *Yes, our company is relatively new, but we've had great success straight out of the chute. Tom pitched well*

straight out of the chute, but he struggled as the game went on.

straight shooter An honest and trustworthy person who is straightforward in dealings with others. Primarily heard in US, Australia. *Joe's a straight shooter—if he says that Alice is taking money out of the cash register, then I believe him. Sal's a real straight shooter. If you ask for his opinion, he'll tell you without trying to sugarcoat it.*

strain a point To expand something beyond its normal limits or interpretation; to treat something flexibly. *The principal will strain a point for any student she actually likes, but me? I get detention whenever I do the slightest thing wrong!*

strain at the leash To try to take action, especially when faced with obstacles. The phrase alludes to a dog pulling at its leash because it wants to walk at a different pace or in a different direction than its owner. *Ever since she got her driver's license, my daughter has been straining at the leash for more freedom.*

strange bird A rather unusual, strange, eccentric, or peculiar person. *His new girlfriend is nice enough, but she's a bit of a strange bird, don't you think?*

strange duck A rather unusual, strange, eccentric, or peculiar person. *His new girlfriend is nice enough, but she's a bit of a strange duck, don't you think?*

strap on a pair vulgar slang A derogatory exhortation to start acting in a more masculine manner; that is, to be more direct, aggressive, courageous, self-confident, and other such characteristics that are stereotypically considered to be masculine attributes. ("Pair" here refers to testicles, but the phrase can be said of or by both men and women.) *You're never going to get the boss's respect if you keep kowtowing to him like that. You need to strap on a pair and show him that you deserve to be taken seriously! Janet, I know you're nervous about asking Tom out on a date, but just strap on a pair and give it a shot!*

strap on the (old) feed bag slang To begin eating; to have a meal. *I can't wait to get to grandma's and strap on the old feed bag. She always cooks the tastiest food! What do you say we strap on the feed bag before we head out?*



strapped for cash Without any or very much money at the moment; broke, especially temporarily. *Would you mind covering the cost of dinner? I'm a little strapped for cash at the moment. My brother always complains that he's strapped for cash, but it's no surprise when he won't go find a job!*

straw in the wind A minor event or action that predicts or foreshadows a future event. *His negative remark about marriage was a straw in the wind that suggested he was headed for a divorce. Bill didn't get the promotion and, looking back, I think his very public argument with the boss was a straw in the wind.*

straw poll An unofficial vote, poll, or survey to gauge the voting public's opinion of an issue or a political candidate. *The latest straw poll puts the incumbent president well ahead of his opponent, but it's eight weeks to the election, and a lot can happen in that time.*

the straw that breaks the donkey's back A seemingly small or inconsequential issue, problem, or burden that proves to be the final catalyst in causing an overworked or overburdened person, system, organization, etc., to fail, give up, or collapse. (A less common variant of "the straw that breaks the camel's back.") *I'm already fed up with your lazy, selfish behavior, Jim, but if you can't be bothered to come with me to my own mother's funeral, that will be the straw that breaks the donkey's back! With governmental resources already strained to the breaking point, any sort of environmental disaster would be the straw that breaks the donkey's back.*

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straw that stirs the drink The most valuable or important person or thing in a system. The phrase is usually attributed to baseball player Reggie Jackson. *In this law firm, Ed may think that he's the straw that stirs the drink, but there are plenty of other lawyers that we could replace him with. Ever*

since Jeannie found out she got the lead in the play, she's been acting like the straw that stirs the drink.

straw vote An unofficial vote, poll, or survey to gauge the voting public's opinion of an issue or a candidate. *The latest straw vote puts the candidate well ahead of his opponent, but it's eight weeks to the election and a lot can happen in that time.*

streaming service A company that provides entertainment, such as music, movies, or television shows, to users via an Internet connection, over which the content can be "streamed" (played without the need for downloading). Netflix and Spotify are prominent examples. *With all the streaming services these days, there is a never-ending supply of entertainment available to us.*

street appeal The external attractiveness of a building or property, such as can be viewed from the street. *We were suckered into buying the house because of its incredible street appeal, but once we moved in, we realized just how run-down it was inside.*

stretch (one's) legs according to the coverlet To not spend more money than one makes; to adapt to one's current financial situation. The image is of one positioning oneself as best as possible in a bed that is too small. *This new job doesn't pay as well as my old one, so I really need to stretch my legs according to the coverlet and budget responsibly.*

stretch the rules To allow something to be done which is technically against the rules or not normally accepted. *It's galling to know that the management team, who are so strict with the lower-level employees, all stretch the rules to give themselves more vacation time and bigger bonuses. You're normally not allowed to take an exam if you arrive late, but because of the student's excuse, his teacher stretched the rules for him.*

strike a sour note To indicate, introduce, or allude to something particularly unfortunate, unpleasant, or disagreeable. *You definitely struck a sour note when you brought up Dan's ex-girlfriends during your best man speech.*

strike oil 1. To access stores of oil while drilling into the ground. *Stop drilling, we've struck oil!* **2.** To achieve success in some area, often financially. A: *"We sure struck oil when we recorded that song."* B: *"I know, it's become a huge hit and will pay us a ton in royalties."*

strike (one's) flag To lower the flag on a ship in a show of surrender. *Captain, they've struck their flag! We've won!*

strike pay dirt To discover or happen upon something very, particularly, or abundantly valuable or useful, especially after a long or arduous search. *I was combing through books in the library for hours, trying to find material for my thesis, when finally I struck pay dirt with an old collection of literary criticisms from the 1970s. I loved to search through my grandfather's attic when I was a kid, convinced that someday I would strike pay dirt.*

strike sail 1. To lower the sail on a ship in a show of surrender, salute, or during high winds. *Captain, they've struck sail! We've won! Those are gale force winds. Strike sail or we're done for!* **2.** By extension, to admit that one has been bested. *You need to strike sail. You've clearly been beaten and need to move on.*

strike (someone) dumb To render someone speechless, as due to a great surprise or shock. *My father's sudden resignation from the company struck each of us dumb.*

strike through In editing, to cross out text to indicate that it should be removed from the document. *Let me take one last look at that article—I'll strike through anything I want deleted. It looks good, just strike through that last paragraph.*

strike while the iron is hot To make most of an opportunity or favorable conditions while one has the chance to do so. *This sounds like a pretty amazing deal they're offering. If I were you, I'd strike while the iron is hot. I deliberated too long before accepting the job offer, and now they've given it to someone else. I should have struck while the iron was hot.*

strike whilst the iron is hot To make most of an opportunity or favourable conditions while one has the chance to do so. (A less common variant of "strike while the iron is hot.") Primarily heard in UK. *This sounds like a pretty amazing deal they're offering. If I were you, I'd strike whilst the iron is hot. I deliberated too long before accepting the job offer, and now they've given it to someone else. I should have struck whilst the iron was hot.*

striking distance Close proximity or a short distance, as to or away from some desired thing, person, goal, or objective. Used especially in the

phrase "in/within striking distance." *A World Cup victory was within striking distance for Germany, but a last penalty kick robbed them of their prize. My grandmother's house is rather old and a bit spooky, but as it is in striking distance of the sea, it was always a favorite summer destination when we were kids.*

string to (one's) bow An option or alternative available in the event that the current course of action, circumstance, opportunity, etc., is not viable. *With all this varied job experience under my belt, I have more than one string to my bow if this particular career path isn't to my liking. I've got a job interview next week, but I'm still handing out my résumé so that I'll have more than one string to my bow.*

strings attached One or more conditions, restrictions, obligations, or arrangements that must be met for one to attain something that they desire. *The Senate is willing to allow the bill to pass, but you can be sure that the final draft will have several strings attached. I want to help him, but I'm worried that there will be strings attached.*

strings attached See [with strings attached](#).

stripes See [\(one's\) \(true\) stripes](#).

stroke of business A lucrative deal or transaction. *That agreement was a great stroke of business for our company.*

stroke of fortune An unexpected fortunate occurrence. *Meeting my favorite celebrity at the airport was certainly a stroke of fortune that wouldn't have happened if I'd arrived five minutes later. I worked very hard on the script, but getting to pitch it to the producer in the elevator was just a stroke of fortune.*

stroke of luck An unexpected fortunate occurrence. *Meeting my favorite celebrity at the airport was certainly a stroke of luck that wouldn't have happened if I'd arrived five minutes later. I worked very hard on the script, but getting to pitch it to the producer in the elevator was just a stroke of luck.*

stroke of work A small or insignificant amount of work. Almost always used in the negative to indicate that one has not done any work. *Ryan is supposed to help me clean out the garage, but he hasn't done a stroke of work since he got here! I'm going to have a long night ahead with this term paper, as I haven't done a stroke of work up till now.*

stroke of work See [not do a stroke \(of work\)](#).

stroll down memory lane To reminisce over memories of past events, especially happy ones. *My grandmother spends more time strolling down memory lane these days than talking about the present. Sarah: "How did your coffee date with John go?" Amy: "It was pretty amicable, actually. We strolled down memory lane for a while, and then we went our separate ways."*

strong point A subject, activity, or field at which one is particularly skilled or adept, or one's foremost virtue. *Working with computers has never been my strong point, so this position is going to be a real challenge for me. Patience is Sam's strong point. I've never seen him lose his temper.*

strong stomach 1. The ability to eat foods that others may find unusual, unpalatable, or too spicy without experiencing any ill effects like nausea or upset stomach. *My husband has such a strong stomach that he can eat a ghost pepper and feel perfectly fine afterward. You must have a strong stomach if you're eating pickles with peanut butter! 2. The ability to experience or witness something unpleasant without becoming upset, nauseous, or squeamish. *That horror movie you're going to see is pretty gory. I hope you have a strong stomach! I don't have a strong stomach, so I could never be a surgeon.**

strong suit A subject, activity, or field, at which someone is particularly skilled or adept. *Working with computers was never my strong suit, so this receptionist position is going to be a real challenge for me. Movie trivia is one of Sam's strong suits, so I think we should ask her to be on our pub quiz team.*

struck dumb See [be struck dumb](#).

stuck his nose in See [stick \(one's\) nose in\(to\) \(something\)](#).

stuck his oar in See [stick \(one's\) oar in\(to\) \(something\)](#).

stuck his spoon in the wall See [stick \(one's\) spoon in the wall](#).

stuck in a time warp See [be stuck in a time warp](#).

stuck in his two penn'orth See [stick in \(one's\) two penn'orth](#).

stuck it to the man See [stick it to the man](#).

stud muffin A physically attractive young man. Primarily heard in US.

Did you see Jane's new boyfriend? He's such a stud muffin that I was practically swooning over him myself!

stuffed like a turkey Feeling extremely full from eating a lot of food. *My grandmother is the best cook around. I always leave her house stuffed like a turkey! We were all stuffed like a turkey after Diana's amazing meal.*

stuffed shirt Someone who is very formal, pompous, or old-fashioned. *I had heard he was a bit of a stuffed shirt, but he was very pleasant when I met him, and not pretentious at all.*

stuffed to the gills Completely full; teeming; having no room to spare. *I've got so many meetings and deadlines these days that my schedule is stuffed to the gills! Her mind was stuffed to the gills with ideas for her new book. I felt stuffed to the gills after my grandmother's Thanksgiving meal.*

stumble at a straw To be thwarted or unsettled by a minor issue or problem. *Overall, your grades are great, so don't stumble at a straw and abandon your studies because of this one B. You can't rely on Kelsey, she always stumbles at a straw and gets rattled by the slightest problem.*

stumbling block A challenge or hindrance that prevents something from being accomplished. *Stay away from your old friends—their drug use will be a stumbling block in your recovery from alcoholism. We're trying to sell the house, but its undesirable location has proved to be a real stumbling block.*

stupid is as stupid does One's actions indicate one's level of stupidity (or intelligence). The phrase was popularized by the film *Forrest Gump*. *Of course that fool backed his car into own house! Stupid is as stupid does! Stupid is as stupid does, so judge her on her actions, not your first impression.*

sub rosa Privately. This Latin phrase (meaning "under the rose") refers to the ancient use of the rose as a symbol of secrecy. *No, I had no idea they were planning to reject the proposal. They must have reached that decision sub rosa.*

sub (sandwich) A sandwich served on a long roll of bread, typically six inches to several feet in length, filled with a variety of ingredients including meat, cheese, and vegetables. Primarily heard in US. *This restaurant across the road from our office makes the best sub sandwich in the city. I've gotten*

to where I go there two or three times a week for lunch. I'm ordering a few four-foot subs for the party this weekend, so if you have any food allergies, let me know before tomorrow.

submarine (sandwich) A sandwich served on a long roll of bread, typically six inches to several feet in length, filled with a variety of ingredients, usually some combination of meat, cheese, and vegetables. Often shortened to "sub" or "sub sandwich," and known by different names in different regions, such as "hoagie" and "hero." *This restaurant across the road from our office makes the best submarine sandwich in the city.*

success depends on your backbone, not your wishbone Success is achieved through dedication and effort, not hopes and dreams or wishful thinking. *You need to work on your writing every single day if you really want to be a famous author because success depends on your backbone, not your wishbone.*

success has many fathers, failure is an orphan People are quick to associate themselves with successful ventures and distance themselves from failures. A: *"All the people who were so excited about this project in the beginning now act like they've never even heard of it."* B: *"Well, success has many fathers, failure is an orphan."*

suck a big one vulgar slang To be remarkably bad, unpleasant, disappointing, or upsetting. *Well, that movie sucked a big one. I wish I could get my money back! Yeah, I heard that class sucks a big one, so I'm taking an intro to chemistry course instead.*

suck a egg See [\(go\) suck a egg](#).

suck a lemon See [\(go\) suck a lemon](#).

suck ass vulgar slang To be remarkably bad, unpleasant, disappointing, or upsetting. *Well, that movie sucked ass. I wish I could get my money back! Yeah, I heard that class sucks ass, so I'm taking an Intro to Chemistry course instead.*

suck balls vulgar slang To be remarkably bad, unpleasant, disappointing, or upsetting. *Well, that movie sucked balls. I wish I could get my money back! Yeah, I heard that class sucks balls, so I'm taking an Intro to Chemistry course instead.*

suck cock 1. vulgar slang To perform oral sex on a male. 2. vulgar slang

To be remarkably bad, unpleasant, disappointing, or upsetting. *Well, that movie sucked cock. I wish I could get my money back! Yeah, I heard that class sucks cock, so I'm taking an Intro to Chemistry course instead.*

suck donkey balls vulgar slang To be remarkably bad, unpleasant, disappointing, or upsetting. *Well, that movie sucked donkey balls. I wish I could get my money back! Yeah, I heard that class sucks donkey balls, so I'm taking an Intro to Chemistry course instead.*

suck it 1. vulgar slang An expression of anger, scorn, or disdain. *Charles: "You never do any chores around the house, you just leave them for the rest of us!" Sam: "Oh, suck it, Charles! I don't have to listen to your crap." If you don't like the way I do things around here, you can just go suck it!* **2.** vulgar slang An expression of condescension, especially following a triumph over someone else. *I just demolished your high score! Suck it, Johnny!*

suck it up To endure something painful, unpleasant, or otherwise dissatisfactory; to deal with or recover from some hardship or stress. *I hated having to work two jobs, but with three small kids at home, I knew I just had to suck it up. Dan: "I can't believe the other kids would make fun of me like that." Tammy: "Oh, suck it up, Dan; they'll only tease you more if you have a tantrum."*

suck the big one vulgar slang To be remarkably bad, unpleasant, disappointing, or upsetting. *Well, that movie sucked the big one. I wish I could get my money back! Yeah, I heard that class sucks the big one, so I'm taking an intro to chemistry course instead.*

suck the kumara To fail in some way. Primarily heard in New Zealand. *If I don't turn this paper in on time, I'll really suck the kumara.*

a (sudden) rush of blood (to the head) A sudden feeling of excitement or anger that causes one to act in unexpected ways. *It must have been a sudden rush of blood to the head that made Gary lash out at Ron, because he's usually so calm.*

suffer the consequences To experience negative repercussions for one's actions or words, especially those that one would expect to incur punishment. *I told you not to try to sneak in, and now that you've been caught, you're just going to have to suffer the consequences. If we do nothing to curb this pollution, I guarantee we will suffer the consequences in the future.*

sugar-coat the pill To make something bad, unpleasant, or dissatisfactory easier to cope with, endure, or accept. *The bosses are giving everyone an extra 10% bonus this Christmas, but I suspect it's a way of sugar-coating the pill that there will be massive pay cuts in January. I have to tell my mom about wrecking her car, but I need to find a way to sugar-coat the pill first.*

sugar pill A pill that does not contain medicine (and may not even contain sugar, as the term "sugar pill" is used broadly); a placebo. *Some patients in the clinical trial will receive the medication, while others will receive sugar pills.*

sugar the pill To make something bad, unpleasant, or dissatisfactory easier to cope with, endure, or accept. *The bosses are giving everyone an extra bonus this year, but I suspect it's a way of sugaring the pill with the massive layoffs that are scheduled. I have to tell my mom about wrecking her car, but I need to find a way to sugar the pill first.*

sum of its parts See [more/bigger/greater than the sum of its parts](#).

summer and winter To monitor one's behavior or abilities for a sufficiently long period of time. *Oh yes, I will summer and winter him during this probationary period, to determine if we should hire him full-time.*

sun worshipper One who enjoys spending time in the sun and/or tanning. *My sister could lie on the beach all day, she's a real sun worshipper. I'm not a sun worshipper anymore—I've had too many skin cancer scares.*

sup with Sir Thomas Gresham To go without food. Sir Thomas Gresham founded the Royal Exchange in London, which the poor often visited. A: *"Why are you so hungry? Didn't you eat dinner?"* B: *"No, I got stuck in a meeting, so I supped with Sir Thomas Gresham."*

superfood A food that is hailed as exceptionally nutritious. *I know kale is a superfood, but I just can't force myself to eat it.*

superior orders A plea or legal defense strategy in which the defendant claims that their actions were solely the result of carrying out the orders of superiors and that, as such, they should not be found guilty of such actions. Often known as the "Nuremberg defense," which is a reference to the use of such a defense by political and military leaders of defeated Nazi Germany in the Nuremberg Trials of 1945–46. *Against the charge of unlawful murder*

during wartime, the staff sergeant's defense attorney put forward a superior orders defense, claiming that the killings were carried out under direct orders by superior officers.

sure as a gun See [\(as\) sure as a gun](#).

sure as death and taxes See [\(as\) sure as death and taxes](#).

sure as shooting See [\(as\) sure as shooting](#).

sure as the wind blows Certainly; without a doubt; assumed as true based on previous experience or evidence. *Congress has stalled on any issue that can be perceived as contentious, so sure as the wind blows, they'll fail to agree on this measure. Mike is never on time. Sure as the wind blows, he'll be late again.*

sure bet **1.** Something that is certain to occur. *Based on his grades, it's a pretty sure bet that Harry won't be able to graduate on time.* **2.** A person or thing that is certain to be good or successful. *Considering her high scoring average, she's a sure bet for the bowling team.*

surprise, surprise Said ironically of or in a situation in which something very predictable has happened. A: *"I somehow managed to break yet another phone!"* B: *"Surprise, surprise! How many does that make it this year?"* *I was telling Sarah about going to the movies with my friend Jess, and surprise, surprise, she launched into another fit of jealousy.*

survive the test of time **1.** To work, function, or endure for a very long time. (A less common variant of "stand/withstand the test of time.") *As computer technology improves, it's ironically getting harder and harder to find a piece of equipment that can survive the test of time.* **2.** To be particularly popular or well regarded for a long period of time. *Of all the other cast members, hers was the only career that survived the test of time.*

swaddling clothes **1.** The pieces of cloth that infants were once wrapped in, so as to limit their movement. The phrase is perhaps most commonly associated with the story of Jesus' birth: "And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes." *Mama wrapped your babe in swaddling clothes and took him to the wet nurse so you could rest.* **2.** Strict limitations imposed upon the young and immature. *Teenagers need swaddling clothes too, in the form of curfews and chores.* **3.** A period at the start of something. It can refer to a person's youth or to the early stages of

an idea or project. *In my mind, my son is still in his swaddling clothes—I can't believe he's about to start middle school. This idea is still in its swaddling clothes, so it might sound a little rough right now.*

swag **1.** noun Extreme self-confidence. A shortened form of the word "swagger." *All the girls want to date him because he's got swag.* **2.** noun Small promotional items given away at events such as conferences. *Look at all the swag I got at that HR conference! Pens, a clipboard, even a beach ball!* **3.** adjective or interjection Cool; awesome. *Yeah that dude's pretty swag. Pizza party with my squad! Swag!*

swagger **1.** verb To exhibit extreme self-confidence. A: *"Look at them swaggering into the cafeteria."* B: *"That's why they're the cool kids."* **2.** verb To boast. *He's always swaggering about what a big rock star he is, and yet he's never recognized when we're out in public. Hmm.* **3.** noun Extreme self-confidence. *All the girls want to date him cause he's got swagger.*

swallow the anchor To retire from life at sea. *After so many years sailing the seas, I knew it was time for me to swallow the anchor and adopt a more normal lifestyle on land.*

swam with the fishes See [be swimming with the fishes](#).

swap horses in midstream **1.** To choose a new leader during a period of upheaval or uncertainty. *The prime minister has been at the helm throughout the crisis. I just don't think we should swap horses in midstream.* **2.** To make major changes to a situation or course of action that is already underway. *We're about to close on the house, and my husband suddenly wants to swap horses in midstream and look at another property!*

swear a blue streak To use profane language with great rapidity and intensity. *My dad swore a blue streak after he found out I'd put a dent in his car.*

swear like a sailor To use profanities or vulgar language very freely and fluently. (An allusion to the rough language presumed to be used by military personnel.) *My little sister has been swearing like a sailor ever since she started learning bad words. My granny is the sweetest old lady you'll ever meet, but she swears like a sailor when she gets on the topic of something or someone she doesn't like.*

swear like a trooper To use profanities or vulgar language very freely



and fluently. (An allusion to the rough language presumed to be used by military personnel.) *My granny is the sweetest old lady you'll ever meet, but she swears like a trooper when she gets on the topic of something or someone she doesn't like.*

swear on a stack of Bibles To make a very serious, solemn pledge, especially that one is telling the truth. A hyperbolic reference to the traditional act of placing one's hand on a Bible while taking an oath, such as before a court proceeding. *Janet has sworn on a stack of Bibles that she wasn't the one to betray me, and I believe her. I swear on a stack of Bibles that if I have a chance to help your campaign, I will.*

swear on (one's) mother's grave To make a very serious, solemn pledge, especially that one is telling the truth. *Janet has sworn on her mother's grave that she wasn't the one to betray me, and I believe her. I swear on my mother's grave that if I have a chance to help your campaign, I will.*

sweat equity Work that one puts into a property or other venture, so as to increase its value. It is perhaps most commonly used to describe improvements or repairs that one makes to one's home. *We're putting some sweat equity into our house by redoing our kitchen. Did you see that glowing write-up in the newspaper? All the sweat equity he put into his company is finally paying off.*

the sweat of (one's) brow One's own personal efforts or hard work. *It's due to the sweat of my father's brow that a barren, fallow little plot of land was transformed into the flourishing farm you see today. This pair of entrepreneurs has created a billion-dollar company by the sweat of their brows.*

sweep (something) under the mat To ignore, deny, or conceal from public view or knowledge something that is embarrassing, unappealing, or damaging to one's reputation. *The senator has been accused of trying to sweep his former drug use under the mat. You need to stop sweeping your problems under the mat. Nothing will get resolved like that!*

sweet cherry A sweet variety of cherry (as opposed to the sour cherry). *I hope these are sweet cherries—those other ones were too tart!*

sweet deal 1. A beneficial business arrangement. Primarily heard in US, Australia. *The benefits package that the company offered proved to be a*

really sweet deal. It kept employees happy and helped retain top talent. 2. A purchase that one believes was a bargain. I got a sweet deal on these shoes—they were 75% off! 3. An exclamation indicating that is one pleased with something. Wow, they're giving away free pizza? Sweet deal!

sweet fuck all rude slang Nothing at all. *Mom must still be angry with me—she brought all these presents for Victoria, and I got sweet fuck all.*

the sweet hereafter The eternal life awaiting us after death; heaven. *I miss my wife terribly, but I know she'll be waiting for me in the sweet hereafter.*

sweet Jesus! An exclamation of alarm, amazement, or exasperation. (Could be considered blasphemous to some.) *Sweet Jesus, I thought that car was going to hit me! Oh, sweet Jesus, could you work any slower?*

sweet Mary, mother of God An exclamation of alarm, amazement, or exasperation. (Could be considered blasphemous to some.) *Sweet Mary, mother of God, I thought that car was going to hit me! Oh, sweet Mary, mother of God, could you work any slower?*

sweet tooth A propensity and preference for eating sugary foods. *If you're looking for a snack, go talk to Jenny—she has a real sweet tooth, so she probably keeps candy bars in her desk. Because I don't have much of a sweet tooth, I get more excited about entrees than desserts.*

sweet young thing A cute, innocent young girl or woman. *You are 60 years old! How, in good conscience, can you date that sweet young thing? I love spending time with my niece, she's such a sweet young thing.*

sweeten the pill To make something bad, unpleasant, or dissatisfactory easier to cope with, endure, or accept. *The bosses are giving everyone an extra 10% bonus this Christmas, but I suspect it's a way of sweetening the pill that there will be massive pay cuts in January. I have to tell my mom about wrecking her car, but I need to find a way to sweeten the pill first.*

swept off her feet See [be swept off \(one's\) feet](#).

swim against the stream To act or behave in opposition or contrary to what is generally understood, assumed, practiced, or accepted. *I had to swim against the stream to get the company to adopt more eco-friendly habits, but I think it will be worth it in the long run.*

swim upstream To go against or disagree with a prevailing or popularly

held opinion or perspective; to act or behave contrary to the majority of others. *When I was in college, I really swam upstream with some radical opinions, but as I've grown older, I've found myself falling more in line with others. I don't understand why you always have to swim upstream instead of making things a little easier on yourself!*

swim with sharks **1.** Literally, to be in the water with sharks. *My brother is a real adventurer—he's bungee jumped before and has even swam with sharks!* **2.** To be involved with cunning, possibly dangerous, people. *I know you think you're a hustler, but you're swimming with sharks now—you could lose all your money against these guys. Before you start swimming with sharks, consider this—the last guy who went into business with them wound up dead!*

swim with the current To go along or agree with the prevailing or popularly held opinion or perspective; to act or behave the same way as the majority of others. *When I was in college, I used to have a lot of radical opinions and beliefs, but as I've grown older, I find myself swimming with the current more often. I'm sorry, but I simply refuse to swim along with the current just because it's the easier option!*

swim with the stream To go along or agree with the prevailing or popularly held opinion or perspective; to act or behave the same way as the majority of others. *When I was in college, I used to have a lot of radical opinions and beliefs, but as I've grown older, I find myself swimming with the stream more often. I'm sorry, but I simply refuse to swim along with the stream just because it's the easier option!*

swim with the tide To go along or agree with the prevailing or popularly held opinion or perspective; to act or behave the same way as the majority of others. *When I was in college, I used to have a lot of radical opinions and beliefs, but as I've grown older I find myself swimming with the tide more often. I'm sorry, but I simply refuse to swim with the tide just because it's the easier option!*

swing for the fences **1.** baseball Literally, to put all one's power into one's swing while batting so as to try to hit a home run. *All they need is two more runs to win the game, so you can bet their star batter will come out swinging for the fences.* **2.** By extension, to put forward one's maximum amount of effort or energy (into or toward something); to act or perform with

great intensity or effort. *I wasn't sure about their state-appointed lawyer at first, but I was well impressed when he came out swinging for the fences on day one of the trial.*

swing state In U.S. general elections, a state that votes in roughly equal proportion for candidates of both the Democratic and Republican Parties and whose influence on the election has the power to determine the outcome.. *With the country so deeply divided between these two candidates, it will come down to just a handful of swing states to determine who will be the next president.*

swings and roundabouts A situation in which certain gains, advantages, or other positive aspects or outcomes are offset or balanced by equally disadvantageous losses, setbacks, or negative outcomes (or vice versa). Primarily heard in UK. *This promotion has meant I can provide for my family much more easily, but it's so demanding that I don't see them all that much—it's swings and roundabouts, really. The government needs to be wary of the swings and roundabouts of a slight surplus in the budget, because many problems can follow on the heels of unfettered increases in spending.*

swipe left 1. slang To decline or reject someone or something in an app. The phrase was popularized by the dating app Tinder, in which users "swipe left" on the screen to reject a potential mate. *That girl is pretty—I'm only swiping left because I'm not into blondes. Ugh, this guy's has no sense of humor—swipe left! I keep swiping left because these dresses are all hideous.* 2. slang By extension, to reject or decline something. *Studying instead of a night out? Definitely swiping left on that.*

swipe right 1. slang To show interest in or approval of someone or something in an app. The phrase was popularized by the dating app Tinder, in which users "swipe right" on the screen to indicate interest in a potential mate. *That girl is gorgeous, I'm definitely swiping right. Ooh, this guy's funny—swipe right! I keep swiping right because these dresses are all gorgeous.* 2. slang By extension, to accept, agree with, or show enthusiasm for something. *A night out instead of studying? I'm swiping right on that.*

Swiss bank account A bank account held in Switzerland. Such accounts are highly confidential and are only identified by a number, rather than the owner's name. *I suspect they're putting the embezzled funds into a Swiss bank account because we haven't been able to trace it. How are we*

going to get information on this transaction if it's going into a Swiss bank account?

sword-and-sandal Of film, to features the exploits and adventures of ancient and biblical figures, as was prominent in Italy in the late 1950s and early 1960s. *Sword-and-sandal films dominated cinemas for a period after the second World War, but they were quashed halfway through the sixties by the Spaghetti Western.*

sword and sorcery A literary genre that depicts adventures with elements of fantasy, such as magic and dragons. *My little brother gets totally absorbed in the imaginary lands of sword and sorcery novels. I'm a realistic fiction kind of gal—sword and sorcery books just don't hold my interest.*

a sword of Damocles hangs over (one's) head One is faced with imminent danger or trouble. In Greek mythology, the courtier Damocles was forced to sit beneath a sword suspended by a single hair to emphasize the instability of a king's fortunes. *I know his history of violent behavior, so I feel like a sword of Damocles hangs over my head whenever I'm alone with him. With the threat of nuclear war, many feel that a sword of Damocles hangs over the world's head.*

swore a blue streak See [swear a blue streak](#).

swore like a sailor See [swear like a sailor](#).

swore like a trooper See [swear like a trooper](#).

swore on a stack of bibles See [swear on a stack of Bibles](#).

swore on her mother's grave See [swear on \(one's\) mother's grave](#).

sworn enemy A person, group, or organization for whom one holds a particularly intense, deep-seated hatred. *Our environmentalist lobby group is heading out to protest against Big Oil, our sworn enemy.*

siphon the python See [siphon the python](#).



T

table scrap A piece of food left over from a meal. *Don't give the dog another table scrap, I don't want him to get sick. We spend all day cooking their food, and all we get to eat are their table scraps.*

table talk The conversation that takes place during a meal. *Once politics and religion enter table talk, it's time to finish the meal as quickly as possible. Why is my love life always the topic of table talk?*

the tables are turned A major change has happened, especially one that results in the opposite of an earlier situation. *I spent years as John's supervisor, but with his recent promotion, the tables are turned and now I report to him!*

tag and rag The lowest social class; the common people. *You must be joking—a person of my social status can't eat with the tag and rag at a fast food place!*

tag team **1.** noun A team of two wrestlers who take turns competing against an opposing pair of wrestlers. The two teammates touch hands when one player leaves the ring, so that the other can "tag in." *A tag team is only as strong as its weakest member.* **2.** noun Two people working in cooperation. *Now that we're a tag team, I think we'll get through this project a lot faster.* **3.** verb To work in cooperation with another person. *Let's tag team to get this project done.*

take 10 See [take ten](#).

take 5 See [take five](#).

take a bawling out To receive a very severe rebuke, chastisement, or scolding (from someone). *I sure took a bawling out from my parents after I smashed up their car.*

take a bead on (someone or something) **1.** To aim at someone or something with the sights on a firearm. *I managed to take a bead on the enemy sniper but had to wait until I received the order to fire.* **2.** By extension, to focus one's attention on someone or something so as to deal with or attack him, her, or it. *The candidate took a bead on his opponent's*

poor political record during the debate. The president has pledged to take a bead on the growing problem of adolescent obesity. **3.** To thoroughly understand, appreciate, or comprehend someone or something. *The team just has to take a bead on the severity of the cyber attack before we can implement any meaningful fixes. I couldn't understand him at first, but I'm finally starting to take a bead on my sister's boyfriend.*

take a beating **1.** To be thoroughly beaten or thrashed. *My younger brother was always a shy, skinny kid who often took a beating from schoolyard bullies.* **2.** To be soundly defeated or bested; to lose. *Their team's inexperience showed on the pitch today, as they took a beating from the powerful squad from New Zealand.* **3.** To suffer severe losses or setbacks. *The stock market took a beating after the period of political instability. My efforts to get my PhD have taken a beating over the last couple of years, but I'm still determined to see it through.*

take a bite of the reality sandwich To recognize and address certain delusions, flaws, or misconceptions regarding a particular situation or task at hand. Most often used as office jargon in a business or place of work. *I know you think this new product will solve all of our problems, but you really need to take a bite of the reality sandwich.*

take a breath To inhale and then exhale. *I can tell that you're just a bit too upset to talk about this. Why don't you take a breath, calm down a bit, and then we'll discuss it. I've loved my son more than life itself ever since he took his first breath.*

take a breather To take a short pause or hiatus (from something). *You can go ahead on the hike if you want, I'm going to stop here and take a breather. The senator is taking a breather from his campaign to spend some time with his family.*

take a bullet See [take a/the bullet \(for someone\)](#).

take a chance To try to do something that has a high probability of having a negative or unfortunate outcome. *I'm taking a real chance hiring this guy, so you had better be right about him. You're never going to find real success unless you're willing to take a chance now and then.*

take a crap vulgar slang To defecate. *I wouldn't mind the neighbor's dog getting into my yard if it didn't always take a crap on my lawn!*

take a dive **1.** In boxing, to pretend to be knocked out by one's opponent. (Generally done as a means of rigging the outcome of the match, so as to exploit betting odds and trends.) *Heavily favored to dominate the match against the challenger, the defending champion has been suspected of taking a dive in the championship match last Saturday.* **2.** In soccer (football), to fall to the ground and make a very ostentatious display that one is in pain and anguish after making contact with an opposing player. (Done so as to draw a penalty kick for one's team.) *It is so obvious that player from England took a dive!* **3.** In the stock market, to very suddenly become lower in value, as of the shares in a company or in the market as a whole. *News of the automaker's deceptive practice of cheating on emissions tests has caused the company's shares to take a massive dive this afternoon. The market took a dive over the weekend after rumors of England's exit from the Eurozone.*

take a drag (on something) To inhale smoke from something, especially a cigarette. *The detective took a drag on his last cigarette and then crushed the butt beneath his heel. I'm trying to quit smoking, but do you mind if I just take a drag?*

take a drubbing **1.** To be thoroughly beaten or thrashed. *My younger brother was always a shy, skinny kid who often took a drubbing from schoolyard bullies.* **2.** To be soundly defeated or bested; to lose by a wide margin. *Their team's inexperience showed on the pitch today, as they took a drubbing from the powerful squad from New Zealand.* **3.** To suffer severe losses or setbacks. *The stock market took a drubbing over the weekend after fears of Greece's exit from the Eurozone. My efforts to get my PhD have taken a drubbing over the last couple of years, but I'm still determined to see it through.* **4.** To be very strongly rebuked, criticized, or condemned. *The giant supermarket chain has taken a drubbing lately over allegations that they've been threatening local shops and markets. Mark sure took a drubbing because of that prank he pulled in class yesterday.*

take a dump vulgar slang To defecate. *I wouldn't mind the neighbor's dog getting into my yard if it didn't always take a dump on my lawn!*

take a fall In boxing, to pretend to be knocked out by one's opponent, generally as a means of rigging the outcome of the match to create a profit for oneself or others from a bet placed on the match. *Heavily favored to dominate the match against the challenger, the defending champion has been*

suspected of taking a fall in the championship bout last Saturday.

take a fancy to (someone or something) To have or develop a fondness for or inclination toward something or someone; to be attracted to or desire someone or something. *I think Jennifer has taken a fancy to my friend Tommy, so I'm going to try to set them up on a date! I never used to like raisins as a kid, but I've taken a fancy to them as I've grown older.*

take a fit To become very or unreasonably angry or upset; to have an outburst of rage, frustration, or ill temper. *My mom's going to take a fit when she sees what happened to the car! I was so embarrassed when Danny started taking a fit in the grocery store.*

take a gamble To do something risky or attempt something that might fail in order for a chance at success, fortune, etc. *I know I'm taking a gamble by starting a business in a recession, but I don't want to put off my dream any longer. The coach took a gamble by calling that play, but his team was able to score a touchdown, so it paid off.*

take a hammering 1. To be thoroughly beaten or thrashed. *My younger brother was always a shy, skinny kid who often took a hammering from schoolyard bullies.* **2.** To be soundly defeated or bested; to lose by a wide margin. *Their team's inexperience showed on the pitch today, as they took a hammering from the powerful squad from New Zealand.* **3.** To suffer severe losses or setbacks. *The stock market took a hammering over the weekend after fears of Greece's exit from the Eurozone. My efforts to get my PhD have taken a hammering over the last couple of years, but I'm still determined to see it through.* **4.** To be very strongly rebuked, criticized, or condemned. *The giant supermarket chain has taken a hammering lately over allegations that they've been threatening local shops and markets. Mark sure took a hammering because of that prank he pulled in class yesterday.*

take a hint To understand, accept, or act upon a message or direction that has been insinuated or communicated indirectly. *Don't worry, I can take a hint. I won't try to hang out with you anymore. I think you need to take a hint and accept the fact that he has no interest in dating you.*

take a leaf from (someone's) book To do something in the way someone else would do it; to behave or act like someone else. *I think I'm going to take a leaf from your book and start going for a run first thing in the morning. Our youngest son was always very placid as a baby, but now that*

he's getting older, he's begun taking a leaf from our older boy's book.

take a leaf out of (one's) book To do something in the way someone else would do it; to behave or act like someone else. *I think I'm going to take a leaf out of your book and start going for a run first thing in the morning.*

take a licking and keep on ticking To continue to function, endure, or persevere despite suffering injuries, damage, setbacks, losses, failures, etc. Taken from an advertisement for Timex wrist-watches: "It takes a licking and keeps on ticking." *When you're younger, your body can take a licking and keep on ticking, so it's easy to fall into a false sense of invulnerability. This old truck of mine has taken quite a licking over the years, and it just keeps on ticking.*

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take a liking to (someone or something) To have or develop a fondness for or inclination toward something or someone; to be attracted to or desire someone or something. *I never used to like onions as a kid, but I've taken a liking to them as I've grown older. I think Jennifer has taken a liking to my friend Tommy; I must try to set them up on a date!*

take a load off (one's feet) To sit down and rest one's feet; to relax. (Usually said as a suggestion.) *Why don't you go take a load off for a while, and I'll fix dinner for tonight? Ah, you've finally arrived! Come on in and take a load off your feet.*

take a load off (one's) mind To relieve one of a source of stress or worry; to comfort or calm one. *I bet it will take a load off your mind to get this test over and done with, huh? Thanks for explaining what you meant by your comments yesterday. That takes a load off my mind.*

take a long walk off a short pier Go away and leave me alone. What you are doing or saying is really irritating. *I'm really tired of your constant criticisms. Why don't you take a long walk off a short pier?*

take a long walk on a short pier Go away and leave me alone! What you are doing or saying is really irritating! (A less common variant on the phrase "take a walk off a short pier.") Jenny: *"The experiment might work better if you actually knew what you were supposed to be mixing together."* Steve: *"You know what, Jenny? Why don't you take a long walk on a short pier?"*

take (a lot of) stick (from someone) To receive strong criticism, disapproval, or judgment (for something). *I took a lot of stick from my parents over my decision to pursue a degree in art, rather than law or medicine. I'm going to take stick from my boss for that accounting error I made last week. John still takes a lot of stick for that time his pants fell down in the middle of class.*

take a lot off (someone's) mind To relieve someone of a source of stress or worry; to comfort or calm someone. *I bet it will take a lot off your mind to get this test over and done with, huh? Thanks for explaining what you meant by your comments yesterday, that takes a lot off my mind.*

take a meeting To attend a business meeting. *I can't take a meeting today, I have a report that I really need to finish.*

take a message to Garcia To show initiative in undertaking important or requisite tasks in the face of difficulties and/or without requiring specific instructions on how to do so. It refers to the essay "Message to Garcia," published in 1899 by Elbert Hubbard, in which a lieutenant named Andrew Rowan undertakes establishing communication with Cuban rebel leader Calixto García to create an alliance in case of war with Spain. *One should always aspire to be the type of employee who will take a message to Garcia, for it says more about you than merely doing what you're told.*

take a number imperative Wait your turn; get in line; there are a lot of other people looking or waiting for the same thing as you. (Refers to offices or shops that distribute printed numbers to let customers know the order in which they'll be helped. Often said somewhat ironically or sarcastically.) A: *"Excuse me, I'm looking to speak to the dean of the university."* B: *"Take a number, kid. Everyone in here is waiting to speak to her."* A: *"Boy, I'd love to go out with Danny sometime."* B: *"Well, you'll have to take a number."*

take a page from (someone's) book To do something in the way someone else would do it; to behave or act like someone else. *I think I'm*

going to take a page from your book and start going for a run first thing in the morning. Our youngest son was always very placid as a baby, but now that he's getting older, he's begun taking a page from our older boy's book.

take a page out of (someone's) book To do something in the way someone else would do it; to behave or act like someone else. *I think I'm going to take a page out of your book and start going for a run first thing in the morning. Our youngest son was always very placid as a baby, but now that he's getting older, he's begun taking a page out of our older boy's book.*

take a punishing 1. To be thoroughly beaten or thrashed; to suffer rough treatment or abuse. *My younger brother was always a shy, skinny kid who often took a punishing from schoolyard bullies. My feet have taken a punishing from hiking in these old sneakers.* **2.** To be soundly defeated or bested; to lose by a wide margin. *Their team's inexperience showed on the pitch today, as they took a punishing from the powerful squad from New Zealand.* **3.** To suffer severe losses or setbacks. *The stock market took a punishing over the weekend after fears of Greece's exit from the Eurozone. My efforts to get my PhD have taken a punishing over the last couple of years, but I'm still determined to see it through.*

take a rain check To refuse an offer or invitation but with the hope or promise that it can be postponed to a later date or time. *I'm sorry, but I'll have to take a rain check for dinner this Saturday. Would next weekend work for you?*

take a ride to Tyburn obsolete To go to one's execution, especially by hanging. (From the Anglo-Saxon town of Tyburn, renowned for its practice of capital punishment.) *The knave, found guilty of the theft of a loaf of bread, will be taking a ride to Tyburn in a fortnight's time.*

take a risk To try to do something for which there is a high probability of a negative or unfortunate outcome. *I'm taking a real risk hiring this guy, so you had better be right about him. You're never going to find real success unless you're willing to take a risk now and then.*

take a run at (someone) To assault someone; to approach or run toward someone with the aim of harming them. *I was passing by these two dodgy-looking guys in the street when, all of a sudden, one of them took a run at me! The next thing I knew I'd been knocked down in the street and all my belongings were gone.*

take a run at (something) To put forward an earnest or sincere effort toward doing, accomplishing, or attaining something. *The senator announced yesterday that she will be taking a run at the presidency next year. Our town is going to take a run at the Guinness World Record for the most people standing in formation to spell out a word.*

take a seat To be seated; to select a place to sit. (Often an invitation or request.) *Hi, Sean, thank you for coming to see me, please take a seat. I was running a bit late to class, so I just took a seat at the back.*

take a shellacking **1.** To be thoroughly beaten or thrashed; to suffer rough treatment or abuse. *My younger brother was always a shy, skinny kid who often took a shellacking from schoolyard bullies. My feet have taken a shellacking from hiking in these old sneakers.* **2.** To be soundly defeated or bested; to lose by a wide margin. *Their team's inexperience showed on the pitch today, as they took a shellacking from the powerful squad from New Zealand.*

take a shine to (one) To have or develop a fondness or preference for someone; to be attracted to or desire someone. *It seems the boss has taken a shine to you, kid. You should start seeing some more work headed your way! I think Jennifer has taken a shine to my friend Tommy, so I'm going to try to set them up on a date!*

take a shit vulgar slang To defecate. *I wouldn't mind the neighbor's dog getting into my yard if it didn't always take a shit on my lawn!*

take a shot in the dark To make a guess or estimate with very little or no assurance as to its accuracy. *I had absolutely no idea what the answer was for the last question on the exam, so I just took a shot in the dark and hoped for the best.*

take a spin (to some place) To go for a brief, leisurely drive (to some place). *Hey Noah, fancy taking a spin to the grocery store with me? Jenny just got a new car for her birthday, so I think we're going to go take a spin after school.*

take a stab at (doing) something To attempt (to do) something; to take a turn trying (to do) something. *Well, I haven't fixed a motor in nearly 10 years, but I'll certainly take a stab at it. You had your chance, now let your sister take a stab at trying to break the piñata.*

take a stab in the dark To make a guess or estimate with very little or no assurance as to its accuracy. *I had absolutely no idea what the answer was for the last question on the exam, so I just took a stab in the dark and hoped for the best.*

take a straw poll To conduct an unofficial vote, poll, or survey to gauge the voting public's opinion of an issue or a political candidate. *After taking the latest straw poll, the incumbent president is placed well ahead of his opponent. However, it's eight weeks until the election, and a lot can happen in that time.*

take a stroll down memory lane To reminisce, especially about happy memories. *Every so often I like to dig out my photo albums from college and take a stroll down memory lane.*

take a telling-off To be scolded, rebuked, or reprimanded, as for a wrongdoing. *I took a telling-off from my teacher in front of the whole class for sticking my tongue out at him. My brother just can't take a telling-off. If our parents even raise their voices to him, he starts getting teary-eyed!*

take a trip down memory lane To reminisce over memories of past events, especially happy ones. *My grandmother spends more time taking trips down memory lane these days than talking about the present. Sarah: "How did your coffee date with John go?" Amy: "It was pretty amicable, actually. We took a trip down memory lane for a while, and then we went our separate ways."*

take a tumble 1. Literally, to fall suddenly to the ground. *I took a bit of a tumble walking home from the pub last night, hence the bruises on my face.* 2. To suffer a sudden fall or decline, as of profits, health, quality, etc. *The price of shares in the tech giant took a tumble on Tuesday after it emerged that they had been manipulating sales figures over the last five years. My father has been doing remarkably well in his battle with cancer, but he has taken a tumble in the last few days.*

take a walk down memory lane To reminisce over memories of past events, especially happy ones. *My grandmother spends more time taking walks down memory lane these days than talking about the present. Sarah: "How did your coffee date with John go?" Amy: "It was pretty amicable, actually. We took a walk down memory lane for a while, and then we went our separate ways."*

take a walk on the wild side To engage in risky, raucous, adventurous, or licentious behavior. *I've been cooped up in the house with the kids all year, so I'm really looking forward to taking a walk on the wild side in Cancun next week! I've had such a quiet, sheltered life that I want to take a walk on the wild side at least once before it's too late!*

take a wife To marry a woman. *I can't believe my son is taking a wife on Saturday. Kids grow up so fast! Is there any hope of Sir Reginald taking a wife in the near future?*

take a/the bullet (for someone) **1.** Literally, to jump in front of and absorb the impact of a bullet from a gun being fired at someone else. *It's one of the basic duties of bodyguards to take the bullet for their clients if someone tries to kill them.* **2.** By extension, to accept or put oneself in the way of some misfortune, difficulty, blame, or danger as a means of protecting someone else. *I don't know why you always feel like you have to take the bullet for your bosses when they screw up. They never reward your loyalty in any way. I used to take a lot of bullets when I worked as a PR representative for the senator.*

take aback See [take \(one\) aback](#).

take an axe to To destroy or attempt to destroy something, usually something intangible. *I'm worried that Sarah will want to take an axe to her whole project after hearing your criticism. Congress is going to take an axe to some of the existing laws once the new term starts. I'm afraid I'm going to have to take an axe to the treehouse since it's so rotted.*

take an eye for an eye To exact revenge, especially in the same way that one was originally hurt. An adaptation of the Biblical phrase, "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." *If that jerk punched you on the playground, you should definitely punch him back—take an eye for an eye!*

take at face value See [take \(someone or something\) at face value](#).

take ball and go home See [take \(one's\) ball and go home](#).

take by surprise See [take \(one\) by surprise](#).

take care of the pence, and the pounds will take care of themselves You will always have money if you are attentive to your finances, especially the smallest amounts or transactions. *Those little bits of*

money you spend here and there all add up and will drain your bank account in no time. Take care of the pence, and the pounds will take care of themselves.

take care of the pennies, and the pounds will look after themselves You will always have money if you are attentive to your finances, especially the smallest amounts or transactions. *Those little bits of money you spend here and there all add up and will drain your bank account in no time. Take care of the pennies, and the pounds will look after themselves.*

take care of the pennies, and the pounds will take care of themselves You will always have money if you are attentive to your finances, especially the smallest amounts or transactions. *Those little bits of money you spend here and there all add up and will drain your bank account in no time. Take care of the pennies, and the pounds will take care of themselves.*

take chances See [take a chance](#).

take cherry See [take \(someone's\) cherry](#).

take cold To become ill with the common cold. *I hate going to the doctor's office—I always seem to take cold after being around all those germs!*

take comfort in (something) To be soothed or calmed by something. *I know this trial has been tremendously hard on you, but take comfort in the fact that the man responsible is now behind bars forever. When things get tough, I take comfort in the company of my closest friends.*

take cum grano salis See [cum grano salis](#).

take eggs for money To let oneself be mistreated or cheated in some way. Eggs were once considered so plentiful as to be not worth much money. *No matter how tantalizing their offers sound, don't take eggs for money.*

take eye off the ball See [take \(one's\) eye off the ball](#).

take fire To start burning. *It shouldn't take long for this wood and brush to take fire, and that will warm you up.*

take five To take a short break, about five minutes. *I've been painting all morning, can I please take five? All right, fellas, take five.*

take for a fool See [take \(someone\) for a fool](#).

take for a spin See [take \(something\) for a spin](#).

take for an idiot See [take \(someone\) for an idiot](#).

take for gospel See [take \(something\) for gospel](#).

take guard (cricket) Of a batsman, to stand in a ready position to receive the bowled ball, especially after having asked the umpire to indicate their position in relation to the stumps. *The umpire has ruled the bowl a dead ball, as the batsman had not yet taken guard.*

take her place See [take \(someone's or something's\) place](#).

take ill To be or become sick or unwell. *I heard your sister has taken ill recently. I hope that it isn't anything too serious?*

take in the wrong way See [take \(something\) in the wrong way](#).

take in tow See [take \(something\) in tow](#).

take in water To be flooded with water, as of a ship. *Captain, the ship is taking in water!*

take it as read To plainly accept something as true, fact, or general knowledge without first verifying or investigating it. *It's a shame that a lot of people take it as read that video games are no more than idle entertainment.*

take it in the neck To receive a very severe rebuke, scolding, or punishment for one's actions. Primarily heard in UK. *Boy, I really took it in the neck for screwing up the Lawson account. I'm lucky I didn't lose my job! I'm really going to take it in the neck if my parents notice this dent in the car!*

take it lightly See [take \(something\) lightly](#).

take it off the table See [take \(something\) off the table](#).

take it out of context See [take \(something\) out of context](#).

take it outside To exit an indoor location. Usually said as an imperative to people who are being disruptive. *Quit playing football in the house! Take it outside! Take it outside, fellas—no fighting in the bar.*

take it sitting down See [take \(something\) sitting down](#).

take it the wrong way See [take \(something\) the wrong way](#).



take it up the ass 1. vulgar slang To receive some form of punishment or mistreatment. A: *"Why aren't you coming out drinking with us?"* B: *"Duh, I'm underage, so I'll be the one who takes it up the ass when we get caught—again."* 2. vulgar slang To engage in anal sex.

take no notice of (something or someone) To not pay any attention to someone or something; to ignore or disregard someone or something. *Take no notice of those troublemakers, they're only trying to provoke you. I was so distracted with thoughts of tomorrow's exam that I took no notice of where I was walking and stepped right out into the road!*

take no stock in (something) To not pay any attention to something; to have or invest no faith or confidence in something; to not accept something. *You'll take no stock in John's promises if you know what's good for you, because more often than not he'll end up letting you down. I don't know how a company expects its managers to perform well when it takes no stock in their abilities.*

take offence (at something) To be or feel insulted, offended, or humiliated by something. Primarily heard in UK. *I know your jokes were made completely in jest, but I couldn't help taking offence at them. I noticed your parents leaving in a bit of a huff earlier; I do hope they haven't taken offence.*

take offense (at) (something) To be or feel insulted, offended, or humiliated by something. *I know your comments were made completely in jest, but I couldn't help taking offense at them. I noticed your parents leaving early. I do hope they haven't taken offense.*

(someone's) take on (something) Someone's perspective, opinion, or idea(s) about something. *Mr. Huxley, what's your take on the recent announcement from the White House? My take on the problem is that we need to devote more of our resources to expanding our marketing campaign.*

take (one) aback To startle, astonish, shock, or disconcert one. *It took us all aback a bit to learn that John was moving to England next month. I'm sure the news of the merger takes everyone aback, but please believe me that this is in the best interest of the company.*

take (one) by surprise To encounter or otherwise engage something or someone who is not prepared or on guard; to shock or startle someone or

something by one's sudden appearance or action. *You took me by surprise when you showed up at my office with flowers this afternoon! Our soldiers descended upon the enemy encampment just before daybreak and took their troops entirely by surprise.*

take (one) in tow To help or guide another person by acting as a mentor. *My high school English teacher was a great mentor—she took me in tow and taught me invaluable skills, like how to read and write critically.*

take (one) to the cleaners 1. To cheat or swindle one for a lot or all of their money. Despite its meaning, the phrase as used often does not refer to actual cheating. *It was my first time playing poker at the casino, and the more experienced players definitely took me to the cleaners. The con man made a living taking people to the cleaners with his scams. 2. To soundly defeat or best one; to succeed over one by a wide margin. *This young team is taking the veteran squad to the cleaners tonight.**

take (one's) ball and go home To be so petulant in dealing with adversity, loss, or rejection that one quits or leaves abruptly, often disrupting other participants in the process. The image is of a child who leaves with the ball, thus preventing others from continuing to play the game. *I didn't lose, you guys are playing wrong! That's it, I'm taking my ball and going home! I've heard that this new artist is a little temperamental, so, everyone, please be on your best behavior so he doesn't take his ball and go home.*

take (one's) eye off the ball To fail to remain focused on or motivated about some goal, objective, or matter at hand. *You can't take your eye off the ball just before this merger deal is supposed to go through, not when there is so much at stake! I was on my way to earning my PhD, but I really took my eye off the ball toward the end of the program.*

take out the trash To carry garbage from one's house to a trash can or other receptacle outside. *Can you please take out the trash? It's beginning to stink up the house.*

take risks See [take a risk](#).

take seats See [take a seat](#).

take sick To be or become sick or unwell. *I heard your sister has taken sick recently. I hope that it isn't anything too serious.*

take silk To be appointed a Queen's Counsel (QC) or King's Counsel

(KC), the highest ranking position of a senior barrister in the British law system. Primarily heard in UK. *Since taking silk, the honourable Thomas Jeffries, QC, has served the public and the crown most admirably.*

take somebody to the cleaners See [take \(one\) to the cleaners](#).

take (someone) for a fool To presume or believe that someone is very stupid or foolish. *I'd advise you not to take her for a fool. She may play dumb, but she's very crafty.*

take (someone) for an idiot To presume or believe that someone is very stupid or foolish. *I'd advise you not to take her for an idiot. She may play dumb, but she's very crafty. Do you take me for an idiot? There's no way I'm falling for that again.*

take (someone or something) at face value To accept that something or someone is as it seems based only on an initial or outward appearance, without further verifying or investigating. *Why some people take what that pundit says at face value is beyond me. He clearly has an ulterior motive. You're right to be wary, but, in this case, I think we can take John at face value. He's just trying to help.*

take (someone's) cherry vulgar slang To have sexual intercourse with a virgin, especially a female. *Before you go taking a girl's cherry, you had better make damn sure that you and she are both totally ready to sleep with each other.*

take (someone's or something's) place To substitute for someone or something; to stand in someone's or something's stead. *It was decided that I would take my sister's place as the head of the company. Due to a scheduling conflict for the professor, the course on modernism has been canceled. I guess that course on 19th-century British Literature will have to take its place.*

take something as read See [take it as read](#).

take (something) for a spin To take a brief, leisurely ride in a vehicle, especially an automobile. *Do you want to go take my dad's Corvette for a spin later? Jenny just got a new car for her birthday, so I think we're going to take it for a spin after school.*

take (something) for gospel To believe that something is absolutely true without any hesitation or reservations. *When we're growing up, we take*

what our parents tell us for gospel. That's part of why teenagers are so rebellious, because they're just starting to realize their parents' fallibility. The beloved professor's opinions on the author are taken for gospel by his students.

take (something) in the wrong way To misunderstand or misinterpret something, especially in such a way as to take offense at what is said or done. (A less common variant of "take something the wrong way.") *Now, I hope you don't take this in the wrong way, but I think it would be easier for everyone if you didn't visit us right after the baby is born. I simply don't comment on things on the Internet anymore because, too often, what I say is taken in the wrong way.*

take (something) in tow To pull or drag something. Originally a nautical phrase used to describe the action of a ship towing something. *They'll take the plane in tow and bring it back to the hangar.*

take (something) lightly To regard something without much seriousness; to be very casual or carefree about something. *I hope you aren't taking these allegations lightly—they could mean a life in prison! I've learned to take my work more lightly in recent years. There are just more important things to worry about.*

take (something) off the table To withdraw something or make it no longer available, as for consideration, acceptance, discussion, etc. *I wouldn't wait too long to accept the job offer—they might take it off the table before you know it. For the sake of making progress in our meeting this morning, let's just take the issue of possible pay reductions off the table for the moment.*

take (something) out of context To misrepresent the meaning of an utterance, an action, or a report thereof by omitting or altering the original context in which it was spoken or done. *You have to be very careful what you say when you're a politician, because the media are all too happy to take anything you say out of context. The way you're describing what she did sounds terrible, but you're taking things completely out of context.*

take (something) sitting down To accept something unpleasant, unfortunate, or unjust without resistance, argument, or action. (Usually used in the negative to express the opposite.) *I just found out my wife has been cheating on me for the last year, and I'm not about to take it sitting down!*

I've been at this job for nearly 30 years and not once have I been given a raise. If you think I'm going to take it sitting down any longer, then you have another think coming!

take (something) the wrong way To misunderstand or misinterpret something, especially in such a way as to take offense at what is said or done. *Now, I hope you don't take this the wrong way, but I think it would be easier for everyone if you waited to visit until the baby is a few weeks old. I simply don't post online comments anymore, because too often what I say is taken the wrong way.*

take soundings To ask questions in order to learn people's opinions about a certain topic. *I'm taking soundings to find out what people want to read about in the student newspaper.*

take stick See [take \(a lot of\) stick \(from someone\)](#).

take strolls down memory lane See [take a stroll down memory lane](#).

take ten To take a short break, about ten minutes. *I've been painting all morning, can I please take ten? All right, fellas, take ten.*

take the ball before the bound To anticipate something and, in many cases, act hastily or recklessly as a result. The phrase originated in reference to cricket. A: *"I did try to tackle him! I just figured he would go left, but he went right."* B: *"Well, now we're losing because you took the ball before the bound!" I didn't study much since I thought I knew the material, but I must have taken the ball before the bound because that test was impossible.*

take the bark off To whip or otherwise punish someone. The phrase initially referred to striking someone so hard as to cut the skin. Primarily heard in US. *That boy didn't do any of his chores around this farm today and still went off with his friends. I'm going to take the bark off him once he gets home! If we had to get in trouble with a teacher, at least it's with Mr. Wright—he's nice and won't take the bark off us.*

take the bear by the tooth To subject oneself to danger or trouble. *I really took the bear by the tooth by sneaking out of the house late at night. I think you're taking the bear by the tooth to drive in such torrential rain.*

take the biscuit To be the most disappointing, annoying, shocking,

outrageous, or egregious thing to have happened or been done. (Usually said hyperbolically.) *But when I found out that he had been reading through my text messages, well, that took the biscuit! The government is using the taxes from the working class to bail out the banks that ruined the economy? That really takes the biscuit!*

take the Browns to the Super Bowl slang To defecate. It is a pun in which "Super Bowl" refers to a toilet, and "the Browns" refers to the Cleveland Browns football team (chosen because feces are brown). *Hang on, I've got to take the Browns to the Super Bowl before we leave the house.*

take the bull by its horns To approach, confront, or deal with a problem or difficult situation directly and with clear, confident action. *I took the bull by its horns and confronted my manager about the blatant sexism in the office. I've been complaining about being out of work for too long—it's time to take the bull by its horns and go find a job!*

take the bull by the horns To approach, confront, or deal with a problem or difficult situation directly and with clear, confident action. *I took the bull by the horns and confronted my manager about the blatant sexism in the office. You've been complaining about being out of work for too long—it's time to take the bull by the horns and go find a job.*

take the bullet See [take a/the bullet \(for someone\)](#).

take the cake 1. To be the worst in a series of negative actions. Primarily heard in US. *When I found out he had been reading through my text messages, well, that took the cake! You charged me for the drink you spilled on me? That really takes the cake!* 2. To be the best or the most outstanding. Primarily heard in US. *You've done some nice murals, but this one takes the cake!*

take the cash and let the credit go To only accept instant gratification. The phrase comes from Edward FitzGerald's *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*, a 19th-century translation of Persian poetry. *I know you teenagers like to take the cash and let the credit go, but you have to work hard over your entire high school career if you want to get into a good college.*

take the fifth (amendment) 1. To refuse to testify against oneself in court, in accordance with the right guaranteed by the Fifth Amendment to the United States Constitution, part of the Bill of Rights. *The defendant took the fifth after every question the prosecution put to him. There is speculation that*

he will take the fifth amendment if he is asked about his actions under oath. **2.** By extension, to refuse to answer a question or provide information, especially if doing so may incriminate or embarrass oneself. *Just take the fifth if your mom asks where you've been all night! A: "So, I hear things got pretty messy at the party last night." B: "Yeah, I'm going to have to take the fifth amendment on that one!"*

take the game to To aggressively attack the opposing team. *They're a fast team, so we need to take the game to them—if we start chasing them, it's over.*

take the gilt off the gingerbread To make something less attractive or appealing. Gingerbread was traditionally decorated before being sold. *Have you seen her without any make-up on? Talk about taking the gilt off the gingerbread! I thought being a nurse would be all excitement, but three patients vomited on me on my first day, and that's really taken take the gilt off the gingerbread.*

take the high ground **1.** To act morally, especially in times of disagreement or tension. *A: "I thought you were mad at Kelly." B: "No, not anymore. Our friendship is more important than a grudge, so I've taken the high ground."* **2.** To be the most successful or renowned in a particular area. *With these test scores, our school will finally take the high ground and become the most prestigious academy in the state.*

take the high road To choose the most noble, ethical, or diplomatic course or method, especially after or in the face of negativity or ill treatment. *Strive to always take the high road when dealing with others, even if they've treated you unfairly in the past. Life has a habit of rewarding those who learn to turn the other cheek.*

take the hint To understand, accept, or act upon a message or direction that has been insinuated or communicated indirectly. *After an hour or so of being ignored, Jeremy finally took the hint and left the party. I think you need to take the hint and accept the fact that he has no interest in dating you.*

take the lead **1.** To be the primary person working on something; to assert oneself as the leader. *I have meetings all day, so please take the lead on this project, Joan.* **2.** To become the leader in a competition by overtaking another player, team, or participant. *And with that goal, the home team takes the lead! Now that exam scores have been factored in, Amelia has taken the*

lead in the race for valedictorian.

take the liberty of (doing something) To do something without first seeking out or asking someone's permission. *I thought I'd take the liberty of printing out some financial reports ahead of today's meeting so we would all be on the same page. I hope you don't mind, but I took the liberty of telling your husband you'd be late for dinner.*

take the liberty to do (something) To do something without first seeking out or asking for someone's permission. *I took the liberty to print out some financial reports ahead of today's meeting. I hope you don't mind, but I took the liberty to tell your husband you'd be late for dinner.*

take the low road To utilize a method, practice, or course of action that is unethical, unscrupulous, underhanded, or otherwise base or vile. *It's unfair that those who work the hardest will be undermined by those who choose to take the low road to success. I didn't raise my son to be the type of person who would take the low road in life!*

take the Michael (out of someone or something) To tease, mock, or ridicule (someone or something); to joke or kid around (about someone or something). A less common variant of "take the mickey (out of someone)," itself a variant of "take the piss (out of someone)." Primarily heard in UK, Ireland. *If you are so serious-minded that you can't take the Michael out of yourself every once in a while, you're going to have a hard time enjoying most of life. It really hurt Steph's feelings to know that the group had been taking the Michael out of her that whole time. Brian was a bit of a troublesome student and tended to take the Michael whenever class began.*

take the mike (out of someone or something) To tease, mock, or ridicule (someone or something); to joke or kid around (about someone or something). A less common variant of "take the mickey (out of someone)," itself a variant of "take the piss (out of someone)." Primarily heard in UK, Ireland. *If you are so serious-minded that you can't take the mike out of yourself every once in a while, you're going to have a hard time enjoying most of life. It really hurt Steph's feelings to know that the group had been taking the mike out of her that whole time. Brian was a bit of a troublesome student and tended to take the mike whenever class began.*

take the moral high ground To claim, purport, or make it appear

that one's arguments, beliefs, ideas, etc., are morally superior to those espoused by others. *The senator always tries to take the moral high ground during a debate so as to shift public opinion in his favor.*

take the offensive To begin attacking someone or adopting an aggressive attitude or position as a means of gaining a pre-emptive advantage. *If you don't take the offensive as soon as the debate starts, your opponent is going to walk all over you! Every time Mike and I start to fight, he immediately takes the offensive and won't listen to my side of things.*

take the piss (out of) (someone or something) To tease, mock, or ridicule (someone or something); to joke or kid around (about someone or something). Primarily heard in UK, Ireland. *If you are so serious that you can't take the piss out of yourself every once in a while, you're going to have a hard time enjoying most of life. It really hurt Steph's feelings to know that the group had been taking the piss out of her that whole time. Brian was a bit of a troublesome student and tended to take the piss whenever class began.*

take the place of (someone or something) To substitute for someone or something; to stand in someone's or something's stead. *It was decided that I would take the place of my sister as the head of the company. Tofu can easily take the place of chicken in this dish.*

take the rein(s) To take or assume control (of something). *After the CEO announced that she had been diagnosed with dementia, her daughter gradually began taking the reins of the company. I don't know why people are so utterly terrified of letting the federal government take the rein when it comes to things like healthcare.*

take the shadow for the substance dated To accept something false, deceitful, shallow, or insubstantial in place of something true, meaningful, or valuable. (Said especially in religious lectures or sermons about shunning or being led away from faith or the dictates of the church.) *In today's modern, materialistic world, it is all too easy to take the shadow for the substance.*

take the teeth out of To make a dangerous or hostile thing harmless or benign. *The first draft of your email was really harsh, but don't worry—I've taken the teeth out of it so you don't get fired. My dog used to act wild and mean all the time, but obedience training has really taken the teeth out of*

him.

take the veil To become a nun (and thus wear a nun's headdress). *Yes, I am taking the veil and devoting my life to God.*

take the weight off (one's) feet To lie or (especially) sit down, generally after being upright for a long period of time. *We've been walking all over town today, so I think we're just going to head back to the hotel and take the weight off our feet for a while.*

take the weight off (one's) legs To lie or (especially) sit down, generally after being upright for a long period of time. *We've been walking all over town today, so I think we're just going to head back to the hotel and take the weight off our legs for a while.*

take the wheel To take or assume control (of something). *After the CEO announced that she had been diagnosed with dementia, her daughter gradually began taking the wheel of the company. I don't know why people are so utterly terrified of letting the federal government take the wheel when it comes to things like healthcare.*

take the wrong way See [take \(something\) the wrong way](#).

take things out of context See [take \(something\) out of context](#).

take this in the wrong way See [take \(something\) in the wrong way](#).

take this lightly See [take \(something\) lightly](#).

take time by the forelock To act decisively; to accept an opportunity without hesitation. If time is pictured with just a forelock of hair, then it can only be grabbed as it comes toward you, not as it leaves. *What are you waiting for? Take time by the forelock and accept that fantastic internship! My anxiety usually keeps me from taking time by the forelock.*

take to the cleaners See [take \(one\) to the cleaners](#).

take to the hills 1. To move to higher ground, as in preparation for or in response to a natural disaster. *There are bound to be tidal waves after an earthquake like that. We'd better take to the hills!* 2. To flee hastily; to clear out or depart quickly. *Uh oh, Uncle Jerome's been drinking again. Take to the hills, everyone! The staff all took to the hills when it was announced that there would be a stock-take at the end of the shift.*

take to the hustings To campaign, with an emphasis on delivering

political speeches. A "hustings" was the platform on which candidates were nominated to British Parliament through the mid-19th century. *If you want to be voted onto city council, you need to take to the hustings and talk to the people.*

take to the stump To campaign, with an emphasis on delivering political speeches. The stump of a tree used to serve as the platform for these speeches. Primarily heard in US. *If you want to be voted onto city council, you need to take to the stump and talk to the people.*

take to the tall timber To leave quickly and covertly. Primarily heard in US. *I think Adam took to the tall timber—no one has seen or heard from him in weeks*

take to wife To marry a woman. *Is it true that Sir Reginald is taking Lady Jane to wife?*

take trips down memory lane See [take a trip down memory lane](#).

take up the gauntlet To accept or attempt a challenge or invitation, as to fight, argue, or compete. *When it comes to civil rights issues, Mary is always eager to take up the gauntlet. When the heavyweight champion boasted that nobody could beat him, no one expected this newcomer to take up the gauntlet.*

take up the hatchet To fight, especially in a violent manner. *The feud has lasted for so long that neither family remembers why they took up the hatchet against the other.*

take us aback See [take \(one\) aback](#).

take us for a fool See [take \(someone\) for a fool](#).

take us for an idiot See [take \(someone\) for an idiot](#).

take us in tow See [take \(one\) in tow](#).

take vows To commit oneself to a religious order. *Yes, I am taking vows and devoting my life to God. My brother has taken vows and joined the priesthood.*

take walks down memory lane See [take a walk down memory lane](#).

take your ball and go home See [take \(one's\) ball and go home](#).

take your cherry See [take \(someone's\) cherry](#).

take your eye off the ball See [take \(one's\) eye off the ball](#).

take your place See [take \(someone's or something's\) place](#).

taken aback Startled, astonished, shocked, or disconcerted. *All of us were a bit taken aback to learn that John was moving to England next month. I must admit that I was taken aback when I heard we weren't receiving our bonuses this year.*

talent management The area of a business that focuses on retaining current employees and hiring new, exemplary candidates. *Talent management is a crucial part of any successful business.*

talk a mile a minute To speak in a very quick or hurried manner; to talk very fast. *When the boss gets excited, she starts talking a mile a minute, and I can never follow everything she's trying to say!*

talk like an apothecary obsolete To chatter on in a foolishly pedantic manner. *The playwright wants to assume his work speaks to the most educated of society, but in truth, each character talks like an apothecary, and their dialogue so fumbling and convoluted as to be laughable.*

talk of the devil An acknowledgment of a person who has arrived just as or after they were being discussed. (A shortened variation of the longer, more common proverb, "speak of the devil, and he shall/will/is sure to appear.") *John: "Hey everyone, sorry I'm late!" Dave: "Well, talk of the devil! I was just telling them about something funny you said the other day."*

talk of the devil, and he is bound to appear An acknowledgment of a person who has arrived just as or after they were being discussed. *John: "Hey everyone, sorry I'm late!" Dave: "Well, talk of the devil, and he is bound to appear! We were just chatting about something funny you said the other day."*

talk of the devil, and he is sure to appear An acknowledgment of a person who has arrived just as or after they were being discussed. *John: "Hey everyone, sorry I'm late!" Dave: "Well, talk of the devil, and he is sure to appear! We were just chatting about something funny you said the other day."*

talk of the devil, and he shall appear An acknowledgment of a

person who has arrived just as or after they were being discussed. *John: "Hey everyone, sorry I'm late!" Dave: "Well, talk of the devil, and he shall appear! We were just chatting about something funny you said the other day."*

talk of the devil, and he will appear An acknowledgment of a person who has arrived just as or after they were being discussed. *John: "Hey everyone, sorry I'm late!" Dave: "Well, talk of the devil, and he will appear! We were just chatting about something funny you said the other day."*

the talk of the town A person or topic that many people are currently talking about in a certain area, typically due to recent eventfulness. *My brother was the talk of the town after leading the high school team to a state championship. How did you not hear about the fire at city hall last night? It's the talk of the town!*

talk out of both sides of (one's) mouth To try to maintain contradictory positions or beliefs in an attempt to please the most people. *We all know that you've been talking out of both sides of your mouth about the merger, so please, just tell us the truth. Will there be layoffs or not? I don't trust that candidate—he still hasn't committed to a clear course of action and is always talking out of both sides of his mouth.*

talk out of (one's) arse 1. vulgar slang To say foolish things; to talk nonsense. Primarily heard in UK. *Don't pay him any mind. He's just talking out of his arse again.* 2. vulgar slang To exaggerate one's achievements or knowledge of some subject; to bluff or boast. Primarily heard in UK. *Dorothy keeps saying she can outrun anyone in our school, but she's talking out of her arse if you ask me. It seemed like the candidate was talking out of his arse for a while when the debate turned to the topic of tax policy and law.*

talk out (of) (one's) ass 1. vulgar slang To say foolish things; to talk of nonsense. *Don't pay Jonathan any mind, Mary, he's just talking out his ass again.* 2. vulgar slang To exaggerate one's achievements or knowledge of some subject; to bluff or boast. *Dorothy keeps saying she can outrun anyone in our school, but she's talking out of her ass if you ask me. It seemed like the candidate was talking out of his ass for a while when the debate turned to the topic of tax policy and law.*

talk out of (one's) hat 1. To say foolish things; to talk of nonsense. *Don't pay Jonathan any mind, Mary, he's just talking out of his hat again.* 2. To exaggerate one's achievements or knowledge of some subject; to bluff or

boast. *Dorothy keeps saying she can outrun anyone in our school, but she's talking out of her hat if you ask me. It seemed like the candidate was talking out of his hat for a while when the debate turned to the topic of tax policy and law.*

talk out of turn To say something erroneous, foolish, or impudent at an inappropriate time or when one does not have the authority to do so. *I hope I'm not talking out of turn, but I think we'd see a higher profit margin if we took better care of our employees' benefits. If you talk out of turn in my class, you can expect to receive a rap across the knuckles!*

talk rot 1. To say foolish things; to talk of nonsense. *Don't pay Jonathan any mind, Mary, he's just talking rot again.* **2.** To exaggerate one's achievements or knowledge of some subject; to bluff or boast. *Dorothy keeps saying she can outrun anyone in our school, but she's talking rot if you ask me. It seemed like the candidate was talking rot for a while when the debate turned to the topic of tax policy and law.*

talk some sense into (one) To assist or persuade one to start thinking sensibly (about something). *Jason is convinced that he wants to join the circus, but I'm hoping we'll be able to talk some sense into him. If you think you're going to find a high-paying job right away without any experience, then you need someone to talk some sense into you.*

talk some sense into (someone's) head To assist or persuade someone to start thinking sensibly (about something). (An extended variant of the more common "talk some sense into someone.") *Jason is convinced that he wants to get a tattoo once he turns 18, but I'm hoping we'll be able to talk some sense into his head by then. If you think you're going to find success with your high school rock band, then someone needs to talk some serious sense into your head.*

talk through (one's) arse 1. vulgar slang To say foolish things; to talk of nonsense. Primarily heard in UK. *Don't pay Jonathan any mind, Mary, he's just talking through his arse again.* **2.** vulgar slang To exaggerate one's achievements or knowledge of some subject; to bluff or boast. Primarily heard in UK. *Dorothy keeps saying she can outrun anyone in our school, but she's talking through her arse if you ask me. It seemed like the candidate was talking through his arse for a while when the debate turned to the topic of tax policy and law.*



talk through (one's) ass **1.** vulgar slang To say foolish things; to talk of nonsense. *Don't pay Jonathan any mind, Mary, he's just talking through his ass again.* **2.** vulgar slang To exaggerate one's achievements or knowledge of some subject; to bluff or boast. *Dorothy keeps saying she can outrun anyone in our school, but she's talking through her ass if you ask me. It seemed like the candidate was talking through his ass for a while when the debate turned to the topic of tax policy and law.*

talk through (one's) hat **1.** To say foolish things; to talk of nonsense. *Don't pay Jonathan any mind, Mary, he's just talking through his hat again.* **2.** To exaggerate one's achievements or knowledge; to bluff or boast. *Dorothy keeps saying she can outrun anyone in our school, but she's talking through her hat if you ask me. It seemed like the candidate was talking through his hat for a while when the debate turned to the topic of tax policy.*

talk through the back of (one's) neck To exaggerate, often to the point of making false or illogical statements. The imagery of the phrase emphasizes that one is not speaking in a straightforward, truthful manner. *Oh, you can't trust a word Joe says, he always talks through the back of his neck. Management may be happy with our numbers, but there's no way they give our whole department the day off on Friday—quit talking through the back of your neck.*

talk to the hand A rude interjection meant to interrupt and dismiss what another person is saying. (Sometimes written or spoken in longer forms, such as, "talk to the hand, because the face isn't listening," or the like.) *Dad: "Sarah, would you mind cleaning up the—" Sarah: "Talk to the hand, dad! I've got too much going on to be dealing with chores around the house!" All of us were aghast when Jonathan turned to the police officer and said, "Talk to the hand, 'cause the face ain't interested!"*

talk twenty to the dozen To talk (to someone) very rapidly, hurriedly, and/or energetically. *My aunt can get talking twenty to the dozen if you get her on a topic she's passionate about.*

tall cotton See [be in tall cotton](#).

tall drink A mixed beverage in a tall or large glass containing little or no alcohol. *I have an early start tomorrow, so I'm just on the tall drinks tonight.*

a tall drink of water **1.** A tall, typically slender person. *Who's that tall*

drink of water who just walked in? 2. A rather boring, plain, or uninteresting person. Sheesh, Sarah's new boyfriend sure is a tall drink of water, huh?

tall in the saddle Proud, stoic, or august in one's manner or composure. *Even after two years of a losing war, the general still rode tall in his saddle before his troops.*

tall story A story that is greatly exaggerated or particularly imaginative, such that it is difficult to believe; a tall tale. *My uncle has always been fond of telling tall stories about his time overseas. I used to believe him when I was a kid, but now I've learned to just laugh along.*

tall tale A greatly exaggerated or particularly imaginative story or account of something, such that it is difficult to believe. *My uncle has always been fond of telling tall tales about his time overseas. I used to believe him when I was a kid, but now I've learned to just laugh along.*

tangled web A convoluted situation usually caused by some form of deception. *The investigation revealed a tangled web of fraud among the members of the political party.*

tanked up slang Drunk. The type of alcohol that one has been drinking can be included by adding "on" to the phrase and then naming it. *It wasn't too smart to get tanked up the night before your exam, now was it? Do you remember last night at all? You were really tanked up on whiskey by the time I got there!*

TANSTAAFL Written abbreviation of "There ain't no such thing as a free lunch," meaning nothing is ever really given away for free, so be wary of hidden charges, motives, or agendas. *Of course, once you're signed up to the free program, you have to pay for all sorts of extra services to make it even worth using. It's a TANSTAAFL situation if I've ever seen one.*

tap the admiral To drink directly (and secretly) from a cask, as if by a straw and gimlet. The phrase refers to British admiral Horatio Nelson, whose corpse was transported to England in a liquor-filled cask that is said to have arrived empty of liquor. *Someone must have tapped the admiral because we are out of liquor already!*

tar and feather 1. Literally, to coat someone with tar and bird feathers as a form of public punishment and shaming (a practice that fell out of use in the early 20th century). *The mob tarred and feathered the thief in the public*

square before parading him through the town strapped to a wooden cart. **2.** By extension, to severely criticize, reprimand, or excoriate someone, especially in a public and humiliating manner. *Everyone is demanding that the government tar and feather the bank executives behind the scandal, but I'd be willing to bet that all they'll receive is a slap on the wrist.*

Target run A shopping trip to the department store Target. A: *"How does every Target run end up costing me at least \$50?"* B: *"Because you say you're only getting milk and paper towels, and then you come home with 12 other things."*

a taste of (one's) own medicine The same unpleasant experience or treatment that one has given to others. *Doug is a bully—of course he won't like it when his victims fight back and give him a taste of his own medicine. This team likes to play rough, so let's go out there and give them a taste of their own medicine!*

TBT An abbreviation for "throwback Thursday," a social media phenomenon in which older pictures (such as childhood photos) are posted on Thursday with the phrase as an accompanying hashtag or caption. *My love of animals started young. #tbt*

teach a man to fish Teaching someone how to do something is more helpful to him or her in the long run than just doing it for him or her. The full proverb is "give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime." A: *"I don't want to teach Billy how to drive!"* B: *"Well, I know you're sick of driving him around, and this is a solution. Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime!"* I'm trying to show my grandfather how to use his new computer, so that he won't call me with questions every time he tries to use it—teach a man to fish and all that.

teach (one's) grandmother to suck eggs To try to teach an older person who is wiser and more experienced and worldly than a young person may think. *Why are you explaining basic typing to Ethel? Yes, she's 70, but she's been using a computer since before you were born—quit teaching your grandmother to suck eggs.*

tear a strip off (someone) To scold, upbraid, or rebuke someone very severely, as for an error or wrongdoing. *The teacher really tore a strip off me for causing a disruption in class again.*

tear someone off a strip To scold, upbraid, or rebuke someone very severely, as for an error or wrongdoing. *The teacher really tore me off a strip for causing a disruption in class again.*

tear up the pea patch obsolete To go on or indulge in a wild outburst, spree, or rampage. (Used largely in relation to sports, especially baseball, where the phrase originated in reference to players running amok and ruining the game.) Primarily heard in US. *Another fight has broken out between the two teams. These boys are positively tearing up the pea patch! A few rowdy types entered the bar and tore up the pea patch. They didn't even pay for anything!*

teensy-weensie childish Particularly small or tiny. *I'm not hungry myself, but I'd love to try just a teensy-weensie bite of your meal, if you don't mind. Be sure to appreciate the time when your children are teensy-weensie, because they grow up very fast!*

teeny-weenie childish Particularly small or tiny. *I'm not hungry myself, but I'd love to try just a teeny-weenie bite of your meal, if you don't mind. Be sure to appreciate the time when your children are teeny-weenie, because they grow up very fast!*

teeny-weeny childish Extremely small; tiny. *I'm not hungry, but I'd love to try just a teeny-weeny bite of your meal, if you don't mind. Be sure to appreciate the time when your children are teeny-weeny, because they grow up very fast!*

teeter on the brink of (something) To be very close to doing something or of having some imminent event happen, especially that which is bad or disastrous. *The company is still doing business, but ever since the recession hit, they've been teetering on the brink of closing down. The crew are so maddened by the cuts to their pay that everyone is teetering on the brink of mutiny.*

teeter on the edge of (something) To be very close to doing something or of having some imminent event happen, especially that which is bad or disastrous. *The company is still doing business, but ever since the recession hit, they've been teetering on the edge of closing down. The crew are so maddened by the cuts to their pay that everyone is teetering on the edge of mutiny.*



telephone tag A series of telephone calls made between two people in which each time one party calls, the other is not available to answer. *Hi Mary, just leaving you another message. We've had a bit of telephone tag today, huh? Just give me a call back whenever you get this, thanks!*

tell a (little) white lie To tell a seemingly small, insignificant, or harmless lie, often presumably in order not to offend or upset someone. *I knew Jenny would be upset if she knew I didn't want to go to the movies with her tomorrow, so I just told her a white lie about having to take care of my elderly grandmother. Don't get into the habit of telling little white lies, or, pretty soon, you'll start telling big, fat, ugly ones.*

tell fortunes To (profess to) anticipate, and inform about, future outcomes or see what future events will take place. *There's this old lady in the apartment next to mine who tells fortunes for ten bucks. I never go in for stuff like that, but I'll admit that I'm a bit curious.*

tell it to Sweeney See [\(Go\) tell it/that to Sweeney!](#)

tell it to the marines See [\(go\) tell it/that to the marines!](#)

tell (one) where to shove it An expression of frustration or anger. The phrase encourages the person in question to shove something up their buttocks. *If she assigns me one more project, I'm going to tell her where to shove it! A: "How did you end up in jail?" B: "Well, the officer tried to give me a parking ticket, and I told him where to shove it."*

tell (someone) a thing or two (about someone or something) **1.** To inform someone of the facts or several pieces of information (about someone or something). *I know you're from the countryside and not used to city folk, so let me tell you a thing or two about New Yorkers. If you want to learn about the history of cinema, then you should ask Jeff—he'd be more than happy to tell you a thing or two.* **2.** To correct or confront someone about his, her, or their mistaken belief or incorrect point of view (about someone or something). *The professor is teaching us some really antiquated material about quantum physics. I think I'll go tell him a thing or two about it after class. That jerk has been making snide remarks about the women in our group all night. I'm going to go over there and tell him a thing or two!*

tell (someone) what's what To inform someone of the true facts or

most fundamental information (about someone or something). *After putting it off for a week, Sarah finally told Jane what's what and ended their relationship. You're so naïve about the way you think this business operates, so allow me to finally tell you what's what.*

tell (someone's) fortune To (profess to) anticipate and inform someone about certain outcomes or events in their near or distant future. *This old lady in the apartment next to mine offered to tell my fortune for ten bucks. I never go in for stuff like that, but I'll admit that I'm a bit curious.*

tell the truth An exhortation to speak honestly. *Come one, tell the truth—you liked Jack when you first met him, didn't you? Tell the truth, Betty—where did all this money come from?*

tell you the truth See [to tell \(you\) the truth](#).

temper tantrum An extreme and childish display of unreasonable anger, frustration, or distemper. *I can't believe you threw a temper tantrum like that just because I didn't want to go see some movie with you! Becca's been having really bad temper tantrums lately. I guess she's just going into the "terrible twos."*

a tempest in a teacup A disproportionate reaction of anger, concern, or displeasure over some minor or trivial matter. *If you ask me, these protests are nothing but a tempest in a teacup that's been stoked by a media campaign of misinformation. I really think you're making a tempest in a teacup over this. It's just a tiny scratch on the car!*

a tempest in a teakettle A disproportionate reaction of anger, concern, or displeasure over some minor or trivial matter. (A less common variant of "a tempest in a teacup/teapot.") *If you ask me, these protests are nothing but a tempest in a teakettle that's been stoked by a media campaign of misinformation. I really think you're making a tempest in a teakettle over this. It's just a tiny scratch on the car!*

a tempest in a teapot A disproportionate reaction of anger, concern, or displeasure over some minor or trivial matter. *If you ask me, these protests are nothing but a tempest in a teapot that's been stoked by a media campaign of misinformation. I really think you're making a tempest in a teapot over this. It's just a tiny scratch on the car!*

tempus fugit Time passes quickly. The phrase is Latin for "time flies." *I*

can't believe it's been so long since my last visit—tempus fugit!

ten a penny Very common, ordinary, or widespread. *At first, they were quite novel and interesting, but now these little organic cafés have become ten a penny. Trashy crime novels like his are ten a penny, but at least he's doing what he loves.*

ten to the dozen Very rapidly, hurriedly, and/or energetically. *My aunt can get talking ten to the dozen if you get her on a topic she's passionate about. Samson came running ten to the dozen when he heard his son crying out to him from the back garden.*

tentpole cinema Films that are created with a very large budget and production value, and which are meant to provide substantial revenue to the production company. *Big blockbusters used to be quite the rare cinematic event, but we've gotten to the point now where there's a tentpole cinema coming out nearly every weekend of the year.*

tentpole film A film with a very large budget and production value that is meant to provide substantial revenue to the production company. *Big blockbusters used to be quite the rare cinematic event, but we've gotten to the point now where there's a tentpole film coming out nearly every weekend of the year.*

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TEOTWAWKI Written acronym of "the end of the world as we know it," referring hyperbolically to some sudden or unexpected deviation from what is familiar or customary. *Well, whoever is elected president, it won't be TEOTWAWKI; each candidate is as good or bad as the other in my book.*

the terrible twos A developmental stage of children, generally at or around the age of two, marked by increased rebelliousness and frequent tantrums. *Becca's been having really bad temper tantrums lately and just keeps saying "no" to everything we say to her. I guess she's going into the terrible twos.*

territorial pissing rude slang The marking of something as one's own

(which an animal would do by urinating on it). Despite the imagery, the phrase can be used to describe any sort of territorial action. *Now that the corner office is empty, there's been lots of territorial pissing by anyone who hopes to get it—Mark even moved his chair in there yesterday. Ugh, when does a puppy finally stop his territorial pissing?*

the terrorists will have won A phrase said in response to changes that are perceived to have been made out of fear following a terrorist attack. *We cannot change the way we govern this country in light of the latest attack—otherwise, the terrorists will have won.*

test bed **1.** An environment used exclusively for testing. The phrase can refer to a software program or to a physical location outfitted with instruments. *Please use the app in this test bed, and let us know if it crashes. I've been in the test bed all day, but everything seems to be working properly now.* **2.** A frame or base that has an engine or other piece of equipment attached to it for testing purposes. *How is the test bed working today? Any progress?*

test of time A figurative test that a person or thing "passes" if it works, functions, or endures for a very long time. *As computer technology improves, it's ironically getting harder and harder to find a piece of equipment that can survive the test of time. Of all the other cast members, hers was the only career that withstood the test of time.*

tête à tête A personal or private discussion between two people. *It is hoped that the president's tête à tête with the prime minister will be more constructive than a full meeting with both cabinets.*

TGIT An abbreviation for "Thank God It's Thursday," ABC's programming block of shows on Thursday nights, which has included *Grey's Anatomy*, *Scandal*, and *How to Get Away with Murder*, all of which were produced by Shonda Rhimes. *What time does TGIT start?*

than the average bear A comparative phrase meaning more/less, better/worse, etc., than the average person or thing. Originates from the animated character Yogi Bear, whose catchphrase is that he is "smarter than the average bear." *He's certainly tougher than the average bear. I don't excel at all my subjects, but I still think I'm smarter than the average bear.*

than the sum of its parts See [more/bigger/greater than the sum of its parts](#).

thank you captain obvious See [Captain Obvious](#).

thankful for small mercies See [be thankful for small mercies](#).

thanks for nothing! An expression of annoyance, exasperation, or disappointment when someone does something unhelpful or disagreeable. *Thanks for nothing, Dan! Now I have to go get all these posters reprinted because of your stupid typo. I can't believe you squealed on me to the principal! Thanks for nothing!*

thanks for small blessings See [give thanks for small blessings](#).

thanks for small mercies See [give thanks for small mercies](#).

that a boy See [attaboy](#).

that a gal See [attagal](#).

that a girl See [attagirl](#).

that charge See [charge](#).

that figures That makes sense; that is as I expected or might have guessed. A: "Sally already broke up with that new boyfriend of hers." B: "Yeah, that figures. The dude looked like a total drug addict!" Fired from another job, huh? Well, that figures: you were showing up hungover most days of the week!

that is just me See [but that's just me](#).

that is something See [be \(really\) something](#).

that is the honest truth See [the honest truth](#).

that is the way the cookie crumbles See [that's the way the cookie crumbles](#).

that is the way the mop flops See [that's the way the mop flops](#).

that is what she said See [that's what she said](#).

that lucky devil See [lucky devil](#).

that old fart See [old fart](#).

that old saw See [old saw](#).

that which doesn't kill you makes you stronger You can grow and learn from even the most negative experiences. *I just know that*

you'll survive this illness and be better than ever afterward. That which doesn't kill you makes you stronger, right?

that will do That is quite enough; I don't need or want any more. *Janet: "Would you like any more turkey, Steve?" Steve: "No, Janet, that'll do, thank you." That will do, dear, now dry your eyes and stop crying, please.*

that will never do! That is completely wrong! That is totally unacceptable! *Let me see how you're doing with the stitchwork there, John. Oh my, that will never do! I'm afraid you'll have to start over. You threw a tantrum in the market? Well, I'm afraid that will never do!*

that works for me! That is perfectly suitable; that is OK with me. *Anna: "Bob, how would you feel about holding our next meeting on the 25th?" Bob: "Sure, that works for me!"*

that/(one's) time of the month The time, usually once a month, at which a woman begins to menstruate. *I've had horrible cramps and have been really tired lately. It must be coming up on that time of the month again. A: "I made a joke about it being Sally's time of the month, and she punched me in the face!" B: "Good for her. You had it coming."*

Thatcher's children A nickname for the generation of people who grew up with Margaret Thatcher as a major political figure in the UK. Primarily heard in UK. *Because we are Thatcher's children, we are very familiar with her political leanings and accomplishments.*

(that's a) likely story A phrase used to express disbelief of an excuse or explanation. *He said he had to stay late at the office again. That's a likely story—he's probably out with his friends! The cat ate your science project? Likely story.*

that's a turn-up for the book(s) That is a remarkable, unusual, and unexpected event, occurrence, or piece of news. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *Mr Literature Snob reading a trashy romance novel? Now that's a turn-up for the books! A: "After the concert, I ran into the singer at a pub down the road from the venue. It turns out his mother went to the same school as mine!" B: "Wow, that's a turn-up for the book!"*

that's all That's the end of that; I don't have anything more to say. *That's all, everyone, thank you for listening. There are refreshments in the other room.*



that's another matter See [be another matter](#).

that's another story See [\(but\) that's another story](#).

that's another thing See [be another thing](#).

that's how the cookie crumbles There is nothing we can do about the way things have unfolded, especially bad ones, so there is no reason to be upset about it. (A variant of the more common "That's the way the cookie crumbles.") *I'm pretty gutted about not getting into the grad school program I wanted, but hey, that's just how the cookie crumbles.*

that's how the mop flops There is nothing we can do about the way things have unfolded, especially bad ones, so there is no reason to be upset about it. (A variant of the more common "That's how the ball bounces.") *I'm pretty gutted about not getting into the grad school program I wanted, but hey, that's just how the mop flops.*

that's it That's the end of that; I've had enough of that. *That's it, everyone, thank you for listening. There are refreshments in the other room. That's it! I can't listen to you two fighting anymore, I'm getting out of here!*

that's my boy An expression of encouragement, support, or approval toward a boy, man, or male animal. *That's my boy, another report card with straight A's!*

that's my girl! An expression used to express praise and pride in what has just been done or accomplished by one's daughter, or, less often, one's girlfriend or another female with which one has a relationship of some kind. *That's my girl, another report card with straight A's! It gave me a lot of encouragement to hear my parents shouting "That's my girl!" during the football game. You came to bail me out, sweetie? That's my girl!*

That's putting it mildly That is an understatement. That's saying it without any exaggeration. A: *"Gosh, it is downright balmy out!"* B: *"That's putting it mildly! I feel like I'm melting!"* *The new manager is a bit of a hothead—and that's putting it mildly!*

that's quite something See [be quite something](#).

that's (someone or something) for you That trait, characteristic, behavior, etc., is so typical of the way someone or something usually acts, behaves, or operates. *Insider trading and horribly unscrupulous backdoor*

deals? Yep, that's Wall Street for you. A: "I can't believe he cheated on her with several different women while they were together." B: "What a pig. That's men for you."

that's the boy See [ataboy](#).

that's the breaks There is nothing we can do about the way things have unfolded, especially bad ones, so there is no reason to be upset about it; that's just the way things are. *I'm pretty gutted about not getting into the grad school program I wanted, but hey, that's the breaks.*

that's the gal See [attagal](#).

that's the girl See [attagirl](#).

that's the honest truth See [the honest truth](#).

(that's) the nature of the beast (That's) the basic, inherent quality or character of something. *You get rich quick in the stock market or you can lose your shirt. That's the nature of the beast. Uncertainty in life is just the nature of the beast. You never know what's going to happen next.*

that's the pits See [the pits](#).

that's the way life is A phrase that encourages acceptance of disappointments and mishaps as just a normal part of life. A: "I set three alarms, mom. I really didn't mean to oversleep." B: "I know, honey. That's the way life is." *Yeah, I'm sad that I didn't get the lead in the play, but hey, that's the way life is.*

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that's what she said An aside that is used to create a humorous but lewd sexual innuendo out of something mundane or innocent that someone else has said. (The use of "she" is because the innuendo always refers to a

woman in a sexual situation.) A: "Wow, that sandwich is huge!" B: "Yeah, I can barely put my hands around it." C: "Haha, that's what she said!"

that's what's up slang That's excellent; that's great news. A jubilant response to good news or a positive outcome. *I got an A on the exam? That's what's up!* A: "I asked Caroline to go to the dance with me, and she said yes!" B: "That's what's up! Glad to hear it, buddy."

(the good) Lord willing and the creek don't rise rural If all goes as it should; if everything goes well. *We've had a lot of delays, but Lord willing and the creek don't rise, we should have the house finished before winter.* A: "Do you reckon we'll have enough from this harvest to make ends meet?" B: "The good Lord willing and the creek don't rise."

the/ last breath See [the/\(one's\) last breath](#).

them's the breaks There is nothing we can do about the way things have unfolded, especially bad ones, so there is no reason to be upset about it; that's just the way things are. *I'm pretty gutted about not getting into the grad school program I wanted, but hey, them's the breaks.*

there and back Taking the distances to the end point and back to the beginning together as a single sum. *Look, the hike is nearly 12 miles there and back, so we'd better get going if we want to be home before dark.*

there are many ways to skin a cat There are many methods one may employ in achieving one's ends. (A variant of the more common "there's more than one way to skin a cat.") *Don't worry, we'll get this start-up off the ground. Our talks with the investment group may have fallen through, but there are many ways to skin a cat!*

there are other (good) fish in the sea There are many other excellent or more suitable people, things, opportunities, or possibilities in the world that one may find. Said especially if someone has recently been through something or some romantic relationship that has failed or turned out badly. *I know you are broken up about Janet leaving you, but there are other fish in the sea. I'm pretty disappointed that I didn't get the job, but I'm trying to remind myself that there are other good fish in the sea.*

there are other pebbles on the beach There are many other excellent or more suitable people, things, opportunities, or possibilities in the world that one may find. Said especially if someone has recently been

through something or some romantic relationship that has failed or turned out badly. *I know you are broken up about Janet leaving you, but there are other pebbles on the beach. I'm pretty disappointed that I didn't get the job, but I'm trying to remind myself that there are other pebbles on the beach.*

there are plenty more pebbles on the beach There are many other excellent or more suitable people, things, opportunities, or possibilities in the world that one may find. Said especially if someone has recently been through something or some romantic relationship that has failed or turned out badly. *I know you are broken up about Janet leaving you, but there are plenty more pebbles on the beach. I'm pretty disappointed that I didn't get the job, but I'm trying to remind myself that there are plenty more pebbles on the beach.*

there are plenty of (other) pebbles on the beach There are many other excellent or more suitable people, things, opportunities, or possibilities in the world that one may find. Said especially if someone has recently been through something or some romantic relationship that has failed or turned out badly. *I know you are broken up about Janet leaving you, but there are plenty of pebbles on the beach. I'm pretty disappointed that I didn't get the job, but I'm trying to remind myself that there are plenty of other pebbles on the beach.*

there for everyone to see A set phrase said about something that has been publicized, exposed, or revealed, often to one's embarrassment or frustration. *I can't believe you got a tattoo, and on your arm, no less! It's there for everyone to see—like they need another reason to think I'm a bad parent! Can you believe he put that award on his desk? It's there for everyone to see, so that they think he's some tech visionary.*

there is (a) method in (one's) madness There is a specific, rational purpose in what one is doing or planning, even though it may seem crazy or absurd to another person. *I know you don't understand my motivation for this decision, but after the dust settles you'll see that there is a method in my madness. You may have method in your madness, but these radical changes to the business could still prove catastrophic.*

there is (a) method to (one's) madness There is a specific, rational purpose in what one is doing or planning, even though it may seem crazy or absurd to another person. *I know you don't understand my motivation*

for this decision, but after the dust settles, you'll see that there is a method to my madness. There may be method to your madness, but these radical changes to the business could still prove catastrophic.

there is always room at the top No matter how daunting a task or venture may seem, everyone has the opportunity to succeed. US politician Daniel Webster is thought to have said this phrase in response to warnings against becoming a lawyer, which was seen as an oversaturated field in the 19th century. *I'm not worried about starting out at that renowned company as an intern—there's always room at the top.*

there is an exception to every rule Rules are not as clear, permanent, and unchanging as they may seem. A: *"I'm so relieved that the principal has not punished my daughter for missing more days of school than school policy allows."* B: *"Well, she was very sick. There is an exception to every rule." As much as I try to remind her that there is an exception to every rule, my grandmother remains totally inflexible.*

there is no harm in (someone's) doing (something) Doing something may be good, pragmatic, or beneficial, and will not cause any problems or harm. *The contractor might not be willing to go any lower on the price, but there's no harm in asking. Sure, you might not be accepted for the PhD program, but there's no harm in your trying, is there?*

there is no use crying over spilt milk See [\(it's/there's\) no use crying over spilt milk](#).

there is reason in the roasting of eggs Even the strangest actions are done for a reason. *I don't understand why my brother quit his job all of a sudden, but there is reason in the roasting of eggs, I suppose. Don't ask your father why he's on the roof—just accept that there is reason in the roasting of eggs.*

there is truth in wine One who is intoxicated is more apt to speak honestly. It is a translation of the Latin phrase "in vino veritas." *Make sure that Mark's cup is never empty tonight—I need to find out why he's getting divorced, and there is truth in wine.*

there we go That is what was needed, desired, asked for, or sought after. *There we go, team! Keep moving the ball down the field like that, and we'll have a shot of winning this game! Ah, there we go: the problem was a corrupted file in your computer's registry.*

there will be the devil to pay There will be a huge amount of trouble (if a particular thing does/does not happen or is/is not done). *There'll be the devil to pay if they catch us sneaking out this late at night! If you don't have that report finished by lunch, there will be the devil to pay!*

there you are Here is what you needed or asked for; I present this to you. *There you are, the complete works of William Shakespeare.*

there you go **1.** Here is what you needed or asked for; I present this to you. *There you go, the complete works of William Shakespeare.* **2.** There you have it; that's the way it is. *I know our political system isn't perfect, but there you go.* **3.** You're doing that well or correctly; nice job. *There you go! I knew you'd get the hang of it eventually!*

there you have it See [and there you have it](#).

there's a sucker born every minute There is always someone willing or able to be swindled or deceived. The phrase is usually attributed to American showman P.T. Barnum. *Any time I see a ridiculous product for sale, I remind myself that there's a sucker born every minute. The only reason he has a following is because there's a sucker born every minute. No rational person would think he knows what he's talking about!*

there's a turn-up for the book(s) That is a remarkable, unusual, and unexpected event, occurrence, or piece of news. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *Mr Literature Snob reading a trashy romance novel? Now there's a turn-up for the books! A: "After the concert, I ran into the singer at a pub down the road from the venue. It turns out his mother went to the same school as mine!" B: "Wow, there's a turn-up for the book!"*

(there's) no comparison This person or thing is clearly and inarguably better than any other. *This place serves the best pizza in town—no comparison! She might not be the most sociable person around, but when it comes to knowledge of classic literature, there's no comparison.*

there's no I in team Said to encourage teamwork and cooperation, as opposed to self-centered thinking or action. The "I" in the phrase refers to the first person pronoun. *I know you want to play first base, but we really need you in the outfield today. Come on, there's no I in team. There's no I in team, people. Focus on what will be good for the group as a whole.*

(there's) no point crying over spilt milk It does no good to get

upset over a bad decision or unfortunate event that has already come to pass and cannot be changed. *We were pretty disappointed to have lost the championship game, but there's no point crying over spilt milk. We just have to train harder for next season! I was such a fool to take out that second mortgage. Oh well, no point crying over spilt milk!*

there's none so deaf as those that will not hear People who choose not to listen will never hear what is being said. *You can try to reason with him all you want, but his mind is made up. There's none so deaf as those that will not hear.*

there's nowt so queer as folk There's nothing as strange as people. This phrase is typically used to emphasize someone's particularly odd behavior. ("Nowt" is a Northern English variation on "naught.") Primarily heard in UK. *Whenever someone does something really bizarre, I remind myself that there's nowt so queer as folk.*

there's one for (record) the book(s) That is a remarkable, unusual, and unexpected event, occurrence, or piece of news. Primarily heard in US. *Mr. Literature Snob reading a trashy romance novel? Now there's one for the books! A: "After the concert, I ran into the singer at a pub down the road from the venue. It turns out his mother went to the same school as mine!" B: "Wow, there's one for the record book!"*

they that live longest see most Older people have had a lot of life experiences. *You can always learn something from your elders—they that live longest see most.*

they'd better be going See [\(one had\) better be going](#).

they'd better get moving See [\(one had\) better get moving](#).

they'd better get on their horse See [\(one had\) better get on \(one's\) horse](#).

they'd better keep quiet about it See [\(someone had\) better keep quiet about it](#).

they'd better keep still about it See [\(someone had\) better keep still about it](#).

they'll rue the day See [rue the day \(that something happened\)](#).

they're only after one thing A phrase typically said to females as a

warning that males (usually teenagers) are only interested in sexual intercourse. *Stay away from high school boys, they're only after one thing!*

thick as a brick See [\(as\) thick as a brick](#).

thick as a shit See [\(as\) thick as a shit](#).

thick as a short plank See [\(as\) thick as a short plank](#).

thick as short planks See [\(as\) thick as two short planks](#).

thick of things See [in the thick of things](#).

thick skin The ability to ignore verbal attacks or criticism from others. *If you're going to pursue a career in politics, you're going to have to develop a thick skin and not let the criticism of your detractors bother you.*

thick-skulled Stupid, dimwitted, or obtuse. *I was pretty thick-skulled going through high school, but when I started college—I decided to start taking my studies more seriously. Jen's new girlfriend is very nice, but she's pretty thick-skulled.*

thief in the night A person or thing that moves in a swift and secretive, stealthy, or surreptitious manner. *The cancer spread through my lungs and into my bones like a thief in the night, giving me no chance of beating it.*

thief in the night See [like a thief in the night](#).

thigh-slapper A hilarious joke, especially one that evokes loud and prolonged laughter. *My uncle told me a real thigh-slapper the other day! Do you want to hear it?*

thin air A figurative phrase used to suggest nothingness or nonexistence. *I had no idea she'd researched the budget so thoroughly—she pulled that report out of thin air. I didn't see Mike leave the party, he just disappeared into thin air.*

thin as a rail See [\(as\) thin as a rail](#).

thin as a rake See [\(as\) thin as a rake](#).

thin as a stick See [\(as\) thin as a stick](#).

a thin line A very narrow division between two alternatives, one of which is much worse than the other. *As a new parent, you learn that there's a thin line between looking out for your child's welfare and being overprotective.*

thin on the ground Not plentiful or abundant; scarce. Primarily heard

in UK, Australia. *That type of bird is thin on the ground these days—I hope it's not going extinct.*

thin on top Balding. This phrase refers to thinning hair on the top of one's head. *I should have known I would be thin on top by 30—none of the older men in my family have much hair.*

thin section A slice of an object or substance that can be viewed under a microscope. *Where is the thin section of that mineral specimen? I want to take a look at it under the microscope.*

a thing of beauty is a joy forever Something beautiful will give pleasure long after it ceases to exist. This phrase is taken from John Keats' poem *Endymion*. *Thoughts of blooming flowers sustain me through the cold winter months. Truly, a thing of beauty is a joy forever.*

the thing of it is The main or fundamental issue or element (of what's being discussed). A longer variant of "the thing is." *I agree with your point, but the thing of it is, if we agree to increase spending for education, then all sorts of other public utilities will go underfunded as a result!*

thing of the past 1. Something that no longer exists. *Those stores are a thing of the past—their parent company filed bankruptcy a few years ago. 2.* By extension, something that is no longer popular or commonplace. *I think everyone is glad that leisure suits are a thing of the past. In today's society, it certainly seems like manners are becoming a thing of the past.*

things could be better See [could be better](#).

things could be worse See [could be worse](#).

things couldn't be better See [couldn't be better](#).

things that go bump in the night Frightful, deadly, and usually supernatural things or events that one imagines in the dark of night. *When I was a kid, I hated staying in my grandparents' spooky old house because I was always kept awake by thoughts of ghosts, axe murderers, and other things that go bump in the night.*

think aloud To verbalize one's thoughts. A: "And I guess I should also pick up some plywood while we're out..." B: "Pardon me?" A: "Sorry, I'm just thinking aloud!"

think of England See [close \(one's\) eyes and think of England](#).



think of England See [close \(one's\) eyes and think of England](#).

think of the children Consider how a particular course of action will affect young people. The phrase is often used in a panicked way, to draw attention or support to a cause. *Think of the children—if they don't have a park to play in, they will turn to unsavory activities instead. We need to band together to discourage drunk driving. Think of the children!*

think (one) hung the moon To consider someone to be extraordinary, the best, or exceptionally wonderful. *Your little sister absolutely adores you. She thinks you hung the moon!*

think (one's) shit doesn't stink vulgar slang To assume an air of arrogance, condescension, or superiority over others; to think that one is better or more refined than other people. *Look at her, hobnobbing with the rich upper crust and refusing to come talk to us. Just when did she start thinking her shit doesn't stink?*

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think out loud To verbalize one's thoughts, especially when trying to produce a solution or conclusion about something. *Those weren't really suggestions for a solution, I was just thinking out loud. OK, so we've got 20 over there, 10 from the last one, five pending—sorry, I was thinking out loud.*

think (someone) hung the moon and the stars To consider someone to be extraordinary, the best, or exceptionally wonderful. *Your little sister absolutely adores you; she thinks you hung the moon and the stars!*

think tank An organization or group of people working to perform research and propose solutions and courses of action to another organization or group, often political parties, government bodies, or the military. *President Ronald Reagan based many of his policies on the results of a study done by the Heritage Foundation, an influential conservative think tank.*

think the sun shines out (someone's) backside To believe a person is better or more important than others or above reproach. (Note: If thought about oneself, it means that they are arrogant, conceited, or self-

absorbed. If someone thinks this of another person, it means that they love or admire that person to such a degree as to be blind to any of their potential faults.) *Tom has acted like he's such a hotshot after getting the promotion. He thinks the sun shines out his backside! He's absolutely head-over-heels in love with Mary. Even though I find her a bit irritating, he thinks the sun shines out her backside.*

third person 1. In grammar, a class of pronoun (and its accompanying verb) that is used to refer to a person or thing other than the speaker or the listener. *"He" is a third person pronoun.* **2.** In writing, a style in which facts or details are presented objectively. This style is used in both creative pieces (often so that the author is not limited to just one character's perspective) and in academic papers (where facts need to be presented without bias or emotion). *This essay must be written in the third person because you are stating facts about historical events, not sharing your feelings about them.*

third string The substitute players who are second in line to replace the starters (or "first string") as a game goes on. A player on the third string is considered the third best player in that position. *My brother seems pretty happy with being the team's third string quarterback, even though he knows he won't get to play unless the two guys ahead of him get injured.*

third time lucky The belief or hope that the third attempt at something will be successful. Primarily heard in UK. *I hope to make it third time lucky after failing this test twice already!*

third time pays for all Success is more enjoyable, and more likely to happen, after initial failures. *I know you're worried about failing this test again, but keep in mind that the third time pays for all.*

third time's a charm The belief or hope that the third attempt at something will be successful. Primarily heard in US. *I hope the third time's a charm—I've already failed this test twice already!*

third wheel Someone who has no real place or purpose in a situation, likened to a superfluous extra wheel on a two-wheeled vehicle. *When Kelly invited me to go to the movies, I didn't know that her boyfriend would be joining us. I felt like a third wheel the entire night.*

thirdhand 1. adverb Indirectly, as opposed to from the original source. *But I heard thirdhand, so who knows if that information is actually true.* **2.** adjective Describing information that has been learned indirectly, as opposed

to from the original source. *I can't trust this thirdhand gossip! Who was in the meeting and can tell us what really happened?* **3.** adjective Describing an item that one has obtained after two previous owners. *Try to pretend that this isn't a thirdhand dress and gush about how good it looks on me!*

this and that Miscellany; a lot of different, varying things. A: "What did you and Steve talk about when you met for dinner?" B: "Oh, this and that. We don't really get into deep or meaningful conversations."

this charge See [charge](#).

this instance This particular situation. *I know I discouraged you from using too many commas in your essays, but, in this instance, I would add a comma. In this instance, Carrie needs her friends' love and support, regardless of how independent she is the rest of the time.*

this side of the black stump Within the local community or a general area familiar to the speaker and/or audience, where "black stump" is used colloquially as an imaginary marker of the edge of civilization. Primarily heard in Australia. *You won't find a better deal this side of the black stump. I've got the tastiest recipe for beef stew this side of the black stump.*

this snipe hunt See [snipe hunt](#).

this too shall pass (away) Nothing is permanent. This phrase is often used as encouragement to remind someone that a bad or unpleasant situation will eventually end. *While I was going through my divorce, I was constantly reminding myself that this too shall pass. I know you're grieving now, but believe me, this too shall pass.*

this (very) minute **1.** Right away; at once; immediately. *Billy, get in here this minute and explain how my favorite vase got broken! Oh jeepers, look at the time! I've got to go this very minute, or I'm going to be late!* **2.** At this moment or just a moment ago. *I'm sorry I can't chat longer, but I'm heading off this minute for a doctor's appointment. You only just missed Daniel, he left this very minute.*

this, that, and the other Miscellany; a lot of different, varying things. Jen: "What did you and Steve talk about when you met for a pint?" Dave: "Oh, this, that, and the other. We don't really get into deep or meaningful conversations." *I really need to sort through this drawer. It has*

this, that, and the other in it, but I can never find what I'm actually looking for!

thorn in (one's) side A person or thing that is frequently problematic and/or annoying. *My new neighbors blast music at all hours of the day and night—they're a real thorn in my side My car has become such a thorn in my side—today is the third day this week that it wouldn't start!*

thorn in (someone's) side A constant or persistent cause of annoyance, frustration, or trouble. *My professor was an environmental activist when he was younger, and, apparently, he was quite a thorn in the oil companies' sides at the time. My little brother is such a thorn in my side—he always wants to do stuff with me, especially when I'm trying to hang out with my friends.*

thorn in the flesh A constant or persistent cause of annoyance, frustration, or trouble. *My little brother is such a thorn in the flesh—he always wants to do stuff with me, especially when I'm trying to hang out with my friends.*

those are the breaks There is nothing we can do about the way things have unfolded, especially bad ones, so there is no reason to be upset about it; that's just the way things are. *I'm pretty gutted about not getting into the grad school program I wanted, but hey, those are the breaks.*

those that have, get more People who already have many advantages in life are in a position to receive more good things (such as opportunities, money, etc.). *Of course the millionaire's daughter got the job instead of me—those that have, get more.*

Those who can, do. Those who can't, teach. Those who are especially skilled in a certain field or area will be able to pursue a career, while those who are less skilled will end up teaching about it instead. A: *"I know he always aspired to be a great novelist, but the last I heard he's still teaching middle school English."* B: *"Well, those who can, do; those who can't, teach."*

those who can't do, teach Those who are unable to successfully find a career in their field of interest end up teaching about it instead. (A shortening of "Those who can, do; those who can't, teach.") A: *"I know he always aspired to be a great novelist, but the last I heard, he's still teaching middle school English."* B: *"Well, those who can't do, teach."*

those who have, get more People who already have many advantages in life are in a position to receive more good things (such as opportunities, money, etc.). *Of course the millionaire's daughter got the job instead of me—those who have, get more.*

those who live by the sword, die by the sword **1.** Those who choose a path of violence against others should expect to have violence and harm visited upon themselves. (Often shortened to "live by the sword, die by the sword.") *The young men of this city getting caught up in gang violence have the shortest lifespans of anyone in the state. True enough, those who live by the sword, die by the sword.* **2.** If you rely upon a certain means of doing something, especially that which is illegal, illicit, or harmful to others, you are likely to have a negative outcome as a result thereof. (Often shortened to "live by the sword, die by the sword.") *For years, the senator took bribes and skimmed profits from kickbacks all over his state, until finally the FBI launched a sting against him that ended up putting him away for life. Those who live by the sword, die by the sword.*

thread and thrum A combination of good and bad. "Thrum" are the bits of thread left on the loom after a finished item has been removed. *I know you're disappointed with your minor role in the play, but at least you get to act—you have to accept the thread and thrum.*

thread the needle **1.** To insert thread through the eye of a needle. *You'll need to thread the needle before you can start sewing.* **2.** To pass something through a narrow space between two things. *The quarterback really threaded the needle with that pass between two defenders.* **3.** A children's game in which the participants stand in a line and hold hands. The person at the end of the line then ducks under the others' linked arms, pulling the rest of the line along with him or her. *Come on, we're playing thread the needle!*

three-dimensionality **1.** The quality of having three dimensions: height, width, and depth. *I created a scale model because I think my vision for the building is best expressed by something with three-dimensionality.* **2.** The quality of being fully realized or developed. *The best film is one that has a clear artistic vision, compelling plot, and characters with three-dimensionality.*

three-martini lunch A long, relaxed lunch break at which cocktails are served. It is typically taken during the work day. Primarily heard in US.

They're not getting anything done, they're just out on a three-martini lunch while the rest of us are stuck here in the office! Every time I travel to our corporate headquarters, the executives take me out for a three-martini lunch.

three on a match Any action that is thought to cause bad luck. Lighting three cigarettes with one match was regarded as a dangerous practice by soldiers in wartime, as the burning match could reveal their position to the enemy. *Unless you enjoy suffering, steer clear of things like broken mirrors and three on a match! We can't have three on a match, or else something bad is sure to happen!*

three-on-the-tree See [3-on-the-tree](#).

three-ring circus A chaotic situation, often one in which a lot of activity is occurring simultaneously. *I felt like I was in a three-ring circus when I babysat my neighbor's three noisy, mischievous children. Without the boss around, the business quickly devolved into a three-ring circus.*

three score and ten Seventy. (A "score" is a group of 20.) *Our forefathers were lucky to reach three score and ten—many of them died much younger than that.*

three sheets to the wind Severely intoxicated from alcohol, to the point of finding control of one's actions or coordination difficult. Taken most likely from nautical terminology, where a "sheet" is the rope that controls the sails of a tall ship; if several sheets are loose or mishandled, the boat's movement becomes unsteady and difficult to control, like that of a drunk person. *On his 21st birthday, Jeff's friends took him to every bar in town until he was three sheets to the wind.*

three skips of a louse obsolete Some infinitesimal or trivial amount. *Sir, I care not even three skips of a louse for the censures of a reprobate such as yourself.*

threenager slang A three-year-old child who displays the moody rebelliousness stereotypical of teenagers. *Now that my daughter is a threenager, I have to deal with temper tantrums and meltdowns on an almost hourly basis.*

thrill killer One who derives excitement or pleasure from murdering people. *I think our suspect is a thrill killer and really enjoys carrying out these violent crimes.*



thrilled to bits Ecstatic; very pleased and excited. A: *"I really hope Mary enjoyed her surprise birthday party."* B: *"I'm sure she did; she seemed thrilled to bits!"* I was thrilled to bits to hear that I'd been selected for a literary award in New York City.

thrilled to death Ecstatic; very pleased and excited. A: *"I really hope Mary enjoyed her surprise birthday party."* B: *"I'm sure she did; she seemed thrilled to death!"* I was thrilled to death to hear that I'd been selected for a literary award in New York City.

thrilled to pieces Ecstatic; very pleased and excited. A: *"I really hope Mary enjoyed her surprise birthday party."* B: *"I'm sure she did; she seemed thrilled to pieces!"* I was thrilled to pieces to hear that I'd been selected for a literary award in New York City.

through the back door In a deceptive, corrupt, or indirect manner, especially in a way intended to reduce the visibility of an action. *The school board is trying to rush this major change through the back door, and we need to fight them on it!*

through the grapevine Through or via an informal means of communication or information, especially gossip. *There is always some absurd rumor or piece of misinformation through the grapevine at work, but I try to just tune most of that out. I heard through the grapevine that John is planning to propose to Samantha next week!*

a throw Each. A piece. *You mean to tell me that these T-shirts are 50 bucks a throw? Sheesh!* A: *"How much did you guys contribute to Lucy's charity?"* B: *"Oh, \$20 a throw, so hopefully she raised quite a bit of money."*

throw a bone See [throw \(one\) a bone](#).

throw a bone to (someone) To attempt to appease or placate someone by giving them something trivial or of minor importance, or by doing some small favor for them. (A reference to giving an animal a bone or scrap from a bigger portion of food.) *The city council has decided to throw a bone to local building companies and will be releasing small amounts of public space to commercial development.*

throw a googly See [throw \(someone\) a googly](#).

throw a scare into (someone) To unsettle, startle, or shock someone; to instill someone with fear or disquietude. *Though heavily favored*

to lose the election, the Republican candidate's late surge in the polls is sure to have thrown a scare into the incumbent president's camp.

throw a sickie To tell one's employer, truthfully or otherwise, that one is ill and unable to attend work. Primarily heard in UK. *I'm going to have work the morning after my birthday party. Something tells me I'll be throwing a sickie that day!*

throw a spanner in(to) the works To disrupt, foil, or cause problems to a plan, activity, or project. Primarily heard in UK. *We had everything in line for the party, but having the caterer cancel on us at the last minute really threw a spanner in the works! It'll really throw a spanner into the works if the board decides not to increase our funding for this project.*

throw a (temper) tantrum To have an outburst of childish or unreasonable anger, frustration, or ill temper. *I was so embarrassed when Danny started throwing a tantrum in the grocery store. You're adults, not children, and throwing a temper tantrum every time something doesn't go your way is not the way to address things.*

throw a tub to the whale To create a diversion, in order to avoid a dangerous or unpleasant situation. *No one can know that I'm here, so throw a tub to the whale while I sneak out the back door!*

throw a wobbler To suddenly become very upset or intensely angry and make a big display of it. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *John threw a wobbler at work after the boss criticized his report. Needless to say, he won't be coming back in on Monday.*

throw a wobbly To suddenly become very upset or intensely angry and make a big display of it. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *John threw a wobbly at work after the boss criticized his report. Needless to say, he won't be welcome back in the office on Monday.*

throw an eye on (something) To inspect something casually and quickly but with attention to detail. *Tom, would you mind just throwing an eye on these reports before you leave? I just want to be sure I didn't make any mistakes.*

throw an eye over (something) To inspect something casually and quickly but with attention to detail. *Tom, would you mind just throwing an eye over these reports before you leave? I just want to be sure I didn't make*

any mistakes.

throw away the key See [lock \(someone\) up and throw away the key](#).

throw caution to the wind(s) To abandon one's cautiousness in order to take a risk. *You can't live life completely reserved, you know. You've got to throw caution to the wind every now and then. After my father won a bit of money at the race tracks, he began throwing caution to the winds and gambling everything we had there.*

throw chunks To vomit, especially violently or in great quantity. *Everyone bought John so many drinks on his 21st birthday that he was throwing chunks before midnight. I felt like I was going to throw chunks from seasickness out on that boat.*

throw discretion to the wind(s) To act or behave recklessly and/or fearlessly, with no sense of restraint or propriety. (An older variant of the now more common "throw caution to the wind(s).") *After my father won a bit of money at the race tracks, he began throwing discretion to the winds and ended up gambling away everything we had. You can't live life completely reserved, you know—you've got to throw discretion to the wind every now and then.*

throw enough mud at the wall, some of it will stick If you make enough attempts or guesses, some of them will be correct or useful. *This is the latest version of my invention, and I think it's really going to work this time. Throw enough mud at the wall, some of it will stick, right? It took a while, but we finally came up with some great ideas in the meeting today—throw enough mud at the wall, some of it will stick.*

throw money away To waste money. *Quit throwing money away on rent and just move back in with your parents. I really threw money away when I bought that old car—it breaks down almost daily.*

throw (one) a bone To attempt to appease or placate someone by giving them something trivial or of minor importance or by doing some small favor for them. (A reference to giving a dog a bone or scrap from a bigger portion of food.) *My younger brother is always pleading for me to help out his career, so I threw him a bone and got him a small gig.*

throw (one) off the scent To misdirect one away from their pursuit; to steer one's investigation or suspicions in the wrong direction. *The mafia*

accountant managed to throw the authorities off the scent of the mob's money laundering for years, but they finally caught up with him after an anonymous source tipped them off. That outlier data threw me off the scent for a while, but I think my research is back on track now.

throw (one) off the track To misdirect one away from their pursuit; to steer one's investigation or suspicions in the wrong direction. *The mafia accountant managed to throw the authorities off the track of the mob's money laundering for years, but they finally caught up with him after an anonymous source tipped them off. That outlier data threw me off the track for a while, but I think my research is back on solid ground now.*

throw (one's) bonnet over the windmill To act in a deranged, reckless, or unconventional manner. Refers to the eponymous character of the novel *Don Quixote*, who tosses his hat over a windmill (which he imagines is a giant) as a challenge to it. *Sarah is always trying to buck social conventions, throwing her bonnet over the windmill whenever possible. I know you like to take risks in business, but don't throw your bonnet over the windmill.*

throw (one's) cap over the windmill To act in a deranged, reckless, or unconventional manner. Refers to the eponymous character of the novel *Don Quixote*, who tosses his hat over a windmill (which he imagines is a giant) as a challenge to it. *Sarah is always trying to buck social conventions, throwing her cap over the windmill whenever possible. I know you like to take risks in business, but don't throw your cap over the windmill.*

throw (one's) hat over the windmill To act in a deranged, reckless, or unconventional manner. Refers to the eponymous character of the novel *Don Quixote*, who tosses his hat over a windmill (which he imagines is a giant) as a challenge to it. *Sarah is always trying to buck social conventions, throwing her hat over the windmill whenever possible. I know you like to take risks in business, but don't throw your hat over the windmill.*

throw (one's) toys out of the pram To behave in a petulantly upset or angry manner; to act like an angry child. Primarily heard in UK. *Manchester United's star striker threw his toys out of the pram after he was ejected from the match for biting another player.*

throw (one's) weight about To assert oneself in a controlling, domineering, or authoritarian manner; to exercise one's position of authority,

power, or influence, especially to an overbearing or excessive degree. (A variant of the more common "throw one's weight around.") *An effective leader should inspire enough confidence in their team that they don't have to throw their weight about to get things done. I'm sick of Donald coming into these meetings and throwing his weight about. Can't he just leave us to our own devices?*

throw (one's) weight around To assert oneself in a controlling, domineering, or authoritarian manner; to exercise one's position of authority, power, or influence, especially to an overbearing or excessive degree. *I'm sick of Don coming into these meetings and throwing his weight around. Can't he just leave us to our own devices? You can expect the big industries to throw their weight around in order to influence the regulations.*

throw (one's/someone's) name in the hat To submit one's own or someone else's name for consideration in a selection, such as a competition, application pool, election, etc. *I'm thinking about throwing my name in the hat for class president! Just so you know, I threw your name in the hat for a chance to win an all-expenses-paid trip to Florida! As has been widely predicted, the governor announced today that he was throwing his name in the hat for the presidential election next year.*

throw shade slang To subtly issue insults or expressions of disapproval. *I was just checking my phone for a second when Joe totally threw shade at me, saying, "Some of us don't need to be glued to our phones every minute of the day." My mom is the queen of throwing shade. She loves to say, "Is that really what you're going to wear?"*

throw smoke slang In baseball, to pitch fastballs. *Wow, I can't believe he's still throwing smoke after eight innings. Watch out for this pitcher, she really throws smoke out there.*

throw (some) light on (something) To reveal information or details about something; to clarify or help people understand something. *We've hired a private investigator to help throw light on the clandestine dealings of the baron. These documents we've uncovered throw some light on how the late author's final book was meant to end.*

throw (some) light upon (something) To reveal information or details about something; to clarify or help people understand something. (A more formal version of "throw (some) light on something.") *We've hired a*

private investigator to help throw light upon the clandestine dealings of the baron. These documents we've uncovered throw some light upon how the late author's final book was meant to end.

throw (some) shapes slang To dance, especially to popular music. Primarily heard in UK. *If I've had a couple of drinks and the music is good, I can't help but throw some shapes on the dance floor. The flash mob started throwing shapes in the train station to classic 1970s disco tunes.*

throw (someone) a googly To present (someone with) a question, situation, or piece of information that is surprising or unexpected. Taken from cricket, in which a "googly" is a ball thrown counter to that which the batsman expects. Primarily heard in UK. *Dave really threw me a googly when he asked if I'd like to go on a date with him. The manager decided to throw a googly by letting his staff have Friday off.*

throw (someone) off the trail To misdirect someone away from their point of pursuit; to steer someone's investigation or suspicions in the wrong direction. *The mafia accountant had been throwing the authorities off the trail of the mob's money laundering for years. My husband has some suspicions about our affair, but the trip I'm taking for work will throw him off the trail.*

throw (someone) under the bus 1. To exploit someone's trust for one's own purpose, gain, or agenda; to harm someone through deceit or treachery. *Senator Davis was supposed to be working with me to bridge the gap between Democrats and Republicans on the issue of gun control, but, instead, she threw me under the bus to get a boost in the polls with her constituency. The investment company threw its clients under the bus when it chose to redirect their hard earned money into various Ponzi schemes that benefited only a few board members at the top.* 2. To avoid blame, trouble, or criticism by allowing someone else to take responsibility. *Tommy was caught with the marijuana in his backpack, but he threw me under the bus and said it belonged to me. Our manager never hesitates to throw an underling under the bus when something goes wrong in the office.*

throw (something) into question To cause something to be doubted, scrutinized, or a matter for serious discussion. *These series of protests have thrown into question the ability of this government to remain in power. This reluctance to act is bound to throw your leadership skills into*

question.

throw straws against the wind To attempt something futile. *Hey, that couch will never fit up the steps—stop throwing straws against the wind!*

throwback Thursday A social media phenomenon in which older pictures (such as childhood photos) are posted on Thursday with the phrase (often abbreviated "TBT") as an accompanying hashtag or caption. *I'm going to post my second grade class picture for throwback Thursday! Me at my senior prom! #throwbackThursday*

thrown a scare into See [throw a scare into \(someone\)](#).

thrown a sickie See [throw a sickie](#).

thrown a wobbler See [throw a wobbler](#).

thrown a wobbly See [throw a wobbly](#).

thrown caution to the wind See [throw caution to the wind\(s\)](#).

thrown chunks See [throw chunks](#).

thrown discretion to the wind See [throw discretion to the wind\(s\)](#).

thrown off balance See [be thrown off balance](#).

thrown off the scent See [throw \(one\) off the scent](#).

thrown off the track See [throw \(one\) off the track](#).

thrown off the trail See [throw \(someone\) off the trail](#).

thrown our toys out of the pram See [throw \(one's\) toys out of the pram](#).

thrown our weight about See [throw \(one's\) weight about](#).

thumb on the scale A method of deception or manipulation that creates an unfair advantage for the swindler, likened to a merchant holding a thumb on the scale when weighing goods for sale, therefore increasing the weight and price. *You have to suspect that the casinos have their thumb on the scale when it comes to the slot machines. There's no way you're getting fair odds.*

thumbnail sketch 1. A small picture that presents a smaller version of a larger image or proposed image. *Before fully redesigning the layout of the office, the interior designer provided me with a thumbnail sketch of his initial*

plans. **2.** A short description or preview. *Class, each of you will need to submit a thumbnail sketch of your essay topic for my approval.*

thus and so **1.** adjective Of or relating to a particular way, manner, or arrangement. *In practical terms, it may be taken for granted that the world is thus and so, but for the sake of philosophical argument, we should not and cannot assume any such thing. I'm less interested with the thus-and-so prescriptions of religious doctrines, and more concerned with the general message of Christianity as a whole.* **2.** adverb phrase In such a particular way or manner; as directed or instructed. *The boss is so specific about the way a report is laid out. If you don't write it thus and so each and every time, you'll be sure to hear about it from him later.*

thus and such **1.** adjective Of or relating to a particular way, manner, or arrangement. *In practical terms, it may be taken for granted that the world is thus and such, but for the sake of philosophical argument, we should not and cannot assume any such thing. I'm less interested with the thus-and-such prescriptions of religious doctrines, and more concerned with the general message of Christianity as a whole.* **2.** adverb phrase In such a particular way or manner; as directed or instructed. *The boss is so specific about the way a report is laid out. If you don't write it thus and such each and every time, you'll be sure to hear about it from him later.*

thus and thus **1.** adjective Of or relating to a particular way, manner, or arrangement. *In practical terms, it may be taken for granted that the world is thus and thus, but for the sake of philosophical argument, we should not and cannot assume any such thing. I'm less interested with the thus-and-thus prescriptions of religious doctrines, and more concerned with the general message of Christianity as a whole.* **2.** adverb phrase In such a particular way or manner; as directed or instructed. *The boss is so specific about the way a report is laid out. If you don't write it thus and thus each and every time, you'll be sure to hear about it from him later.*

tick all the (right) boxes To satisfy or fulfill everything that is necessary or desired. Primarily heard in UK. *Of course, a prospective employee may tick all the right boxes on paper but might not be suited to the job once they're actually working for you. His newest thriller ticks all the boxes the author's fans will be hoping for.*

tick over **1.** Of an engine, to run at an idle pace in neutral while the



vehicle is not moving. Primarily heard in UK. *I won't stay any longer, as I've left the car ticking over outside.* **2.** To continue operating steadily but uneventfully. Primarily heard in UK. A: *"How are things lately, Jeff?"* B: *"Just ticking over, can't complain really."* They decided to leave one person in charge to make sure business ticked over during the long break. **3.** To record or be recorded, as on a clock or other mechanical counting device. *The Irish squad will be glad to see the first half tick over, as they'll need to regroup if they want to beat this Italian team. The taxi's meter had just ticked over £35 when we pulled into Heathrow Airport.*

a (ticking) time bomb A person, thing, or situation that can at any moment cause much havoc or result in a disastrous outcome. *I'm telling you, this dirty money we're using to finance the campaign is a ticking time bomb! If anyone were to investigate how we got it, we'd all go to jail! Jenny's attracted to men who exude an air of danger, and her new boyfriend seems like a time bomb.*

tickle (someone's) funny bone To make someone laugh; to be humorous or amusing to someone. *There's this silly statue on campus that never fails to tickle my funny bone when I walk past it. David has such wit that he can tickle the funny bone of anyone he meets.*

tickle the dragon's tail To do something risky or dangerous. *You know dad has a temper, so why are you antagonizing him? Stop tickling the dragon's tail unless you want to be grounded for weeks! Rob is definitely tickling the dragon's tail with his new interest in skydiving.*

tickled pink Very pleased with someone or something, perhaps to the point of giddiness. *My family loves my fiance as much as I do, so they were just tickled pink to hear that we're getting married. Your mother is really tickled pink that you've decided to go to her alma mater.*

tickled to death Very pleased with someone or something, perhaps to the point of giddiness. *My family loves my fiance as much as I do, so they were just tickled to death to hear that we're getting married. Your mother is really tickled to death that you've decided to go to her alma mater.*

tie on the (old) feed bag slang To begin eating; to have a meal. *I can't wait to get to grandma's and tie on the old feed bag. She always cooks the tastiest food! What do you say we tie on the feed bag before we head out?*

tie (one) (up) in knots To make one confused, anxious, worried,

and/or upset. *I've been planning to propose to James on Sunday, but the nervousness is tying me in knots! It's something about the austere, imposing way the boss speaks that always ties everyone up in knots.*

tie (oneself) in(to) knots **1.** To make oneself confused, anxious, worried, and/or upset, as when trying to make a decision, come up with an idea, or resolve an issue. *Now don't go tying yourself into knots over the details of your papers—at this point, all you need is a cohesive outline. We've tied ourselves in knots this past week trying to choose who to hire, but I think we've reached a decision.* **2.** To befuddle oneself while attempting to explain something (to someone). Primarily heard in UK. *Jim's a smart guy, but for some reason, he always ties himself into knots whenever I ask him to explain something on the computer for me.*

tie (oneself) (up) in knots **1.** To make oneself confused, anxious, worried, and/or upset, as when trying to make a decision, come up with an idea, or resolve an issue. *Now don't go tying yourself in knots over the details of your papers — at this point, all you need is a cohesive outline. We've tied ourselves in up knots this past week trying to decide on who to hire, but I think we've reached a decision.* **2.** To become flustered while attempting to explain something (to someone). Primarily heard in UK. *Jim's a smart guy, but for some reason he always ties himself up in knots whenever I ask him to explain something on the computer for me.*

tie (someone) in(to) knots To make someone confused, anxious, worried, and/or upset. *I've been planning on proposing to James on Sunday, but the nervousness is tying me into knots! It's something about the austere way the boss talks that always ties you into knots.*

tie up (some/a few) loose ends To take care of, finish, or resolve some issues or pieces of business that are not critical but have remained outstanding. *I'm just about ready to move to Europe, but I need to tie up some loose ends with my ex-girlfriend before I go. The legal team is still tying up a few loose ends in the merger contract, but, other than that, we are ready to move ahead with the deal.*

tied to (someone's) apron strings To be controlled or dominated by someone. *I'm worried that my husband will forever be tied to his mother's apron strings—he's a grown man but still does every little thing she asks! Can you make a decision on your own, or are you tied to her apron strings?*

tiger team business jargon A team of highly skilled professionals who are assembled to investigate, test, or try to exploit the potential weaknesses of a company's or organization's security system. *The tech giant has begun recruiting coders and hackers fresh out of college into tiger teams to stress test vulnerabilities in their new operating system.*

tight arse rude slang A disparaging term for an extremely frugal person; a miser. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *Don't even bother asking Jerry to donate to your charity. He's a real tight arse and never gives money to anybody.*

tight as the bark on a tree Extremely frugal. *If you're going to lunch with Derek, be prepared to pay for your own meal—he's tight as the bark on a tree. My grandfather is as tight as the bark on a tree, so he's probably saved every dollar he ever made.*

tight ass rude slang A disparaging term for an extremely frugal person; a miser. Primarily heard in US. *Don't even bother asking Jerry to donate to your charity. He's a real tight ass and never gives a dime to anybody.*

a tight corner A particularly difficult or awkward situation, especially one that is not easy to get out of. *Your brother helped me out of a tight corner when I was out of work a few years back, so I'm more than happy to lend him a hand now. Jeremy's been in more tight corners since he left college than I care to recount. I just don't know what's going to become of that boy.*

tight-lipped Secretive; not revealing information. *Does anyone know when we're moving to the new office? Management is being so tight-lipped about everything. We need to be tight-lipped about our divorce until I figure out the right time to tell my parents.*

tight-lipped 1. Literally, having one's lips pressed together, as in anger. *I knew my girlfriend was angry as soon as I saw her glaring at me, tight-lipped.* 2. Unwilling to talk openly or share details about someone or something. *I still don't know anything about Maria's new boyfriend because she's so tight-lipped about him. Don't worry, we can trust my sister to be tight-lipped—she won't tell anyone about our engagement until we do.*

a tight spot A particularly difficult or awkward situation, especially one that is not easy to get out of; a jam. *Your brother helped me out of a tight spot when I was out of work a few years back, so I'm more than happy to lend*

him a hand now. *Jeremy's been in more tight spots since he left college than I care to recount. I just don't know what's going to become of that boy.*

tighten the purse strings To become less liberal with or more controlling of one's expenditures; to decrease the availability of money for spending purposes. *After losing my job, I've had to tighten the purse strings quite a bit. We've been behind schedule ever since the boss decided to tighten the purse strings on our project.*

tighten the reins To begin doing something more carefully or cautiously; to regain or tighten control of someone or something. *This thesis you're planning is becoming unfocused. I think you should tighten the reins a bit. I wish those parents would tighten the rein on their kids, the little devils are tearing the place apart!*

till all hours (of the day and night) Until a very late hour of the night or very early hour of the morning. *Johnny keeps taking the car and staying out till all hours, and I just don't know what to do anymore! My boyfriend lives in another state, so to make up for the long distance, we stay up talking till all hours of the day and night.*

till death do us part A common phrase used in wedding ceremonies indicating that the marriage bond is be intended to last until death. Taken from the marriage liturgy in the Anglican Communion's Book of Common Prayer, the phrase refers to the fact that marriage is seen in the Christian faith as insoluble except by the death of one of the partners. (Also worded as "till death us do part," which is how it is written in the Book of Common Prayer.) *It was only as I said "Till death do us part" that I realized the solemnity and magnitude of our marriage to one another.*

till death us do part A common phrase used in wedding ceremonies indicating that the marriage bond shall be intended to last until death. Taken from the marriage liturgy in the Anglican Communion's Book of Common Prayer, the phrase refers to the fact that marriage is seen in the Christian faith as insoluble except by the death of one of the partners. (Also worded as "till death do us part," especially in the United States.) *It was only as I said "Till death us do part" that I realized the solemnity and magnitude of our marriage to one another.*

till doomsday For a very long, indefinite amount of time; forever. *Although we don't have to pay for medical care in this country, you'll*

sometimes be waiting till doomsday to receive elective treatment. My wife was talking on the phone with her sister till doomsday last night!

till (one) (is) blue in the face Of something vocalized, for a great or indefinite length of time. *You can complain about it till you're blue in the face, but we're going to your grandmother's for Thanksgiving whether you like it or not. They are such strange friends. They'll argue till they're blue in the face, then they'll go out for drinks and be the best of pals.*

till/until the bitter end **1.** Until the point of completion or conclusion, even though it may be difficult, unpleasant, or take a long time to reach. Possibly of nautical origin, referring to the "bitts" on a dock to which a ship's ropes are moored. *I'm not really enjoying this book, but I always make a point of sticking with a novel till the bitter end.* **2.** To the final or most critical extremity, such as death or total defeat. *We might not have a chance of winning today, but we have to give it our all until the bitter end! My father stayed beside my dying mother's bed till the bitter end.*

tilt the balance To change the balance of a situation, such that one side or element is favored or gains advantage. *The two candidates are so close in the polls that both are vying for something that will tilt the balance in their favor. The immense interconnectivity of social media has tilted the balance of power somewhat back into the hands of the ordinary population.*

tilt the scale(s) To change the balance of a situation, such that one side or element is favored or gains advantage. *The two candidates are so close in the polls that both are vying for something that will tilt the scale in their favor. The immense interconnectivity of social media has tilted the scales of power somewhat back into the hands of the ordinary population.*

time and material The cost of labor and materials necessary to complete a construction job. *Can you believe what these guys are charging me for time and material on this small job? What a rip-off.*

time and tide tarry for no man One cannot stop or slow the passage of time. A less common variant of the phrase "time and tide wait for no man." *If you're unhappy with your life, make changes as soon as you can because time and tide tarry for no man.*

time bomb See [a \(ticking\) time bomb](#).

time burglar A person or thing that distracts or takes time from more



useful or productive activities. *I'm trying to catch up on work after being out sick, but my inbox is such a time burglar. I'll call my mom back later—she can be a real time burglar, and I need to finish up this essay.*

time heals all wounds Emotional pain lessens over time. *I know it's hard to consider now, as you're grieving, but time heals all wounds. I'm sure you will reconcile with Kathleen eventually. After all, time heals all wounds.*

time immemorial Long before one would be able to remember; the distant past. *Our family line has presided over this land since time immemorial. Giant sea turtles have been coming to this spot to mate since time immemorial.*

time is of the essence Time is a key consideration in this situation (often because time is limited or a specific deadline must be met). *Has anyone called an ambulance? Time is of the essence with this man's injuries! We have to get these pages to the printer by 8, so work faster, people—time is of the essence!*

the time of the month See [that/\(one's\) time of the month](#).

time out of mind Long before one would be able to remember; a very long time ago. *Our family line has presided over this land since time out of mind, but with the fall of the aristocracy, that seems to be coming to an end. Giant sea turtles have been coming to this spot to mate for time out of mind.*

timing is everything The success of something is often related to when it happens. *You shouldn't start a new business during an economic recession—timing is everything. Timing is everything in relationships. I love Renee, but I want to get married, and she just isn't ready to settle down yet.*

tin ear **1.** A lack of musical ability, especially in relation to proper pitch. *Unfortunately, most karaoke singers have a tin ear.* **2.** The inability to recognize subtleties in language. *Don't try to joke around with him—he has a tin ear and can't distinguish sarcasm.*

a tin god See [\(little\) tin god](#).

Tinker to Evers to Chance A legendary baseball double-play. The phrase is used as the refrain in the poem "Baseball's Sad Lexicon" by Franklin Pierce Adams. It refers to three Chicago Cubs players from the early 20th century: Joe Tinker, Johnny Evers, and Frank Chance. *I wish I had been born in an earlier era, so that I could have seen Tinker to Evers to Chance—*

not to mention Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig and all the famous players of yore.

TINSTAAFL Written abbreviation of "There is no such thing as a free lunch," meaning nothing is ever really given away for free, so be wary of hidden charges, motives, or agendas. *Of course, once you're signed up to the free program, you have to pay for all sorts of extra services to make it even worth using. It's a TINSTAAFL situation if I've ever seen one.*

a tip of the hat A small, respectful gesture of thanks, praise, or congratulations. *Having my name mentioned in the announcements about my win at the state science championship was a nice tip of the hat by the school.*

tip (one's) hat To raise or tilt the brim of one's hat as a salutation, greeting, or mark of respect. *It would be nice to live in a time when folks would tip their hats to you when you entered a room. When her father tipped his hat to me, I knew that he had come to accept me as part of the family.*

tipping down See [be tipping \(it\) down](#).

tipping (it) down Raining very heavily. Primarily heard in UK. *We have a football match scheduled for tomorrow, but if it keeps tipping down like it is today, I'm sure that it will be cancelled. Looks like it's tipping it down outside again. I guess I won't be cycling to work this morning.*

tiptoe around (someone or something) To avoid confronting or engaging with a troublesome or undesirable person, problem, situation, issue, etc. *It would be humorous if it weren't so sad the way Sarah tiptoes around her wife. The boss just keeps tiptoeing around the fact that we need to hire more staff if we want to remain competitive.*

tire kicker 1. One who examines or inspects a second-hand car or cars, often without really intending to buy anything. Primarily heard in Australia. *This guy isn't a serious buyer, he's just a tire kicker. 2.* One who wastes another's time. *We need serious candidates for this position, so make sure to eliminate any tire kickers.*

tired and emotional A euphemism for being drunk. Primarily heard in UK. *Boy, you were really tired and emotional last night—how do you feel this morning?*

tired and emotional A semi-polite or humorous euphemism for drunkenness. Primarily heard in UK. *I might be mistaken, but Sean's father looked a bit tired and emotional at the picnic, didn't he? You must excuse me,*

I'm a bit tired and emotional just now. I think I'd best be going home.

tired to death of (something) Exceedingly wearied by, bored of, or exasperated with something. *I'm tired to death of doing my boss's errands. If something doesn't change soon, I'm going to quit! I was all gung-ho about this graduate program when I first began, but I must admit that I've grown tired to death of these boring lectures.*

tissue of lies A number of false statements made to deliberately hide the truth. *After the human resources manager performed a background check on the new applicant, she realized his resume was a tissue of lies.*

tits up 1. mildly vulgar Broken or malfunctioning; dead, falling apart, or ceasing to work. ("Tits up" is sometimes hyphenated.) *Sorry, Mark, I'd love to give you a lift to the airport, but my car's tits up on me again. It looks like our co-op might be tits-up if we aren't granted a license for our communal work premises.* 2. mildly vulgar By extension, having a poor, undesired, or ruinous outcome; failing completely or not coming together at all. *We were all set to have our picnic on Saturday, but the weather went tits up, and we had to cancel at the last minute. The merger deal between the two companies turned tits-up when it came to light that one of the CEOs had been dodging tax obligations for several years.*

TL;DR An abbreviation for "Too long; didn't read," an expression that indicates that one did not read an online article or post, usually because it was deemed too long and/or boring. *I really want to write "TL;DR" on all these novella-length rants my friend keeps posting on Facebook.*

to a certain degree Somewhat; partly; in a limited way or to a limited extent. *Your essay would be improved to a certain degree by tidying up your paragraphs, but your topic on the whole has some fundamental problems. Our administration is willing to negotiate to a certain degree, but we aren't ready to make any significant changes to the legislation.*

to a certain extent Somewhat; partly; in a limited way or to a limited degree. *Your essay would be improved to a certain extent by tidying up your paragraphs, but your topic on the whole has some fundamental problems. Our administration is willing to negotiate to a certain extent, but we aren't ready to make any significant changes to the legislation.*

to a fare-thee-well 1. To a state or condition of utmost perfection or completion. *Her new house is absolutely gorgeous! They've designed it to a*

fare-thee-well. **2.** To the greatest or furthest degree possible. *After the economy crashed, the government began whittling down social welfare to a fare-thee-well. The home team trounced their opponents, beating them to a fare-thee-well.*

to a nicety With great precision or accuracy. *Every aspect of the robbery was planned out to a nicety, allowing no room for error or confusion. The chef has balanced the flavors in this dish to a nicety!*

to a turn For exactly the right amount of time necessary or desired (used almost exclusively in reference to how well meat is cooked). *My goodness, these steaks are so flavorful and have been cooked to a turn! Jeff is always the one manning the grill, because he makes sure everything on there is done to a turn!*

to all appearances According to the way things appear or how one sees things; as is apparent to observation. *To all appearances, Daren seemed a very happy, outgoing fellow, so his nervous breakdown took many people by surprise. The giant corporation was, to all appearances, doing quite well, but just last week it filed for bankruptcy.*

to an extent Somewhat; partly; in a limited way or to a limited degree. *Your essay would be improved to an extent by tidying up your paragraphs, but your topic on the whole has some fundamental problems. Our administration is willing to negotiate to an extent, but we aren't ready to make any significant changes to the legislation.*

to barely make it 1. To come very close to failing at something but succeed in the end. *That marathon was so exhausting, I barely made it! I barely made it through math class this semester.* **2.** To come very close to being late for something, such as a deadline, appointment, class, etc., but manage to arrive on time in the end. A shortening of "barely make it on time." *If you leave right now, you'll just barely make it to the film before it starts.*

to barely make it on time To come very close to being late for something (such as a deadline, appointment, class, etc.) but manage to arrive on time in the end. *Traffic was so bad this morning that I barely made it on time to the meeting. I was finishing my essay right up until the minute before it was due. I barely made it on time!*

to be honest A set phrase used to emphasize that one is speaking

truthfully (and perhaps reluctantly). *Well, to be honest, I've never liked her husband that much. I know you guys love going to bars on Saturday night, but to be honest, it really doesn't interest me.*

to be named later A set phrase used when certain details are not known at present but will be revealed later. It is perhaps most often used in sports. A: *"Who else did we get in that trade?"* B: *"Just a player to be named later."*

to bomb See [bomb](#).

to cap it all off See [cap it \(all\) off](#).

to coin a phrase A set phrase said after one uses a new expression. It is typically used jocularly to indicate the opposite (i.e. that one has just used a well-known or trite saying). *Well, we can't do anything about it now, so que sera sera, to coin a phrase.*

to do with A set phrase used to show that things are—or are not—related or connected. *Don't bring that up! That has nothing to do with this! Gina's name isn't on the report, but I know she had something to do with it. I know my son isn't the best student, but this is a volunteer position—what do grades have to do with it?*

to heel Into a position of subjugation, discipline, or submission to one's authority. (Used chiefly in the phrases "bring/call someone to heel.") *The CEO was quick to call the junior board member to heel after the latter spoke out of turn at the annual general meeting. Sir, the members of your squad are all out of control. You need to bring them to heel right away!*

to hell in a handbasket A set phrase used to emphasize that something has gone wrong or awry. Typically used with the verb "go." *I just got pulled into a meeting and assigned a huge project, so my day has really gone to hell in a handbasket. What a mess! This party really went to hell in a handbasket quickly!*

to hell with (someone or something) I'm disgusted, fed up with, or want nothing to do with someone or something; I don't care about someone or something at all. *An F? To hell with this class, I don't even like calculus! Well to hell with him then! It's not like I'm going to miss him.*

to little avail Having or with very little or no benefit, efficacy, or effect. *We did our best to keep Sarah from finding out about her dad, but to little avail. All my protesting over the decision to fire Jeff was to little avail.*

to make matters worse See [make matters worse](#).

to no avail Having or with very little benefit, efficacy, or effect. *We did our best to keep Sarah from finding out the party to no avail. All my protesting over the decision to fire Jeff was to no avail.*

to (one's) heart's desire As much as or to the point that one wants; to the point of contentment, satiety, or surfeit. *I've made plenty of food for everyone, so please eat to your heart's desire.*

to (one's) knowledge Said of that which one knows or understands. A: *"Is Janet coming in today?"* B: *"Not to my knowledge."* *To my knowledge, Jack is working a different shift these days. But Jill makes the schedule, so she would know for sure.*

to rights Into correct or proper position, arrangement, condition, or order. (Especially in the phrase "put/set (something) to rights.") *I must make sure I put the house to rights before my parents come home this evening. Since being diagnosed with terminal cancer, I've begun setting my will and financial affairs to rights.*

to some degree Somewhat; partly; in a limited way or to a limited extent. *Your essay would be improved to some degree by tidying up your paragraphs, but your topic on the whole has some fundamental problems. The administration is willing to negotiate to some degree, but it is not ready to make any significant changes to the legislation.*

to some extent Somewhat; partly; in a limited way or to a limited degree. *Your essay would be improved to some extent by tidying up your paragraphs, but your topic on the whole has some fundamental problems. The administration is willing to negotiate to some extent but it is not ready to make any significant changes to the legislation.*

to tell (you) the truth I must admit; to be honest; in actuality. *To tell you the truth, even though I majored in English literature, I've never read anything by Hemingway! I know I said I wanted to go out to the bars tonight, but to tell the truth, I'd rather just stay home and watch a movie.*

to that end For or to satisfy that reason or intention; so as to achieve that goal. *We need to cut costs if we're going to stay in business. To that end, I suggest a suspension of bonuses and a freeze on all raises across the company. Art thrives when collaboration is plentiful, so, to that end, we have*

created a new co-operative studio for all kinds of different artists.

to the effect that Of or having the general meaning that. *I didn't catch the whole meeting, but I heard something to the effect that we would begin receiving yearly bonuses again this year. Analysts' reactions to the president's speech have largely been to the effect that he focuses far too little on the economy and far too much on foreign policy.*

to the end of (one's) days Forever; until the day that one dies. *For his heinous crimes, the murderer is going to be locked away to the end of his days. Baby, you know that I'll love you to the end of my days!*

to the ends of the Earth To anywhere on Earth, including the most remote or inaccessible; as far as one needs to go. *Baby, my love for you is so strong that I would go to the ends of the Earth to be with you! That no-good cheat robbed me of my inheritance, and I'll follow him to the ends of the Earth to get it back.*

to the ends of the world To anywhere in the world, including the most remote or inaccessible places. (A variant of the more common "to the ends of the Earth.") *Baby, my love for you is so strong that I would go to the ends of the world to be with you! That no-good cheat robbed me of my inheritance, and I'll follow him to the ends of the world to get it back.*

to the full To the greatest degree or extent; thoroughly. *Everyone enjoyed the performance to the full. I have studied the works of Chaucer to the full.*

to the nines To the greatest degree or extent; to a point of perfection. (Especially in the phrase "dressed (up) to the nines.") *I know it takes me a long time getting ready, but nothing feels better than being dressed to the nines for a night out on the town. Wow, they weren't kidding when they said this new club had been designed to the nines!*

to the purpose To the point; that which is pertinent. *We don't have much time left, so please, get to the purpose.*

to the quick 1. To the exposed flesh, especially that which is tender. *I've bitten my fingernails to the quick, and still, I can't stop myself!* **2.** To the deepest, most fragile part of oneself. Typically used to describe emotional wounds. *I can't even look at her right now—that hurtful remark cut me right to the quick.*

to the teeth To the greatest degree or extent; extremely, completely, or

utterly. *I know it takes me a long time getting ready, but nothing feels better than being dressed to the teeth for a night out on the town. Everyone in the bar was armed to the teeth, so we felt a little bit nervous sitting down for a drink in there. I have to say, I'm fed up to the teeth with all the people littering on campus!*

to the victor belong the spoils The winner is entitled to all of the rewards, bonuses, or benefits of success. (A variation of "to the victor go the spoils.") *John won the betting pool, so he gets the whole pot of money from those who paid in. To the victor belong the spoils! A lot of other contestants on the singing competition are well worthy of signing a record deal, but to the victor belong the spoils.*

to the victor go the spoils The winner is entitled to all of the rewards, bonuses, or benefits of success. (Also written as "To the victor belong the spoils.") *John won the betting pool, so he gets the whole pot of money from those who paid in. To the victor go the spoils! A lot of other contestants on the singing competition are well worthy of signing a record deal, but to the victor go the spoils!*

to thine own self be true Act authentically, in accordance with your interests, beliefs, and desires. This set phrase comes from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. *You don't have to be a cheerleader if you don't want to, regardless of what the popular kids say. To thine own self be true!*

to this end For or to satisfy this reason or intention; so as to achieve this goal. *We need to cut costs if we're going to stay in business. To this end, I suggest a suspension of bonuses and a freeze on all raises across the company. Art thrives when collaboration is plentiful, so, to this end, we have created a new co-operative studio for all kinds of different artists.*

to top it all off See [top it \(all\) off](#).

a toad choker See [a \(real\) toad-choker](#).

a toad strangler See [a \(real\) toad-strangler](#).

the toast of (the town) Someone who is especially well-liked, regarded, or admired in a certain place. *The young entrepreneur's new tech innovation has made him the toast of the town in Silicon Valley. I hope you enjoy being the toast of London now, because such fame is always fleeting.*

toe-to-toe A direct conflict between two people or groups, possibly in

close quarters. *Adam and Joe are going toe-to-toe out in the schoolyard! I almost got hit with a punch as I walked by! The literary magazine and the science club are going toe-to-toe for extra funding this year.*

toes up **1.** Deceased. *My poor old dad has been toes up for five years today, but I still miss him like crazy! When I'm toes up, I don't want my funeral to be a somber occasion—I want people to smile and remember the good times we all had together!* **2.** Completely non-functioning, non-operational, incapacitated, or destroyed. *Well, my computer turned toes up last night. I don't know how I'll be able to finish my essay on time now! I'm just writing this email to let you know that your website has been toes up for the last 12 hours or so. It looks like after nearly 80 years of struggling to stay open, the family business is finally going toes up.*

toilet mouth A person who uses obscenities, vulgarities, or profanities in their speech, especially at inappropriate times. Used especially in reference to a child or as a childish rebuke to an adult. *Hey, you little toilet mouth! If I hear you speaking like that around your grandmother again, you're going to be grounded for a week! Well there's no need to be a toilet mouth about it, Rick. You could have refused like a civilized person.*

toke up To get high (become intoxicated) by smoking marijuana, especially in the form of a marijuana cigarette. *Hey man, Jim and I are going to toke up at his house this weekend, do you want to come? Hey, it's no skin off my teeth if you want to spend your free time toking up, but I have no interest in it whatsoever.*

toll the death knell To cause or signal the impending end or ruin of something, especially a business, organization, or activity. Refers to the sound of a bell ringing (the knell) from a church to indicate that someone has died. *The geometric expansion of the Internet and digital media has tolled the death knell for countless print-based businesses around the world.*

Tom, Dick, and Harry Common, undistinguished people; any manner of person, indiscriminately. (Usually in the form "every Tom, Dick, and Harry.") *You don't want Tom, Dick, and Harry coming to your performance, but then you don't want to limit the amount of business you might bring in, either. Kate's being very selective as to who gets invited to the wedding, as she doesn't want Tom, Dick, and Harry to end up coming.*

Tom, Dick, or Harry A common, undistinguished person; any manner

of person, indiscriminately. (Usually in the form "(just) any Tom, Dick, or Harry.") *You don't want just any Tom, Dick, or Harry coming to your performance, but then you don't want to limit the amount of business you might bring in, either. Kate's being very selective as to who gets invited to the wedding, as she doesn't want Tom, Dick, or Harry turning up.*

tomato can An exceptionally poor boxer, one who is often paired with a much better boxer so as to improve the latter's statistics and win percentages. *The up-and-coming star boxer suffered a huge upset last night at the hands of a tomato can who everyone expected to lose.*

tomato juice 1. Literally, juice from a tomato. *My grandfather loves to drink tomato juice, but I can't stomach it. I think this Bloody Mary needs some more tomato juice.* 2. slang Blood, especially from a boxer. (This phrase is likely related to the term "tomato can"—an exceptionally poor boxer.) *Look at that fool, leaking tomato juice all over the ring already!*

tomayto, tomahto A negligible, trivial, or unimportant difference, distinction, or correction. (Refers to the American pronunciation of tomato as "tomayto," compared with the British pronunciation of "tomahto." Specifically, it is an allusion to a verse in the song "Let's Call the Whole Thing Off": "You like potayto, I like potahto; you like tomayto, I like tomahto; potayto, potahto, tomayto, tomahto, let's call the whole thing off!")
A: "Well, technically, the Hindenburg was a rigid airship, not a blimp." B: "Eh, tomayto, tomahto, who cares?"

Tommy Atkins A British soldier. The term originated in manuals once sent to British soldiers, in which the name used as an example was "Tommy Atkins" (as opposed to "John Doe"). *In his younger years, my grandfather was a Tommy Atkins.*

tongue-in-cheek Jocular or humorous, though seeming or appearing to be serious. *The president's tongue-in-cheek speech about the "War on Couch Potatoes" has been extremely popular on the Internet this week.*

tongue in cheek See [\(with\) tongue in cheek](#).

tongue-lashing A harsh vocal reprimand. *The boss gave his sales team a real tongue-lashing after seeing a drop in profits for the fourth straight month.*

tonsil hockey slang Open-mouthed kissing in which both partners'

tongues touch. *There's this area behind the school where lots of couples go to play tonsil hockey.*

tonsil tennis slang Open-mouthed kissing in which both partners' tongues touch. *There's this area behind the school where lots of couples go to play tonsil tennis.*

too clever by half Too contrived or arrogant in one's cleverness or intelligence, to the point of being irritating to others. Primarily heard in UK. *I think every adolescent goes through a stage where they become too clever by half and begin to think of themselves as the only person who has things figured out. The phones people use these days are all too clever by half—I can barely even use them to make phone calls!*

too close for comfort 1. So close as to cause worry because of being dangerous or unwelcome in some way. *The way these planes fly so low over the house is just too close for comfort. My neighbors and I all feel that the new shopping center they're planning near our neighborhood is a little too close for comfort. 2.* Too narrow a margin for error or deviation. *Having only \$20 in your bank account is far too close for comfort, if you ask me.*

too far north slang Extremely shrewd. The phrase refers to people from the north of England, who are thought to be especially astute. Primarily heard in US. *You'll never outsmart Alison, she's too far north for you.*

too good to be true So exciting or pleasing as to be unbelievable. *The asking price for that house was indeed too good to be true—the bank made a mistake when they listed it. I had to ask them to repeat their salary offer because it just seemed too good to be true!*

too hot to handle 1. Literally too hot to pick up or touch. *The steak just came out of the pan, so it's too hot to handle right now. I'll cut it after it rests. 2.* Too taboo or risky for a particular setting or audience. *The scandal was a little too hot to handle for the evening news without heavily censoring the details.*

too hot to hold (someone) Describes a place that a person can no longer stay in, due to their transgressions, misconduct, or criminal activities. *The notorious gangster eventually had to flee New York City, as it had become too hot to hold him after two decades of theft and murder. I'm transferring to a college in Oregon next fall; my last school got to be too hot to hold me.*

too long; didn't read An expression that indicates that one did not read an online article or post, usually because it was deemed too long and/or boring. Usually abbreviated "TL;DR." *I really want to write "too long; didn't read" on all these novella-length rants my friend keeps posting on Facebook.*

too many balls in the air Too many things happening or competing for one's attention at the same time. The phrase alludes to juggling. *Between working, taking classes, and spending time with my family, I just have too many balls in the air right now.*

too many chefs in the kitchen Too many people are trying to control, influence, or work on something, with the quality of the final product suffering as a result. (A variation of the more common phrase, "Too many chefs spoil the broth/stew/soup.") A: *"The more that goes wrong with this project, the more people get involved. Now we've got my boss, his boss, the assistant manager, a freelance consultant, and the head of IT all involved, and it's turning into a complete disaster!"* B: *"It sounds to me like there are too many chefs in the kitchen."*

too many cooks Too many people trying to control, influence, or work on something, with the quality of the final product suffering as a result. A shortened version of the full phrase, "Too many cooks spoil the broth/stew/soup." A: *"We've got my boss, his boss, the assistant manager, a freelance consultant, and the head of IT all involved, and it's turning into a complete disaster!"* B: *"It sounds to me like there are too many cooks."*

too many cooks in the kitchen Too many people are trying to control, influence, or work on something, with the quality of the final product suffering as a result. (A variation of the more common phrase, "Too many cooks spoil the broth/stew/soup.") A: *"The more that goes wrong with this project, the more people get involved. Now we've got my boss, his boss, the assistant manager, a freelance consultant, and the head of IT all involved, and it's turning into a complete disaster!"* B: *"It sounds to me like there are too many cooks in the kitchen."*

too many cooks spoil the soup If too many people try to control, influence, or work on something, the final product will be worse as a result. A: *"We've got my boss, his boss, the assistant manager, a freelance consultant, and the head of IT all involved in this project, and it's turning into a complete disaster!"* B: *"Well, too many cooks spoil the soup, after all!"*

toot (one's) own horn To boast or brag about one's own abilities, skills, success, achievements, etc. *I don't mean to toot my own horn, but this pasta sauce I made is quite delicious! I can't stand being around Marcus ever since his company became such a massive success. The guy just can't stop tooting his own horn!*

toot (one's) own trumpet To boast or brag about one's own abilities, skills, success, achievements, etc. *I don't mean to toot my own trumpet, but this pasta sauce I made is quite delicious! I can't stand being around Marcus since his company became such a massive success. The guy just can't stop tooting his own trumpet!*

tooth and nail Furiously or fiercely; with all of one's strength and effort. *I know my brother has fought tooth and nail to be re-elected, so his victory tonight is certainly well earned. The elite troops have been placed around the perimeter to defend the palace tooth and nail from rioters.*

a tooth for a tooth See [an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth](#).

top billing **1.** On a theatrical poster or playbill, the place at the top where a star's name is listed. *I know you're disappointed, but Anita is a bigger star than you, so she gets top billing.* **2.** By extension, a position of prominence or recognition. *You did the most work on this report, so you should get top billing on the cover.*

top edge **1.** noun In cricket, a hit that goes off the top edge of a bat held sideways. *I think I can get a top edge against this bowler.* **2.** verb To hit the ball in such a way. *Albert just top edged the ball.*

top hand A worker, especially of a farm or ranch, who is particularly skilled or useful. *I hear the boss has a new top hand who's coming in to help break horses this spring.*

top hat A tall hat once worn typically by men in formal settings. *There's nothing more attractive than a man in a tuxedo and a top hat. Elliot, you look so dapper in that top hat!*

top it (all) off To finish or complete an experience or situation in an especially positive or negative way. *Our date was fantastic! We went for dinner, saw a great film, and then we topped it off with some salsa dancing! What a bad day: I left my phone in the grocery store, my car broke down on the way home, and, to top it all off, my groceries broke through the bag as I*

was walking to the front door.

top of mind (hyphenated if used before a noun) Occupying one's foremost attention or concern. *I assure you that privacy issues are a top-of-mind priority for our company. The recent setback in the stock market has kept economic policy top of mind for voters.*

top of the morning (to you) A generic greeting used in the morning time. (A dated phrase that is nowadays considered to be stereotypical or stock Irish, rather than one that is used ingenuously.) *Top of the morning, Bill! That was quite a party last night, wasn't it? A: "Well, top o' the morning to you, my friend!" B: "I wish you would stop saying that to me, just because my dad is Irish."*

top (one)self **1.** To commit suicide. Primarily heard in UK. *A: "Did you hear that his father topped himself over the weekend?" B: "Yeah, I can't believe it. Everyone is still in shock." 2. To outdo or outperform one's previous effort(s) or achievement(s). Primarily heard in US. *Wow, you've really topped yourself with these cupcakes, Stephen!**

top-shelf **1.** Of a high, excellent, or superior quality. *Jim was drinking top-shelf liquor all night on his birthday. I can't imagine the bar tab he must have racked up! My brother-in-law is always driving around town in the latest top-shelf car. 2. Of or containing pornography. *Few realize that the newspaper mogul got his start by distributing top-shelf magazines to newsagents in the '70s.**

tore a strip off See [tear a strip off \(someone\)](#).

tore her off a strip See [tear someone off a strip](#).

tore up the pea patch See [tear up the pea patch](#).

torpedo juice A low-quality alcoholic beverage made by soldiers during World War II. Grain alcohol was extracted from torpedoes (among other things), hence the expression. *I can't drink any more of this torpedo juice, it's disgusting!*

torque (someone) off To irritate, frustrate, or exasperate someone. *It really torqued me off to hear that yet another local grocery store was being bought out by the huge supermarket chain.*

torqued off Particularly irritated, frustrated, or exasperated. *It's no use getting torqued off just because you don't like your professor's style of*

teaching. *I was pretty torqued off to hear that yet another local grocery store was being bought out by the huge supermarket chain.*

#tortitude A hashtag highlighting the sassy attitude that tortoiseshell cats (or "torties") are said to have, often accompanying posts about torties on social media. *This girl was a cuddle monster last night and wants nothing to do with me today. #tortitude*

toss a bone to (someone) To attempt to appease or placate someone by giving them something trivial or of minor importance, or by doing some small favor for them. (A reference to giving an animal a bone or scrap from a bigger portion of food, this phrase is a variant of the more common "throw (someone) a bone.") *The city council has decided to toss a bone to local building companies and will be releasing small amounts of public space to commercial development.*

toss (one's) hat in(to) the ring To announce or make known one's intention to compete against others for something, especially in a political race. *After Arnold Schwarzenegger was elected governor of California, it seemed like all sorts of celebrities tried tossing their hats in the ring.*

toss (one's/someone's) name in the hat To submit one's own or someone else's name for consideration in a selection, such as a competition, application pool, election, etc. *I'm thinking about tossing my name in the hat for class president! Just so you know, I tossed your name in the hat for a chance to win an all-expenses-paid trip to Florida! As has been widely predicted, the governor announced today that he was tossing his name in the hat for the presidential election next year.*

toss (someone) a bone To attempt to appease or placate someone by giving them something trivial or of minor importance, or by doing some small favor for them. (A reference to giving an animal a bone or scrap from a bigger portion of food, this phrase is a variant of the more common "throw (someone) a bone.") *My younger brother is always pleading for me to help his career, so I tossed him a bone and got him a gig in some bar at the edge of town.*

a toss-up A situation in which the outcome cannot be predicted or a decision between two things is very close. *I don't know which team will win. Both have done so well this season that it's a real toss-up. Should I take the entry level position, or go back to school? It's really a toss-up in my mind.*

a totally different ballgame A situation that is completely different from what one is used to or expecting. *Living away from home is a totally different ballgame for most young adults. I used to babysit, but having a child of my own is a totally different ballgame.*

totus porcus humorous slang A fake Latinization of the phrase "whole hog," meaning completely, entirely, or without restraint or reserve. *If we're going to do a trip around Europe, let's go totus porcus and do the trip the right way! I accept your explanation and apology totus porcus, Bill; no need to say anything further on the matter.*

touch cloth See [be touching cloth](#).

touch cotton See [be touching cotton](#).

a touch of the tar brush See [have a touch of the tar brush](#).

touch of the tar brush dated ethnic slur Of mixed race, such that one's skin is darker than that of a person with only white ancestry. *My racist aunt refuses to vote for someone who has a touch of the tar brush.*

touch (oneself) euphemistic slang To masturbate. *My ultra-religious aunt scared us silly when we went through puberty with all sorts of myths about what would happen if we touched ourselves.*

touch wood A superstitious expression said, typically in combination with actually touching or knocking on a wooden object or surface, when one desires something positive to continue, lest the mention of it "jinx" or somehow reverse one's good fortune. More commonly expressed as "knock on wood." *I've been driving for 36 years and have never been in an accident. Touch wood! Hopefully, touch wood, we'll continue to avoid sickness this winter.*

tough act to follow Someone or something so exemplary that it overshadows anything that follows. *I don't know how Mel's replacement will be received by the staff. He was so admired and respected that he'll be a tough act to follow. That award-winning play will be a tough act to follow on Broadway.*

tough cookie A strong, determined person who is not easily intimidated, discouraged, or defeated. *Our principal was a little lady, but she was one tough cookie! She had a difficult childhood, but she's a tough cookie. I know she'll be a success.*

tough cookies An interjection indicating that one has no sympathy for the situation another person is in or how that person feels about it. *Sam: "When you said I'd be getting a car for my birthday, I didn't think it would be some beat-up old van like this!" Dad: "Well, tough cookies! You should be thankful to have a car at all!" A: "Ugh, I feel so horrible this morning." B: "Tough cookies. If you want to drink yourself silly, then that's the price you pay."*

tough luck **1.** noun Adverse circumstances resulting in misfortune or hardships; bad luck. *John's had some tough luck lately—he really can't seem to catch a break.* **2.** adjective Involving such circumstances. When used as an adjective, the term is often hyphenated. *The deadline is non-negotiable, so don't come to me with some tough-luck story about how you couldn't finish your assignment.* **3.** interjection I have no sympathy for the situation you are in or how you feel about it. *A: "When you said I'd be getting a car for my birthday, I didn't think it would be some beat-up old van like this!" B: "Tough luck! You should be thankful to have a car at all!"*

a tough nut (to crack) A person, thing, situation, or problem that is particularly difficult to understand, solve, or deal with. *I've been dating Jenny for over a year, and I still think she's a tough nut to crack! Figuring out the best way to modernize our product without alienating existing customers is definitely a tough nut to crack. The spy we captured is a tough nut; he hasn't said a thing since we began the interrogation.*

a tough nut to crack **1.** A difficult task to complete. *Getting an A in this class will be a tough nut to crack. You want me to find more money in the budget? Ha, there's a tough nut to crack!* **2.** A challenging and/or unreasonable person to understand or deal with. *Our super-strict principal is a tough nut to crack, so I hope Kate can convince her to let us host this event. Because our boss usually keeps to himself, I have no idea what his interests are—he's a tough nut to crack.*

a tough pill to swallow Something, especially a fact or piece of news, that is unpleasant or difficult but which is unavoidable or must be accepted. *It was a tough pill to swallow learning that my father's fortune had been squandered. Her recent breakup with Janet was a tough pill to swallow.*

a tough spot A particularly difficult or awkward situation, especially one that is not easy to get out of. *Your brother helped me out of a tough spot*

when I was out of work a few years back, so I'm more than happy to lend him a hand now. Jeremy's been in more tough spots since he left college than I care to recount. I just don't know what's going to become of that boy if he doesn't clean up his act soon.

tough titties vulgar slang An interjection indicating that one has no sympathy for the situation another person is in or how that person feels about it. *Sam: "When you said I'd be getting a car for my birthday, I didn't think it would be some beat-up old van like this!" Dad: "Well, tough titties! You should be thankful to have a car at all!" A: "Ugh, I feel so horrible this morning." B: "Tough titties. If you want to drink yourself silly, then that's the price you pay."*

tough titty vulgar slang An interjection indicating that one has no sympathy for the situation another person is in or how that person feels about it. *Sam: "When you said I'd be getting a car for my birthday, I didn't think it would be some beat-up old van like this!" Dad: "Well, tough titty! You should be thankful to have a car at all!" A: "Ugh, I feel so horrible this morning." B: "Tough titty. If you want to drink yourself silly, then that's the price you pay."*

tour de force An exceptionally masterful performance or achievement, especially in the arts. *The director's latest movie is a tour de force of filmmaking. The Olympic gymnast's final routine was a tour de force that earned her a gold medal.*

toy boy A young man who is in a sexual relationship with an older woman. *Heather is having too much fun with her new toy boy to get involved in a serious relationship.*

toys in the attic See [have toys in the attic](#).

track record A history of someone's or something's performance, often cited as a predictor of how they will perform in the future. *The mayor brought in the new police chief because he has a strong track record of reducing crime in inner-city neighborhoods. The company had an almost perfect track record before the scandal, which made it even more shocking.*

trade blows To fight, either physically or verbally. Typically said of two people who are evenly matched and thus able to continually exchange punches or barbs. *The boxers traded blows all through the first round. Somebody needs to stop this debate, or these politicians will trade blows all night!*

trade off the orchard for an apple To be overly concerned with minor details and ignore the situation as a whole. *I know you're worried about that one aspect of your project, but don't trade off the orchard for an apple.*

traditional marriage **1.** A term for marriage between a man and a woman, typically used by those who consider the marriage of a same-sex couple to not be legitimate. *Of course I value traditional marriage, but I don't understand why same-sex marriage can't be legal as well.* **2.** A marriage featuring the traditional customs of a particular group or society. *In this country, a traditional marriage is celebrated with a lengthy religious ceremony attended by the entire town.*

trail (one's) coat To incite an argument. If one literally trails one's coat, a passerby could easily step on it, thus creating a tense situation. *With a comment like that, she is clearly trailing her coat, and I refuse to take the bait.*

trailer (park) trash derogatory slur A poor, uneducated, and unsophisticated person who lives in or was raised in a trailer park. *Just because I come from a caravan park doesn't make me trailer trash. I'm working on my PhD at Harvard, for goodness' sake! I don't want my daughter going out with trailer park trash like him!*

train of thought One's uninterrupted progression of thinking. *When the phone rang, it derailed my train of thought—I totally forget what I was talking about! Please don't interrupt my train of thought when I'm writing.*

train wreck **1.** A major or total failure, disaster, or catastrophe. *This project has become an absolute train wreck. We've wasted so much time and money already, I don't know how we'll make up the losses. Despite a stellar cast, the film turned out to be a real train wreck.* **2.** A person whose life is a complete mess or is in total disarray. *I don't know about my relationship with Kevin. He's a bit of a train wreck, between you and me.*

transcendental meditation A practice derived from Hindu traditions, in which a practitioner repeats a mantra to achieve a state of relaxation and mental calm. *I've felt much less anxious ever since I started practicing transcendental meditation.*

trapped in a time warp See [be trapped in a time warp](#).



tread lightly 1. To walk carefully, so as not to disturb what is underfoot or nearby. *This is rare alpine vegetation, so tread lightly. Tread lightly so you don't wake up the baby.* 2. To be extra tactful in one's dealing with someone so as not to offend or aggravate. *The boss is really irritable today, so if you have bad news for him, tread lightly. Tread lightly if you ask Mrs. Smith for extra credit—she usually gets annoyed with those requests.*

tread on air To be extremely happy. *I've been treading on air ever since I got engaged!*

tread on (someone's) toes To insult, offend, or upset someone, especially by involving oneself in that which is someone else's responsibility. *I want to help Johnny out on his project, but I know he's very proud, and I don't want to tread on his toes in any way. Look, you're going to have to tread on a few peoples' toes if you want to get ahead in this business.*

treat them mean, keep them keen Neglecting a romantic partner (or a potential romantic partner) keeps him or her interested in you. A: *"Why hasn't Tom called me yet? I thought he liked me."* B: *"Maybe he thinks that 'treat them mean, keep them keen' actually works."*

trench mouth A bacterial infection in which the gums and throat are inflamed and prone to ulcers. Also known as "necrotizing ulcerative gingivitis," the illness is called "trench mouth" because it commonly affected soldiers in the trenches during World War I. *I just saw a patient with a terrible case of trench mouth.*

trick of the trade A skill associated with a particular job that makes one more proficient, often acquired through experience. *You'll get better at taking dictation—you're a receptionist now, and it's a trick of the trade. When you're a pediatrician, being able to stay calm while dealing with panicked parents is a trick of the trade.*

trick (oneself or something) up To adorn with fancy, attractive, or ostentatious clothing or ornaments. *I like getting tricked up before going out for a fancy meal. He spent all that money tricking his car up, but the thing still runs like a piece of junk.*

trick up (one's) sleeve A secret plan, idea, or advantage that can be utilized if and when it is required. A reference to cheating at a card game by hiding a favorable card up one's sleeve. *I've got a few tricks up my sleeve if he*

decides to pursue legal action against me.

a trifle A little. *I'm feeling a trifle hungry, but I don't want a big, heavy meal right now.*

trigger **1.** noun Something that causes one psychological distress, typically because it reminds them of a past trauma. *The graphic descriptions in that article were a trigger for me.* **2.** verb To cause psychological distress in someone, typically by reminding them of a past trauma. *This article might be triggering for child abuse survivors.*

trigger warning A statement at the beginning of an article or video advising that its content might be upsetting, especially for trauma survivors. *At least that graphic article came with a trigger warning.*

trip balls semi-vulgar slang To become intoxicated from a hallucinatory or psychoactive drug. *Oh, Jim? Don't worry, he took some acid and is kind of tripping balls, but he'll be fine in a few hours.*

trip out slang To become intoxicated from a hallucinatory or psychoactive drug. *Oh, Jim? Don't worry, he took some acid and is kind of tripping out, but he'll be fine in a few hours.*

Trojan horse **1.** Something that initially seems innocuous but is ultimately bad or malicious. A reference to the myth in which Ancient Greek soldiers hid inside a giant wooden horse in order to gain access to the city of Troy. *That personable new hire turned out to be a Trojan horse—she stole our intellectual property and sold it to the competitor!* **2.** A computer program that appears to be useful or harmless but secretly installs malicious code or software onto the infected computer. *We have malware on our computer because that game you downloaded turned out to be a Trojan horse.*

trouble and strife Wife. The phrase comes from Cockney rhyming slang. Primarily heard in UK. *How's the trouble and strife? I haven't seen her in a while.*

trouble in paradise cliché Stress, difficulty, unhappiness, or discontentment in what is thought to be a happy or stable situation, often a marriage or romantic relationship. *I think that's David's husband over there flirting with the bartender. Surely there isn't trouble in paradise already? It looks like there might be trouble in paradise for the tech giant, as news is*

leaking of a major internal power struggle within the company.

troubled waters A situation, circumstance, or experience that is fraught with disorder, difficulty, confusion, stress, etc. *No one really thought about the money lenders who were making cash hand over fist during the recession, capitalizing on the troubled waters many homeowners and small businesses found themselves in. Dan's and David's marriage has been in troubled waters for a few years, so their divorce seemed inevitable to a lot of us.*

true believer One who passionately supports a cause or concept. *My sister is a true believer in social equality, so she is out at the protest today.*

(one's) true colours One's true or honest beliefs, thoughts, convictions, biases, desires, etc.; one's real personality, character, or disposition. Primarily heard in UK. *Dave said all along that he only wanted this deal because it was in the company's best interest, but he showed his true colours once he realised that he wouldn't get any special commission for his efforts. You will really see your friends' true colours when you call upon them in a time of crisis.*

(one's) (true) stripes One's true or honest beliefs, thoughts, convictions, biases, desires, etc.; one's real personality, character, or disposition. (A less common variant of "one's (true) colors.") *Dave said all along that he only wanted this deal because it was in the company's best interest, but he showed his true stripes once he realized that he wouldn't get any special commission for his efforts. You will really see your friends' true stripes when you call upon them in a time of crisis.*

true to (one's) colors Unfailingly loyal. *Don't worry, the enemy will not be able to sway Richard—he is true to his colors.*

trump card 1. A designated card in some card games that ranks above all others. *The only way I can win this hand is if I get the trump card.* 2. A resource used to gain an advantage over others, often by being held and then used at an opportune time. *I have a feeling the prosecution still hasn't played their trump card in this trial—I expect a big revelation during tomorrow's testimony.*

the truth be known See [\(if the\) truth be known](#).

the truth be told See [\(if the\) truth be told](#).

try (one's) utmost To put forth the greatest possible amount of effort or

energy toward some task or goal; to try as hard as one can. *I'll try my utmost to be there for your wedding, but I don't know if I'll have enough money to buy the plane ticket. Janet tried her utmost to save the family farm, but the bank foreclosed on it in the end.*

tub of guts A particularly overweight person. *I used to be a tub of guts when I was in high school, but during college I really made an effort to slim down.*

tub of lard A highly derogatory term for an obese person. *These glamour magazines make it seem like anyone who's not a cover model is basically a tub of lard.*

the tune the old cow died of Advice or complaints instead of actual help. The phrase refers to an old song about a farmer who serenaded his cow about the lack of grass, instead of feeding her. *I know you have a lot of suggestions for how to help the homeless, but honestly, they are the tune the old cow died of. The people who have come here tonight need food, so get in there and serve them.*

tuppence 1. A variant spelling of "two pence," it can refer to two pennies, or to a British coin with a value of two pennies. Primarily heard in UK. *You don't have to pay me back—that thing was so cheap, it practically cost just a tuppence.* 2. An insignificant amount of something. Typically used in negative sentences. *I don't give a tuppence what that ridiculous woman thinks! If he doesn't come to my show tonight, I'll know he doesn't give a tuppence about me.*

(one's) tuppence (worth) One's ideas, opinions, or point of view. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *If anyone wants to hear Dr Sanders' tuppence worth about the anti-vaccination debate, you can tune in to his podcast this Friday. I'd just like to put in my tuppence worth before we finish up the meeting, if I may.*

turd in the punchbowl vulgar slang Something or someone that spoils, ruins, or needlessly complicates a situation or circumstance; a disagreeable nuisance or source of irritation. *For these greedy corporate executives, restrictions put in place by regulators to protect consumers are just turds in the punchbowl. Not to be the turd in the punchbowl, but I really think we should take this money we found to the police, instead of keeping it for ourselves.*

turf (someone) out To eject, evict, or otherwise forcibly remove someone (from someplace). Primarily heard in UK. *The bouncer turfed the drunkard out of the bar after he started a fight with another customer. I just found out that the landlord is turfing us out at the end of the month because he wants to move back into the house himself.*

turf war **1.** An ongoing fight among factions, often criminal ones, attempting to control a particular territory (i.e. their "turf"). Primarily heard in US. *The neighborhood has been torn apart by the turf war between the two gangs.* **2.** By extension, a dispute or hostile environment among persons or factions competing for a particular position, or influence in a particular area. *The school newspaper has become the scene of a turf war among several ambitious students who all want to add "editor" to their college applications. The electoral map has become nothing more than a diagram of the turf war between the two parties.*

turfed See [be turfed](#).

turfed out See [be turfed out](#).

turkey shoot A fight or competition that is one-sided because one combatant or competitor is far superior to the other. Primarily heard in US. *What some predicted to be a long, arduous war ended up being a turkey shoot because the smaller country lacked adequate troops and firepower.*

turkey slap slang The use of one's penis to slap another's face.

turn a corner To begin to find success or improvement after a particularly difficult or troubling period. *I know that rehab has been hard on you, but I feel like you've been really turning a corner lately. Their new start-up took a couple of years to get going, but they finally turned a corner when their product was featured in a high-profile tech magazine.*

turn a phrase To express something in very adept, elegant, and clever terms. *Mr. Broadmoor is so cultivated and witty. Not only is he remarkably intelligent, but he is always able to turn a phrase most poignantly.*

turn an honest penny To earn money in an honorable and legitimate way, typically through one's hard work. *I used to swindle people, but I turn an honest penny these days, I swear! You're 40 years old—you need to get a job and start turning an honest penny.*

turn around (something) To reverse the direction or course of

something; to reverse the way something is facing or oriented. *I swear, if you kids don't stop fighting back there, I am going to turn around this car and take us straight back home! The company is hiring a new financial consultant to turn around the sales trends of the last two years.*

turn back the clock **1.** Literally, to set the clock to an earlier time. *Can you turn back the clock? It's five minutes fast.* **2.** To revisit, recount, or recreate a time or era from the past. *If I could turn back the clock, I would manage my finances better so I could retire at an earlier age. The purpose of this conference is to turn back the clock by analyzing early human remains to gain insight into their way of life.*

turn belly up **1.** slang To die. Likened to a fish floating upside down when it dies. *Those fireflies are going to turn belly up if you don't poke some holes in the lid of that jar.* **2.** slang To completely cease to work; to fail or become defunct. *Sorry, Mark, I'd love to give you a lift to the airport, but my car turned belly up on me again. It looks like our co-op might be turning belly up if we aren't granted a licence for our communal work premises.*

turn full circle To return to the original or a similar position, situation, or circumstance where one or something started. *After the banking sector brought on the economic collapse through lack of federal oversight, things seem to be turning full circle as politicians are beginning to call for deregulation of the industry once again. I used to work in various kitchens during college to support myself, but now I've turned full circle and am the head chef of my own restaurant.*

turn in (one's) badge To stop working. *I can't believe it's time to turn in my badge already—this internship just flew by! My father recently turned in his badge after 30 years at the same job.*

turn into a pumpkin To have to return home or go to bed due to the late hour of the night. (Usually used as a present participle, the phrase is a reference to the story of Cinderella, whose magic carriage turned into a pumpkin at midnight.) *I've had a wonderful time, but I'm turning into a pumpkin. I think I'll call a cab and head home.*

turn of events A sudden change or alteration in a situation or circumstance. *After an unexpected turn of events, the president has announced that he will be resigning from office. Sometimes it takes a dramatic turn of events for our lives to head in the direction they were meant*

for.

turn of phrase 1. An expression. *I understood what she was saying until she used a turn of phrase that I had never heard.* **2.** An eloquent style of writing or speaking. *That writer's turn of phrase has earned him many accolades and awards.*

turn of the screw Something that worsens an already difficult or negative situation. *Seeing my ex-boyfriend with his new girlfriend is just another turn of the screw. My financial situation is already dire, so that traffic ticket is a real turn of the screw.*

turn (one's) coat dated To change one's allegiance or affiliation (especially in politics) for personal gain or advantage. *A good politician will espouse the most hard-line stance of his party's political ideologies, but a successful politician knows when to turn his coat.*

turn (one's) face to the wall To die. This phrase originated in the Bible. *I just learned that Lady Catherine has turned her face to the wall—what a tragedy.*

turn (one's) hand to (something) To undertake or apply oneself to (doing) something; to attempt or be able to do something. *I'd like to turn my hand to learning the saxophone in my spare time. With Sarah's intelligence, she could probably turn her hand to anything after high school.*

turn (over) in (one's) grave To (hypothetically) show enormous anger, disfavor, or regret for someone's actions or something that happens after one has died. That is, if someone were still alive, they would be greatly upset, angered, or disgusted by what has happened. *I can't believe you're using our employees' pension payments to prop up a Ponzi scheme. The founder of this once-great company would be turning in his grave to see its directors stoop so low. Your poor mother would turn over in her grave if she heard the horrible things you were saying about your sister. I can't believe you wrecked your grandfather's prized truck. That's enough to make him turn over in his grave!*

turn (someone) around (one's) (little) finger To gain complete control, dominance, or mastery over somebody; to make someone do whatever one wishes. *The spoiled little brat has completely turned his parents around his little finger. Everyone accused her of turning the boss around her finger.*

turn (someone or something) loose To release or discharge someone or something, as from confinement. *Due to a lack of evidence, the suspects were turned loose by police. Samantha was suspended for turning mice loose throughout the school.*

turn (someone) round (one's) (little) finger To gain complete control, dominance, or mastery over somebody; to make someone do whatever one wishes. *The spoiled little brat has completely turned his parents round his little finger. Everyone accused her of turning the boss round her finger.*

turn (someone's) crank To excite or arouse the interest of someone. *To be honest, science never turned my crank in school. I was always more interested in literature.*

turn (something) to account To gain or profit from something. *I'm confident that I can turn this new invention of mine to account.*

turn swords into ploughshares To abstain from destructive activities, such as war and violence (symbolized by swords), in favor of peaceful, constructive activities (symbolized by ploughshares, a farming implement). The phrase comes from the Bible. *We must turn swords into ploughshares so that our children can inherit a peaceful world.*

turn the air blue To use profane language, especially with great rapidity and intensity. *My dad turned the air blue after he found out I'd put a dent in his car.*

turn the corner To begin to find success or improvement after a particularly difficult or troubling period. *I know that rehab has been hard on you, but I feel like you've been really turning the corner lately. Their new startup took a couple of years to get going, but they turned the corner when their product was featured in a high-profile tech magazine.*

turn the scale(s) To change the balance of a situation, such that one side or element is favored or gains advantage. *The two candidates are so close in the polls that both are vying for something that will turn the scale in their favor. The immense interconnectivity of social media has turned the scales of power somewhat back into the hands of the ordinary population.*

turn the screw(s) (on someone) To exert excessive and coercive pressure, force, or threats of violence on someone. *The bank has really*

started turning the screws on me ever since I began missing my mortgage payments. I'll send one of my men around to him tomorrow to start turning the screw. Then we'll see if Johnny's still so sure he won't sign the contract.

turn the trick To do, accomplish, or fulfill exactly what is needed or sought after. *The recipe calls for pancetta ham, but I think this regular bacon should turn the trick. The movie's plot, such as it is, won't go on to win any awards, but the gory special effects will turn the trick for any fans of the horror genre.*

turn the/(one's) clock(s) back To adjust the time on one's clock(s) back by one hour to account for the end of daylight saving time. *Don't forget to turn your clock back tonight. I hate having to turn the clocks back every autumn, it's such an antiquated custom.*

turn the/(one's) clock(s) forward To advance the time on one's clock(s) ahead by one hour to account for the beginning of daylight saving time. *Don't forget to turn your clock forward tonight or you'll end up oversleeping tomorrow! I hate having to turn the clocks forward every spring, it's such an antiquated custom.*

turn tits up **1.** mildly vulgar To break or malfunction; to die, fall apart, or cease to work. (A variant of the more common "go tits up," itself a play on the phrase "go belly up." "Tits up" is sometimes hyphenated.) *Sorry Mark, I'd love to give you a lift to the airport, but my car's turned tits up on me again. It looks like our co-op might be turning tits-up if we aren't granted a licence for our communal work premises.* **2.** mildly vulgar By extension, to have a poor, undesired, or ruinous outcome; to fail completely or not come together at all. *We were all set to have our picnic on Saturday, but the weather turned tits up, and we had to cancel at the last minute. The merger deal between the two companies turned tits-up when it came to light that one of the CEOs had been dodging tax obligations for several years.*

turn tricks slang To perform sexual acts for money. Typically said of a prostitute. *A lot of these girls are addicts who started turning tricks to get drug money.*

turn two slang In baseball, to make two outs on the same play. Another way of referring to a "double play." *Did you see them turn two? What a play!*

a turn-up for the book(s) A remarkable, unusual, and unexpected event, occurrence, or piece of news. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *Mr*

Literature Snob reading a trashy romance novel? Now that's a turn-up for the books! A: "After the concert, I ran into the singer at a pub down the road from the venue. It turns out his mother went to the same school as mine!" B: "Wow, there's a turn-up for the book!"

turning a corner See [turn a corner](#).

turning a phrase See [turn a phrase](#).

turning an honest penny See [turn an honest penny](#).

turning around something See [turn around \(something\)](#).

turning back the clock See [turn back the clock](#).

turning belly up See [turn belly up](#).

turning full circle See [turn full circle](#).

turning her clock back See [turn the/\(one's\) clock\(s\) back](#).

turning her clock forward See [turn the/\(one's\) clock\(s\) forward](#).

turning her coat See [turn \(one's\) coat](#).

turning her crank See [turn \(someone's\) crank](#).

turning her loose See [turn \(someone or something\) loose](#).

turning in her grave See [turn \(over\) in \(one's\) grave](#).

turning into a pumpkin See [turn into a pumpkin](#).

turnt slang Characterized by excitement or euphoria, perhaps due to intoxication. *That party was turnt, man! You should have been there! You were turnt last night—how much did you drink?*

turnt up slang To be intoxicated. *You were turnt up last night—how much did you drink?*

tweetstorm **1.** A series of tweets on a particular topic composed by an individual Twitter user and posted in succession. Each tweet may start with number and a slash (such as "2/4") to convey that it is part of a longer message. *Good grief, did you see her latest tweetstorm? I don't need eight tweets from one person clogging up my feed!* **2.** A surge in activity on Twitter as users comment on a particular topic or current event, often one that is controversial. Such users commonly use a unique hashtag relevant to the topic. *The actor's sexist comments sparked a real tweetstorm, as well as a*

public outcry.

twelve-ounce curls See [12-ounce curls](#).

twenty-three skiddoo See [23 skidoo](#).

twenty-three skiddoo st. See [23 Skidoo Street](#).

twenty to the dozen See [talk twenty to the dozen](#).

twenty winks A very brief nap or a short sleep. *When you have a baby for the first time, you are suddenly forced to learn how to operate on only twenty winks at a time. I'm going to go grab a quick twenty winks before everyone starts arriving for the dinner party.*

twerk slang To perform a dance (called "twerking") that includes provocatively shaking and lowering one's buttocks. *It seemed like every girl in the club was twerking along with the music.*

twinkle in (one's) eye 1. A facial expression that denotes happiness, amusement, or knowledge of a secret. *Just when Rita thought all hope was lost, Jared got a twinkle in his eye that told her he had a plan to get them both out of that sticky situation.* **2.** A hope or plan that is not yet in existence. *You were not even a twinkle in your mother's eye when that photo was taken.*

twinkle in (one's) father's eye A phrase used to describe the time before one's birth. *I never knew my grandparents; they died when I was just a twinkle in my father's eye.*

twinkle of an eye See [in the twinkle of an eye](#).

twinkly-eyed Happy, cheerful, innocent, and good-natured. *Jack's new girlfriend is so twinkly-eyed and friendly that I actually find it a little bit irritating. The company has brought in a new twinkly-eyed spokesperson to help improve their public image.*

twinning slang Matching someone else in appearance. *You guys are twinning with your sparkly purple phone cases. Look at us, twinning in our grey sweater dresses!*

twist (someone) around (one's) (little) finger To gain complete control or dominance over someone; to make someone do whatever one wishes. *The spoiled little brat has completely twisted his parents around his little finger. Everyone jealously accused her of twisting the boss around her finger.*

two a penny Very common, ordinary, or widespread. *At first, they were quite novel and interesting, but now these little organic cafés have become two a penny. Trashy crime novels like his are two a penny, but at least he's doing what he loves.*

two birds with one stone Two tasks completed, achieved, or taken care of at the same time or with a singular series of actions; two problems solved with one action or solution. Typically used with the verbs "kill" or "hit." *I might as well kill two birds with one stone and drop off my tax return while I'm at the mall for the computer part I need. Bike-to-work plans are a great way of hitting two birds with one stone: getting more exercise while cutting down on the cost of your daily commute.*

Two Bob **1.** slang A 10-pence coin. Typically capitalized. Primarily heard in UK. *Grandma gave me a Two Bob for my birthday!* **2.** slang A 20-cent coin. Primarily heard in Australia. *Grandma gave me a two bob for my birthday!*

two can play that game If one person can do something (often something deceptive or hurtful), so can another. This phrase typically prefaces an act of retaliation. *Did she really start a rumor about me? Well, two can play that game—I'll make sure the whole school is talking about her by tomorrow morning! Stu's been getting here early to impress the boss, so here I am too—two can play that game!*

two cents One's opinion or point of view for whatever it may be worth, generally when it is unasked for. *I find Jeff's husband a bit trying at times. He always insists on putting in his two cents whether we want his opinion or not! Here's my two cents: I think the staff would really appreciate a bump in their pay.*

two for two An acknowledgment of one's success with two things. *Wow, he got both questions right? He's two for two! I've attempted two things on my to-do list and have gotten both done. I'm two-for-two this morning!*

two left feet A lack of coordination, especially while dancing. Typically used with the verb "have." *Don't ask Paul to dance, he has two left feet. I decided to take dance lessons before the wedding because I have two left feet.*

two of a kind Very similar, typically in interests, dispositions, or beliefs. *Those kids have the same wacky sense of humor—they're truly two of a kind.*



They're two of a kind, of course they're married!

(one's) two pennies (worth) One's ideas, opinions, or point of view. Primarily heard in UK. *If anyone wants to hear Dr Sanders' two pennies worth about the anti-vaccination debate, you can tune in to his podcast this Friday. I'd just like to put in my two pennies worth before we finish up the meeting, if I may.*

(one's) two penn'orth One's ideas, opinions, or point of view. ("Penn'orth" is a contraction of "pennies' worth.") Primarily heard in UK. *If anyone wants to hear Dr Sanders' two penn'orth about the anti-vaccination debate, you can tune in to his podcast this Friday. I'd just like to put in my two penn'orth before we finish up the meeting, if I may.*

two-second rule A guideline denoting the distance that a driver should ideally maintain from the back of another car in order to avoid hitting it in the event of a fast stop. *While teaching my daughter how to drive, I made sure to emphasize the two-second rule. I've never been in a car accident, and I think it's because I always keep the two-second rule in mind when I drive.*

two sides of the same coin Two things that seem disparate but are actually related. *I've always felt that environmentalism and human rights are actually two sides of the same coin.*

two thumbs up An indication of one's approval or enthusiasm. The phrase can be used literally or figuratively. *I loved that movie so much that I would give it two thumbs up! She just gave me two thumbs up, so the meeting must have gone well.*

two-way street A situation in which both sides must put forth an equal amount of effort to achieve a desired result. Primarily heard in US. *Respect is a two-way street—you have to give it if you expect to receive it.*

two wrongs make a right The belief that a hurtful or deceitful action is acceptable if it is retribution for another. *I know you think that two wrongs make a right, but honestly, I disagree. Just because he insulted you doesn't mean it's OK for you to start a rumor about him.*

(one's) twopence (worth) One's ideas, opinions, or point of view. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *If anyone wants to hear Dr Sanders' twopence worth about the anti-vaccination debate, you can tune in to his podcast this Friday. I'd just like to put in my twopence worth before we finish*



up the meeting, if I may.

the tyre kicker See [tire kicker](#).

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U

U-turn 1. Literally, a sudden 180-degree turn made by a vehicle, such that it is quickly facing or moving in the opposite direction. *Once I realized I was going the wrong way, I had to do a U-turn at the next light.* **2.** By extension, any sudden and drastic reversal, as of opinion, policy, intention, fortune, trend, etc. *After a huge public outcry about the controversial program, the president quickly made a U-turn and announced that he would not support the plan. The disastrous unveiling of the tech giant's latest gadget marks a major U-turn in their otherwise unyielding success.*

ugly duckling A person or thing once considered unattractive or unlikely to succeed that becomes beautiful or successful in time. The phrase refers to Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale of an ugly duckling that grows up to be a beautiful swan. The phrase can apply to physical appearance or to the level of success of something. *I thought that fledgling company would dissolve in months. No one foresaw that it was just an ugly duckling and would have great success. Mary went unnoticed in high school but she's gorgeous now—a real ugly duckling!*

un-friend See [unfriend](#).

unavailable energy In science, energy converted into a form that is unavailable for work. *Today, we'll be studying the unavailable energy in this system.*

uncanny valley A hypothesized phenomenon holding that humans experience a sense of revulsion or cognitive discomfort when encountering robots, dolls, animations, or other human-like entities that exhibit human characteristics that are not precisely lifelike. The "valley" refers to the portion of the spectrum of realism in which a feeling of the "uncanny" is experienced—i.e. between depictions that are convincingly lifelike and those that are intentionally unrealistic. The concept was first described by Japanese robotics professor Masahiro Mori in 1970. *None of our testers reacted positively to that doll. They all found it creepy, which might be indicative of the uncanny valley. The computer-generated faces at the end of the movie really dipped into the uncanny valley—I found them really distracting.*

uncharted waters A situation or circumstance that is foreign, unclear, or unfamiliar and which may be dangerous or difficult as a result. *We're starting to get into uncharted waters exploiting these tax loopholes. If we aren't careful, the government may crack down on us hard! John keeps himself so closed off that I've never understood the uncharted waters of his emotions.*

an Uncle Tom A derisive term for a black person who is submissive or servile to white people. The phrase refers to the titular faithful black servant in Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. *He was once a passionate activist, but he's become an Uncle Tom.*

Uncle! An exclamation of defeat and/or a plea for mercy, especially in an informal physical contest of some kind. *Uncle! Uncle! Let me out of this headlock already!*

under a cloud (of suspicion) Viewed with distrust and/or thought to be dishonorable. *Ever since that leak of private emails, everything the CEO has done has been under a cloud. As far as I'm concerned, the victim's husband is under a cloud of suspicion until we interrogate him.*

under a microscope Under close inspection or intense scrutiny. *Since I got that official reprimand in work, it feels like I'm being put under a microscope by my boss. The country's surveillance methods have been under a microscope lately, after it emerged that it had been eavesdropping on its own citizen's communications.*

under erasure A literary practice in which a word is erased from a text but left visible, usually to emphasize that the term is relevant but imperfect. This concept, also known as *sous rature*, originated in the philosophical works of Martin Heidegger. *Class, why do you think the author chose to include this word under erasure?*

under false colors Using or under the guise of false pretenses, so as to deceive someone or to hide one's true nature or intentions. (An allusion to the identifying flags of a ship, and so usually used in the phrase "sail under false colors.") Primarily heard in US. *Tim thought he could just put on fancy clothes and rub elbows with the upper crust that Janet's family socialized with, but everyone at the party knew he was sailing under false colors. I don't want to be accused of flying under false colors, so let me say straight away that I'm being paid to give a review of this product today.*

under foot **1.** Literally underneath one's feet. *Be careful, there are some fire ants under foot.* **2.** In one's way; acting as an obstacle. *Can you take the kids outside? I can't get a thing done with all of them under foot. I tried to get some cleaning done today, but with the dog under foot, I wasn't very productive.*

under glass **1.** In a greenhouse. Typically used to describe plants grown in a greenhouse. *If you want these plants to thrive, you'll need to grow them under glass.* **2.** In a protective case. *Come and look at these cool specimens that are under glass. Our pricier jewelry is kept under glass.*

under (one's) breath Of speaking, very softly or indistinctly, especially so that one's words can only be heard or understood by oneself. *"You'll get what's coming to you one of these days," Janet muttered under her breath. Quit speaking under your breath like that, Steven. Speak up so that I can hear what you're saying!*

under (one's) feet So physically close to someone as to be a nuisance or obstruction, sometimes literally as a tripping hazard. Usually said of a person or animal. *I haven't been able to get any work done today with the kids under my feet asking me to take them to the park. Our puppy always gets under our feet when we're trying to move around the kitchen—it's getting a little dangerous!*

under (one's) thumb Under another's authoritarian control; continually forced to submit to another's will. *They seem happy when they're out and about, but I hear that Johnny is under his husband's thumb at home. Although the job paid well, I couldn't stand the way I was under the boss's thumb.*

under (one's) very eyes Right in plain sight or while one is watching. *Someone smashed into my parked car under my very eyes. Each day, under our very eyes, we see signs of poverty and need on our city's streets.*

under pain of With the threat of undergoing something extremely bad or unpleasant as a punishment. (Often used in the phrase "under pain of death.") *Under pain of having our pay docked, we were told we had to come in every Saturday until further notice to take care of the backlog in work. The prisoners were forced to march under pain of death from the POW camp across the burning desert.*

under pain of death With the threat of dying or being executed as a punishment. (Sometimes used hyperbolically.) *The prisoners were forced to march under pain of death from the POW camp across the burning desert. I am under strict instructions by my wife not to leave the house in disarray by the time she comes back from her trip, under pain of death!*

under par Below average; not as good as desired, required, or expected. *This essay you turned in on Friday is really under par, Stevens. Has something been distracting you from your studies recently? Our food was rather uninteresting, and the service was really under par. I honestly don't understand why this restaurant is so popular! I'm feeling a bit under par this morning, boss. I don't think I can make it in to work today!*

under separate cover old fashioned In a separate correspondence. *This letter serves only as a receipt of your application—we shall send you our decision under separate cover after it has been reviewed.*

under (someone's) spell Influenced or controlled by someone because one finds that person fascinating, enchanting, or seductive. *Our son never acted out like this before he fell under that new student's spell. Ever since I fell under Susan's spell, our relationship has progressed much more quickly than I would normally be comfortable with.*

under the aegis of Under the protection, sponsorship, or patronage of; under the supervision, control, or management of. *This course will be offered under the aegis of the English Department. Although the program receives federal funding, it is run under the aegis of the state.*

under the auspices of Under the protection, sponsorship, or patronage of; under the oversight, supervision, control, or management of. *The whole exhibition, under the auspices of the National Organization for Women, aims to draw attention to the injustices women all over the world face every day. After the overthrow of the previous government, the country is now led by a dictator under the auspices of the US government.*

under the carpet Kept secret or hidden from view, usually due to one's misfortune or embarrassment. The phrase is typically used with the verbs "sweep" and "brush," likened to how dirt would be swept under a carpet to hastily hide it. *We need to sweep this scandal under the carpet as soon as possible. I was so mortified by my mistake that I immediately tried to brush it under the carpet.*

under the cosh Contending with a difficult or stressful situation; experiencing pressure or difficulty. Primarily heard in UK. *Local businesses have been increasingly put under the cosh by the austerity measures imposed by the government after the economic crash. Manchester United has really been under the cosh in this second half. I don't think they've left their own side of the pitch more than a handful of times.*

under the covers **1.** Literally, in one's bed. *I'm not going out tonight—I'm already in my pajamas and under the covers!* **2.** In consort with another, usually secretly (and perhaps scandalously). *They may represent different parties, but I think those two politicians are under the covers together. The way he keeps looking at her makes me wonder if they're under the covers together.*

under the gun In a stressful situation that requires quick action, often to meet a deadline; under pressure. *We have to get these pages to the printer by 8, so work faster, people—we're under the gun tonight! Has anyone called an ambulance? Judging by the severity of this man's injuries, we're really under the gun here.*

under the microscope Under close inspection or intense scrutiny. *After I got that official reprimand at work, it feels like I'm being put under the microscope by my boss. The country's surveillance methods have been under the microscope lately, after news sources learned that it had been eavesdropping on its own citizens' communications.*

under the pump Under pressure to perform, succeed, or achieve results. Primarily heard in Australia. *The fast-food giant has been under the pump in the last few years, as sales and market share continue to slide. An ageing batsman, I found myself under the pump to show that I still had what it takes to be a great cricket player.*

under the rug Kept secret or hidden from view, usually due to one's misfortune or embarrassment. The phrase is typically used with the verbs "sweep" and "brush," likened to how dirt would be swept under a rug to hastily hide it. *We need to sweep this scandal under the rug as soon as possible. I was so mortified by my mistake that I immediately tried to brush it under the rug.*

under the spell of (someone) Influenced or controlled by someone because one finds him or her fascinating, enchanting, or seductive. *Our son*

has never acted out like this before. I think he must be under the spell of that new friend of his. Such was the magnitude of her beauty that countless men have been under the spell of the duchess.

under the weather **1.** Mildly ill. *Yeah, I was under the weather last week, but I'm feeling much better now.* **2.** Drunk. *Do you remember last night at the bar at all? You were really under the weather!* **3.** Suffering from a hangover. *We were out celebrating Valerie's birthday last night—that's why we're all under the weather today.*

under the yoke Under or at the mercy of an immense and oppressive force, burden, or pressure. *Thousands of people are estimated to have lost their lives under the yoke of the brutal dictatorship. Under the yoke of misogyny, racism, and homophobia, a gay woman of color will inevitably face an immense amount of discrimination in our society.*

under the yolk Under or at the mercy of an immense and oppressive force, burden, or pressure. (A common misspelling of the correct phrase, "under the yoke.") *Thousands of people are estimated to have lost their lives under the yolk of the brutal dictatorship. Under the yolk of misogyny, racism, and homophobia, a gay woman of color will inevitably face an immense amount of discrimination in our society.*

under (the/someone's) radar Without being noticed, detected, or addressed. A: *"Have you heard this band's latest album?"* B: *"I didn't even know it was out, it must have flown under my radar."* *Every year, the government promises to do something about the homelessness problem, yet every year it seems to slip under the radar again.*

underpromise and overdeliver Workers should aim to exceed a customer's expectations, in order to achieve customer satisfaction. *I want all of our customer service representatives to underpromise and overdeliver, so that all experiences with our company are positive ones. The boss urges us to underpromise and overdeliver, but I think our clients are perfectly happy when we do just what we promised.*

undertow **1.** A strong undercurrent, as in the ocean. *There's a really powerful undertow today, so I think the kids should stay out of the water.* **2.** A contrasting tone or aspect in art or literature. *That movie is advertised as a comedy, but the humor has a strong undertow of sadness and despair.*

unfriend To delete a friend from one's network on a social media site. *I*

can't believe he unfriended me just because I disagreed with an article he posted.

the university of life The informal education one receives by learning from one's experiences, both good and bad, rather than a formal educational institution. *My uncle might not have made it past grade school, but he's learned more from the university of life than most of our professors. A proper education is indeed important, but do not neglect the lessons you receive from the university of life.*

an unknown quantity A person or thing that is unpredictable and thus difficult to anticipate. *We're still revising our new product, so its potential success is an unknown quantity. This is her first year teaching, so her ability to connect with her students is still an unknown quantity.*

uno ab alto A slogan of the US Air Force. This Latin phrase translates to "one from on high." *Since its inception, the Air Force has used a variety of slogans, including "uno ab alto."*

unring a bell To rescind information that has been shared publicly, especially that which is damaging to a person or organization's reputation. Just as a bell cannot be "unrung," this is usually a futile effort. *How confident are you in this information? Because once we announce it, we can't unring a bell. You may think your lawyers can unring a bell, but I doubt this scandal is going away anytime soon.*

untested waters A situation or circumstance that is foreign, unclear, or unfamiliar and which may be dangerous or difficult as a result. *We're starting to get into untested waters exploiting these tax loopholes. If we aren't careful, the government may crack down on us hard! Though every precaution is being taken, this experimental procedure is still very much in untested waters.*

until all hours (of the day and night) Until a very late hour of the night or early hour of the morning. *Johnny keeps taking the car and staying out until all hours, and I just don't know what to do anymore! My boyfriend lives in another state, so to make up for the long distance, we stay up talking until all hours of the day and night.*

until doomsday For a very long, indefinite amount of time; forever. *Although we don't have to pay for medical care in this country, you'll sometimes be waiting until doomsday to receive elective treatment. My wife*

was talking on the phone with her sister until doomsday last night!

until kingdom come For a very long, indefinite amount of time; forever. *Although we don't have to pay for medical care in this country, you'll sometimes be waiting until kingdom come to receive elective treatment. My wife and her sister will talk on the phone until kingdom come if nothing interrupts them!*

until (one) is blue in the face For a great or unending length of time; until one has done it to exhaustion. *You can complain about it until you're blue in the face, but you're going to school today whether you like it or not. They are such strange friends. They'll argue until they're blue in the face, then they'll go out for dinner and be the best of pals.*

until the bitter end See [till/until the bitter end](#).

until the last dog is hung Until the very end. *You can leave early, but I'm staying here until the last dog is hung.*

the unwashed masses The broader general public, especially those of the lower and lower-middle classes. *The film didn't cause too great a stir with the unwashed masses, but it has been considered a milestone in cinematic achievement among film critics. The world of the super-rich is one that we among the unwashed masses can't even begin to understand.*

up a gum tree In a challenging or troublesome situation. (Possums were known to flee predators by hiding in gum trees.) Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *I have no savings, so if I get fired from my job, I'll be up a gum tree. Shouldn't we stop for gas? We'll be up a gum tree if the car dies on that desolate road ahead.*

up a stump In a challenging situation. *I'm a single mother who just lost her job—I'm really up a stump right now.*

up (a/the) creek (without a paddle) slang In a challenging or troublesome situation, especially one that cannot be easily resolved. *I have no savings, so if I get fired from my job, I'll be up the creek without a paddle. Shouldn't we stop for gas? We'll be up a creek if the car dies on that desolate road ahead.*

up against a brick wall Stymied by difficulties or obstacles that seem unlikely to change. *There are so few properties available in our town right now that prospective buyers are basically up against a brick wall. I'm trying*

to get funding for my project, but so far I'm up against a brick wall and have made only \$20.

up against it Having or likely to face serious problems, stresses, or difficulties. *Each year, more and more families find themselves up against it going into the holiday season. Sorry I haven't been in touch recently, I've just really been up against it at work the last few weeks.*

up against (something) Having or being likely to face serious problems, stresses, or difficulties. *Each year, more and more families are up against debt going into the holiday season. Sorry I haven't been in touch recently, I've just really been up against it in work the last few weeks. This team is undefeated, so we're up against our biggest challenge this season.*

up alley See [\(right\) up \(one's\) alley](#).

up and about Moving around, especially after a period of injury, illness, or inactivity. *After months in a cast, I'm finally up and about again, thank goodness! The surgery went very well, and the doctor is optimistic that she'll be up and about soon. We're all thrilled to be up and about after seven hours on a bus!*

up-and-comer Someone who displays signs of or potential for ambitious development, advancement, and achievement. *That new intern we hired certainly is an up-and-comer, don't you think? I wouldn't be surprised if she ended up running this place someday. He might not have won the championship round, but this amateur is definitely an up-and-comer!*

up and down **1.** Alternately happy and sad, as due to depression or a traumatic event. *My dad's been quite up and down ever since he lost his job at the factory. I was really confused as to why I felt so up and down after having my baby, until my doctor told me about postpartum depression.* **2.** Going between success and failure. *Things were a bit up and down in the first few years of the business, but now we're seeing stable profit growth each month.*

up and running **1.** Functioning properly, either after a malfunction or for the first time. *Until the dryer is up and running again, I guess I'll be going to the laundromat. It only took me a few minutes to get the printer up and running after taking it out of the box.* **2.** Newly-launched, as of a business or product. *We are so happy to announce that, after years of preparation, our design company is officially up and running!*

up for (something) 1. Ready and willing to do something *Sure, I'm up for going to the mall. I'm a little busy right now, but your brother is probably up for a game of basketball. You look tired. Are you sure you're up for this?* 2. Slated for a potential change in one's official status. *The boss said I might be up for a promotion after the next quarter. Nicky's been on his best behavior since he's up for parole next year. Dr. Stephen will be up for tenure at the end of this term.*

up her street See [\(just/right\) up \(one's\) street](#).

up in arms Very upset or angry about something, likened to an armed rebellion, from which the phrase originated. *The whole town is up in arms about the addition of a new shopping center. Mom was really up in arms after I dented her brand-new car.*

up in the air Uncertain; subject to change. *Becky and I were supposed get brunch this weekend, but things are up in the air now because she's not feeling well. Because the whole town protested plans to build a new shopping center, that proposal is now up in the air.*

up on (one's) ear 1. Angry or frustrated. Primarily heard in US. *Please don't get up on your ear, I really didn't mean to upset you.* 2. Showing effort. Primarily heard in US. *Wow, you really got up on your ear and did a lot of work today!*

up (one's) alley Suited to one's interests. *I really like Romantic poetry, so this class on John Keats is right up my alley. I'm sure Dave can fix your car—mechanical things like that are really up his alley.*

up (one's) sleeve Of a plan or advantage, kept in secret so it can be utilized if and when it is required. A reference to cheating at a card game by hiding a favorable card up one's sleeve *My stamina is the ace up my sleeve for this race—the other runners don't stand a chance! I've got a few tricks up my sleeve if he decides to pursue legal action against me.*

up (one's) street Suited to one's interests. *I really like Romantic poetry, so this class on John Keats is right up my street. I'm sure Dave can fix your car—mechanical things like that are really up his street.*

up shit creek (without a paddle) rude slang In a challenging or troublesome situation, especially one that cannot be easily resolved. *I have no savings, so if I get fired from my job, I'll be up shit creek without a paddle.*

Shouldn't we stop for gas? We'll be up shit creek if the car dies on that desolate road ahead.

up shit's creek (without a paddle) rude slang In a challenging or daunting situation. *I'm a single mother who just lost her job—I'm really up shit's creek right now. A: "I just found out that the school told my parents that I'm failing French." B: "Oh man, you're up shit's creek without a paddle."*

up-skirt See [upskirt](#).

up the duff Pregnant. Primarily heard in UK, Ireland. *You two have only been married for a couple of months, I can't believe you're up the duff already! I was pretty wild during my university years, which is how I found myself up the duff at 22.*

up the stick Pregnant. Primarily heard in UK, Ireland. *You two have only been married for a couple of months, I can't believe you're up the stick already! I was pretty wild during my university years, which is how I found myself up the stick at 22.*

up the walls Extremely busy or overworked; having many things to contend with at once. Primarily heard in UK, Ireland. *Sorry I haven't been in touch, but between work and our new baby, I've just been up the walls lately! Thank goodness you're here, Mary, we're up the walls in here! Could you take this order out to table 10 straight away, please?*

up the wazoo To an excessive or extreme degree; in great or excessive abundance. *The company's had financial difficulties up the wazoo lately, but the CEO is adamant that it will start making a profit soon. I only buy video game consoles after they've been out a while and stores aren't charging up the wazoo for them.*

up the yin-yang To an excessive or extreme degree; in great or excessive abundance. *The company's had financial difficulties up the yin-yang lately, but the CEO is adamant that it will start making a profit soon. I only buy video game consoles after they've been out a while and stores aren't charging up the yin-yang for them.*

up there Positioned above someone or something *Can you reach that book up there? Oh, that's right, I put the plates up there.*

up there with See [\(right\) up there with \(someone or something\)](#).

up to elbows See [\(in\) up to \(one's\) elbows](#).

up to eleven At the highest or most extreme level. The phrase comes from the movie *This Is Spinal Tap* and refers to the maximum volume on the band's amplifiers, which is marked as 11 instead of 10. *I love that song! Turn it up to eleven! If we're going to win this game, we need our intensity to be up to eleven.*

up to eleven To an intense, excessive, or extreme degree; at or beyond the maximum amount or normal threshold. (Coined in the 1984 comedy film *This is Spinal Tap*, referring to the guitar player's amplifier going to eleven, as opposed to the traditional limit of ten.) *Some of the best nights we had when we were teenagers were spent just driving aimlessly, cranking the car stereo up to eleven. Whenever our parents' fighting got up to eleven, my sister and I made ourselves scarce.*

up to eyes See [\(in\) up to \(one's\) eye\(ball\)s](#).

up to grade Meeting a necessary standard. *I don't think this product is up to grade—it shouldn't break down this quickly.*

up to ninety Extremely busy or overworked; having many things to contend with at once. Primarily heard in Ireland. *Sorry I haven't been in touch, but between work and our new baby, I've just been up to ninety lately! We're up to ninety in here, Mary! Could you take this order out to table 10 straight away, please?*

up to no good Engaging in malicious or nefarious behavior. *I'm worried that my daughter's boyfriend is up to no good—he always seems to be involved in some bizarre scheme. What are you boys whispering about? You're up to no good, aren't you?*

up to (one's) ears in (something) Having too much of something; overwhelmed by something. *We're still unpacking our new house, so we're just up to our ears in boxes. If any of my guys get hurt at the construction site, I'll be up to my ears in paperwork.*

up to (one's) eyeballs (in something) Extremely busy (with something); deeply or overly involved (in something); possessing, filled up with, or overwhelmed by an excessive amount (of something). *There's no way I can take a vacation right now, I'm up to my eyeballs in work at the moment! I only meant to be peripherally involved in David's business venture, but, before I knew it, I was in up to my eyeballs! Dana was worried*

she wouldn't find any work as an accountant working for herself, but she's up to her eyeballs in clients!

up to (one's) eyes (in something) Extremely busy (with something); deeply or overly involved (in something); possessing, filled up with, or overwhelmed by an excessive amount (of something). *There's no way I can take a vacation right now, I'm up to my eyes in work at the moment! I only meant to be peripherally involved in David's business venture, but, before I knew it, I was in up to my eyes! Dana was worried she wouldn't find any work as an accountant working for herself, but she's up to her eyes in clients!*

Up to (one's) neck in alligators business adage The full expression is some variation of: "When you are up to your neck in alligators, it's easy to forget that the goal was to drain the swamp." It is easy to be so overcome or preoccupied by various tangential worries, problems, or tasks that one loses sight of the ultimate goal or objective. *I've spent so much time dealing with various infrastructure problems for my new business that I've had no time to actually develop our product properly. I guess it's easy to forget, when up to your neck in alligators, that the mission is to drain the swamp.*

up to (one's) neck in (something) Having too much of something; overwhelmed by something. *I'm still unpacking my new house, so I'm just up to my neck in boxes. If any of my guys get hurt at the construction site, I'll be up to my neck in paperwork.*

up to scratch See [\(not\) up to scratch](#).

up to something Actively engaging in mischief or preparing to do something nefarious, usually in clandestine way. *That guy over there keeps snooping around the front of the store—I think he's up to something. Why won't you tell me who you were on the phone with? Are you up to something?*

up to the gills Drunk. *Boy, you were really up to the gills last night—how hungover do you feel this morning? You're up to the gills, stumbling in here reeking of alcohol!*

up with the chickens Awake at a particularly early hour, especially at or before sunrise (i.e., the hour when chickens wake). *I'm sorry, but I have to get going. I have to be up with the chickens tomorrow. Ma is up with the chickens every day to prepare breakfast for the farmhands.*

up with the crows Awake, out of bed, and active at a particularly early hour of the morning. Primarily heard in Australia. *I don't know how he does it, but my husband has gotten up with the crows every morning of his life. I won't have another pint, thanks. I have to be up with the crows tomorrow, so I'd better head home soon.*

up with the lark Awake at a particularly early hour, especially at or before sunrise (i.e., the hour when larks sing). Primarily heard in UK. *I'm sorry, but I have to get going. I have to be up with the lark tomorrow. Mum is up with the lark every day to prepare breakfast for the farmhands.*

up with the lark(s) Awake, out of bed, and active at a particularly early hour of the morning. *I don't know how he does it, but my husband has gotten up with the lark every morning of his life. I won't have another pint, thanks. I have to be up with the larks tomorrow, so I'd better head home soon.*

up your alley See [up \(one's\) alley](#).

up your alley See [\(right\) up \(one's\) alley](#).

up your sleeve See [up \(one's\) sleeve](#).

up your street See [up \(one's\) street](#).

up your street See [\(just/right\) up \(one's\) street](#).

uphill battle A task that is very daunting from the outset and continues to be challenging. *The incumbent is so popular that defeating her will be an uphill battle. I'm terrible at math, so I have a real uphill battle ahead of me if I want to improve my grade in Algebra.*

(upon) my word An interjection expressing surprise, amazement, or incredulity. *Upon my word, I cannot believe that my own wife would stoop to such depths of treachery! My word, Jenkins, this report is simply terrible. You're going to have to do better than that if you want to stay in this company.*

upon the heels of Soon after. *It's no surprise that a recession has come upon the heels of the stock market crash. I've been sick all month—one illness just follows upon the heels of another!*

upon the whole Considering all parts or aspects of something together; ultimately. *Karen isn't doing well in French this semester, but upon the*

whole, her grades are good. Upon the whole, we had a great trip, but it was annoying that our flight got delayed.

upskirt A video or photo that has been taken with the camera aimed up a woman's skirt, often secretly and without her consent. *I'll make sure that the man responsible for this disgusting upskirt video is sued.*

upwardly mobile Ascending or having the ability to ascend in social rank, esteem, or class. *I was worried that Janet's wealthy parents would think I wasn't upwardly mobile enough to go out with their daughter. It wasn't until I received my uncle's large inheritance that I became in any way upwardly mobile.*

use it or lose it If you do not utilize something, usually within a certain timeframe, it will disappear or no longer be viable. Said as an imperative. *If you want to stay fit, you need to keep exercising regularly—use it or lose it.*

use (one's) head To use one's own intelligence and intellectual ability; to think logically and rationally. In this phrase, "head" refers to one's brain. Often said as an imperative. *Come on, Dean, I know you can figure this out on your own. Use your head for a change!*

use (one's) noggin To use one's own intelligence and intellectual ability; to think logically and rationally. ("Noggin" here is slang for head or brain. Often said as an imperative.) *Come on, Dean, I know you can figure this out on your own. Use your noggin for a change! I can't believe you were arrested for selling marijuana. What were you thinking? Why don't you use your noggin once in a while?*

use (one's) noodle To use one's own intelligence and intellectual ability; to think logically and rationally. ("Noodle" here is slang for head or brain. Often said as an imperative.) *Come on, Dean, I know you can figure this out on your own. Use your noodle for a change! I can't believe you were arrested for selling marijuana. What were you thinking? Why don't you use your noodle once in a while?*

user base business jargon The number units of a particular product or service that are currently in use, especially software or an Internet or computing platform. (Also referred to as "install(ed) user base" or simply "install(ed) base.") *There have been fears that the computer giant's existing user base may decline after their newest operating system is implemented. The video game developer's insistence on backwards compatibility in their*

newest console shows an earnest effort to keep their user base happy.
utter a word See [not utter a word](#).

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V

v 1. The roman numeral for 5. *V stands for 5, so VII is 7.* **2.** An abbreviation for "versus," used to indicate a competition between two entities. In this usage, it is usually followed by a period. *It's Jackson v. Jones, the fight of the century!* **3.** An abbreviation for "very" that is typically used in text messages and social media posts. In this usage, it is seen with and without a period. *My cat knows that napping is v important. This legislation is v. important. Please call your senators.*

vajayjay slang Vagina. The term was popularized after being used on a 2006 episode of the TV show *Grey's Anatomy*, whose writers chose it due to censors' objection to multiple instances of the word "vagina." *I'd really rather not have to talk about my vajayjay in front of your parents, so let's not bring up the birthing class.*

vajazzle slang Of a woman, to adorn one's pubic area with decorative elements, like rhinestones and glitter. It is likely a portmanteau of "vagina" and "bedazzle." *I don't know why vajazzling is so popular right now—women have survived thousands of years without decorating their private parts!*

valley of death A grim place where death is or seems imminent. It appears in the Alfred, Lord Tennyson poem "The Charge of the Light Brigade" and is likely a shortened version of the Biblical phrase "valley of the shadow of death." *Walking through that old, bombed-out neighborhood, Sam felt like he was in the valley of death. I would never be able to march into the valley of death like soldiers do.*

valley of the shadow of death A grim place where death is or seems imminent. This Biblical phrase comes from Psalm 23. *Walking through that old, bombed-out neighborhood, Sam felt like he was in the valley of the shadow of death. I would never be able to march into the valley of the shadow of death like soldiers do.*

vape To smoke an electronic cigarette. The term is a shortening of "vapor" (that which is inhaled from an e-cigarette). *A lot of teenagers are vaping these days, which usually leads to smoking traditional cigarettes.*

variety is the spice of life Having many different experiences is what makes life interesting, exciting, enjoyable, or worthwhile. *I think everyone should travel the world. Variety is the spice of life, after all! You should really start trying new foods instead of eating the same thing all the time. Variety is the spice of life.*

vaulting school obsolete A house of prostitution; a brothel. ("Vaulting" being an allusion to sexual intercourse.) *To such a depth of degradation he has fallen, that his abode has been a vaulting school for a fortnight past.*

velvet handcuffs A situation that is undesirable, unenjoyable, or unfulfilling but that provides enough financial security as to make one unwilling or unable to leave. *After nearly three years at my mind-numbing job, held back by the velvet handcuffs of my salary and benefits, I decided to break away from it all and go live in Japan.*

(one's) Venus turns out a whelp An outdated expression used to describe the failure of something that was once expected to be successful. The phrase comes from dice, in which the best roll was once known as a "Venus" and the worst a "canis" (a dog). A "whelp" is a young dog. *I thought I was definitely going to get a promotion, but I didn't even get a raise—my Venus turned out a whelp, all right.*

verbal assault Very hostile speech directed at someone. *Don't talk to Stan today—I just tried to ask him a simple question, and I got a verbal assault. A: "Why are you crying?" B: "The professor gave me a verbal assault in the middle of my presentation."*

verbal diarrhea Babbling, longwinded talk; inane and lengthy chatter. Primarily heard in US. *I get so nervous when I go out on dates that I always start getting verbal diarrhea and sounding like a fool.*

Vermont charity An expression of sympathy, especially when more tangible assistance is needed. A: *"I'm so sorry that you still have so much work left to do."* B: *"Don't give me Vermont charity—grab a paint brush, and help me out here!"*

vertically challenged Short; not tall in stature. (Pseudo-politically correct slang used for humorous effect.) *Whenever anyone teases me about my height, I just tell them that I'm vertically challenged! Yeah, my boyfriend is a little vertically challenged, but he's the most loving man I've ever known.*



Vicar of Bray Someone who changes their alleged fundamental belief(s) or allegiance(s) in keeping with the popular views of the time, so as to gain or maintain a favorable position or advantage. (An allusion to Simon Aley, a 16th-century vicar in the town of Bray, Berkshire, who changed his religious doctrine between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism to that of the ruling monarch.) *Though the statesman always remained popular in the polls, many politicians felt him to be a Vicar of Bray, changing the tune of his rhetoric to meet whatever fancy the public demanded at the time.*

vicious circle A negative situation that is constantly maintained or worsened, rather than resolved. *Underdeveloped countries are often stuck in a vicious circle of poverty that their citizens can never overcome. I use my credit card because I don't make enough money to pay my bills, and as soon as I get paid, any extra money goes toward my credit card bill. That vicious circle is why I'm constantly broke!*

view in a bad light See [in a bad light](#).

a viper in (one's) bosom A friend, lover, or relation who proves to be traitorous, untrustworthy, deceitful, or ungrateful. (Used especially in the phrase "nourish/nurse/nurture a viper in one's bosom.") *Well, it turns out that Margaret was quite a viper in my bosom. I put my neck on the line to get her a job in our company, and then she turns around and tries to steal my position!*

viral Quickly and widely circulated on the Internet, as of content such as a video, picture, or post. *Have you seen that viral video of the puppy lounging on a pool float? It's hilarious! This meme is definitely going to go viral.*

virgin ears Said of a person who is or seems particularly young or innocent (and thus has not been exposed to much profanity or other inappropriate talk). *I can't curse in front of him—he's 10 years old and still has virgin ears! Please go upstairs—the story I'm about to tell is not meant for virgin ears.*

virgin territory Completely unexplored or untested field(s) or area(s) of activity. *The entrepreneur made his millions when he set up one of the world's most popular search engines back when the Internet was still considered virgin territory.*

viviparous lizard A European species of lizard, so named because the

females give birth to live young (as opposed to laying eggs). *Today, we're going to study the viviparous lizard.*

voice crying in the wilderness One who expresses an unpopular opinion or idea. *He was a voice crying in the wilderness as he tried to expose the vast corruption within the organization. She felt like a voice crying in the wilderness as she tried to warn others about the impending economic collapse.*

a voice in the wilderness See [\(lone\) voice in the wilderness](#).

volte-face A complete change of opinion or belief. The phrase comes from the Italian term *voltafaccia*. *Everyone was surprised when the candidate made a complete volte-face on her stance on taxes.*

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W

w00t See [woot](#).

w00t w00t See [woot woot](#).

wading bird A type of bird with long legs and a long neck that is typically found in shallow water. Examples include the crane and the stork. *Look at all that wading bird near the shore. I think it might be a heron.*

wag (it) To absent oneself or leave early (from school or work) when one would normally be required to be there; to play truant. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *I was so restless and bored at work that I decided to just wag it after lunch without telling anyone. Hey, Jim and I are planning on wagging from school on Friday, do you want to come with us? That's the last time you wag class, mister! From now on, I'm dropping you to school every morning!*

wag off To absent oneself or leave early from school or work when one would normally be required to be there; to play truant. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *I was so restless and bored at work that I decided to just wag off after lunch without telling anyone. Hey, Jim and I are planning on wagging off from school on Friday, do you want to come with us? That's the last time you wag off class, mister! From now on, I'm dropping you off to school every morning!*

wag (one's) tongue To talk or chat. *My dad is a pretty quiet guy, but when he's interested in something, he can really wag his tongue. My wife and her sister haven't seen each other in a while, so they've been wagging their tongues all day.*

WAGs An acronym for "wives and girlfriends." It is usually applied to wives and girlfriends of famous people, especially professional athletes. *Are WAGs invited to the event too?*

wait for dead men's shoes To await one's inheritance (and thus anticipate another's death). *Not that I'm waiting for dead men's shoes, but I'm going to get a lot of money when my grandfather dies.*

wait for it 1. Do not continue or begin (speaking, moving, doing something, etc.) until precisely the right moment. *Don't start the attack until*

you see the signal from our scouting party. Wait for it... OK, go now! **2.** An interjection used parenthetically to indicate that the speaker is about to say or introduce something one thinks is particularly funny, interesting, exciting, or surprising. *So while we were out on our date, we got talking about our families, and it turns out that he—wait for it—is a distant cousin! I couldn't believe it! So a horse goes into a bar, and the bartender says to him—wait for it—"Why the long face?" Get it?*

wait on (someone) hand and foot To dote on someone and do everything that they want. *I don't know if Tom's relationship with Jeremy is healthy. It seems like he's always waiting on him hand and foot. I hate the way Terrence waits on the boss hand and foot—what a toady!*

wait upon (someone) hand and foot To dote upon someone and do everything that they need or want. *I don't know if Tom's relationship with Jeremy is healthy. It seems like he's always waiting upon him hand and foot. I hate the way Terrence waits upon the boss hand and foot—what a brown-noser!*

waiting game A situation where one postpones or delays a decision or course of action so as to first see what might happen or what one's opponent(s) might do. (Often used in the phrase "play a/the waiting game.") *The prosecution has submitted a plea bargain to the defendant, so it's a bit of a waiting game at the moment to see if she will take it. The market is rather tumultuous at the moment, so I think we're better off playing the waiting game rather than making any hasty decisions.*

wake up and smell the roses See [stop and smell the roses](#).

wake-up call 1. A phone call that one schedules to be placed to one's hotel room in order to be woken up at a certain time. *I set an alarm and scheduled a wake-up call so there's no way I oversleep for the first conference session tomorrow.* **2.** An event that triggers a sense of urgency or the motivation to make a change. Primarily heard in US, Australia. *Harold's sudden chest pain was the wake-up call he needed to finally see his doctor. That terrible car accident was just the wake-up call I needed to quit my boring office job and start acting again.*

wake up on the wrong side of (the) bed To be in a particularly and persistently irritable, unhappy, or grouchy mood or state, especially when it is not in line with one's normal disposition. *I'm sorry I snapped at you*

earlier, I think I just woke up on the wrong side of the bed today. Jeez, the boss has been in a really bad mood all day. I guess he must have woken up on the wrong side of bed!

wake up with the chickens To wake up at a particularly early hour, especially at or before sunrise (i.e., the time when chickens wake). *No, thank you, I won't have another drink. I have to wake up with the chickens tomorrow. Ma wakes up with the chickens every day to prepare breakfast for the farmhands.*

walk a mile in (someone's) shoes To spend time trying to consider or understand another person's perspectives, experiences, or motivations before making a judgment about them. *I know that certain people can come across as selfish or mean-spirited, but you should try walking a mile in their shoes before you dismiss them too quickly.*

walk away scot-free To escape from some predicament, accusation, or wrongdoing without incurring any penalty or punishment; to be acquitted of all charges for some crime or crimes. *It sickens me that all these bankers who ruined our economy get to walk away scot-free, while millions of people have suffered as a result. Due to an error in the filing of evidence by police, the suspect ended up walking away scot-free.*

walk down memory lane To reminisce over memories of past events, especially happy ones. *My grandmother spends more time walking down memory lane these days than talking about the present. Sarah: "How did your coffee date with John go?" Amy: "It was pretty amicable, actually. We walked down memory lane for a while, and then we went our separate ways."*

walk down the aisle To get married. *I still can't believe that Nora and Scott walked down the aisle—I never thought I'd see those two get married!*

walk of life 1. One's socioeconomic status or background. *It was nice to see people from every walk of life come together to raise money for the sick little girl.* 2. One's profession. *I've always been interested in medicine, but I'm far too squeamish for that walk of life.*

walk on eggshells To act with great care and consideration so as not to upset someone. *The littlest thing tends to anger my mother, so I feel like I have to walk on eggshells whenever I'm at her house.*



walk on the wild side 1. noun A risky, raucous, adventurous, or licentious act, instance, or period of time. *I liked to take a walk on the wild side while I was in college, but now that I'm a bit older, I tend to be a bit more conservative in the things I do for fun. Jim, we've had such a quiet, sheltered life together. I want at least one walk on the wild side before we get too old!* 2. verb To engage in risky, raucous, adventurous, or licentious behavior. *If you're looking for a wild time on your vacation, you should travel with Samantha—she's always ready to walk on the wild side!*

walk on water To do something impossible or extraordinary. The phrase refers to the Gospel story in which Jesus walks on water. *Because Jeremy was able to finish that huge project in just a few days, the boss now thinks he walks on water. I'm not asking you to walk on water here—just pick up your sister from basketball practice, it's not that hard!*

walk softly and carry a big stick A variation on "speak softly and carry a big stick," a phrase popularized by US President Theodore Roosevelt that encourages one to attempt peaceful negotiations while also being armed and ready for battle. *Because that group is violent and unpredictable, I think you need to walk softly and carry a big stick when you deal with them.*

walk Spanish To force one to leave a place. The phrase might have originally referred to the actions of pirates. A: "Why are you home so early?" B: "Well, they made me walk Spanish."

walk the chalk To show one's competence in a particular area. This outdated phrase refers to a sobriety test in which one had to walk between chalk lines. *I was so worried that I wouldn't be able to walk the chalk, but I got a perfect score on my exam!*

walk the dog To exercise a pet dog by having it walk outdoors. The owner typically guides the dog by holding onto a leash attached to the dog's collar. *I don't have time to walk the dog tonight, so can you please do it? I bumped into your sister while I was out walking the dog.*

walk the talk To back up one's boastful talk with meaningful actions. (A compressed version of the largely American, "If you're going to talk the talk, you have to walk the walk," or, "You talk the talk, but can you walk the walk?" and other such iterations.) Primarily heard in UK. *This consultant has sold us on some pretty radical ideas, but it remains to be seen whether he can walk the talk.*

a walking disaster Someone who seems to constantly be in or cause great amounts of trouble, difficulty, or mayhem; someone who epitomizes disaster or calamity in their actions or behavior. *I heard that John got fired from another job because he kept on messing up his boss's instructions. What a walking disaster! First, I lock myself out of the house, then my grocery bag breaks in the parking lot, and now I stepped on my glasses—I'm just a walking disaster today!*

walking papers A notice of dismissal from one's employment. *After messing up that account, I'm terrified that I'm going to get my walking papers any day now. The boss gave Daniel his walking papers for arriving to work late yet again.*

wall of silence 1. An unspoken policy of concealment by police regarding the wrongdoing or illicit activity of other officers. A variation on the phrase "blue wall of silence." *I respect police, but it's hard to trust them completely when so many stories of the wall of silence come to light.* 2. Constant silence, often due to unhappiness or secrecy. *Ever since my husband found out that I lied to him, there's been a wall of silence between us. Mom can never know that I broke her vase, OK? There's a wall of silence, starting now.*

Wall Street A metonym for the US financial sector and stock exchange. (The New York Stock Exchange is located on Wall Street in Manhattan.) *What's the news out of Wall Street this morning? Judging by Wall Street, I think this economic recession is finally over.*

wallflower Someone who remains on the outer edges of a social event, especially a dance or party, and does not participate due to being shy or unpopular. *I used to be a real wallflower when I was in high school. It wasn't until I got to college that I finally started having a bit more confidence and began enjoying myself at parties.*

wallow in the mire To remain stuck in an undesirable or negative situation due to one's unwillingness to do something to change. *Jane left you six months ago—it's time to stop wallowing in the mire and get back to living your life.*

wangle (one's) way into (someplace or some situation) To succeed in entering some location or situation by tricky, clever, or persuasive means. *I didn't think we'd be able to do it, but after Rajesh talked to the*

bouncer, we were able to wangle our way into the night club. I've been trying to wangle my way into the honors course at Harvard all year, but so far, nothing has helped.

wangle someone into (someplace or some situation) To succeed in getting someone into some location or situation by tricky, clever, or persuasive means. *It turned out that Rajesh knew the bouncer at the club, so he was able to wangle us into the place even though we weren't on the guest list. I don't know how I let Jeff wangle me into looking after his dogs this weekend—I don't even like dogs!*

wanton kittens make sober cats One who behaves wildly in youth often shows more restraint in adulthood. *I wouldn't worry too much about your son's interest in partying—wanton kittens make sober cats most of the time.*

war bride A woman who marries a serviceman—often one from another country—in wartime. *I was a war bride. I met your father when he was stationed in Germany, where my family was living at the time, and we married soon after.*

a war of nerves Psychological warfare used to wear down an adversary's resolve through fear tactics. *The dictator's threats against the sovereign nation he was trying to conquer became a war of nerves as the citizens worried about the future of their country.*

war of words A lengthy argument characterized by verbal exchanges. *The union boss got into a war of words with management over the unfair treatment of the workers.*

warm and fuzzy 1. noun A highly sentimental, reassuring, and comforting emotional response. (Sometimes hyphenated.) *If all you want out of a relationship is a constant source of the warm and fuzzies, then you are going to have a hard time finding meaningful, long-term connections with people. I got such warm-and-fuzzies from visiting the lake house again after so many years.* 2. noun A thing or situation designed to provoke or evoke such an emotional response. (Sometimes hyphenated.) *Toys that people grow up with tend to become a sort of warm-and-fuzzy for them later in life.* 3. adjective Particularly sentimental, reassuring, and comforting, as of an emotional response. (Sometimes hyphenated.) *My dad was never a warm-and-fuzzy type of guy, but, in his own way, he always let us know that he*

loved us. *I love this movie, it always gives me a warm and fuzzy feeling whenever I watch it.*

warm fuzzy **1.** A highly sentimental, reassuring, and comforting emotional response. *If all you want out of a relationship is a constant source of warm fuzzies, then you are going to have a hard time finding meaningful, long-term connections with people.* **2.** A thing or situation that provokes or evokes such an emotional response. *Toys that people grow up with tend to become sort of warm fuzzies for them later in life.*

warm regards A friendly but slightly formal valediction (used to say farewell at the end of a letter or other written message; also known as a complimentary close). *I hope I'll have the chance of meeting with you again soon. Warm regards, Brian*

warning shot **1.** Literally, the firing of a weapon to signal an impending attack and/or to urge the opponent into surrender. *We're almost at the shore—send up a warning shot before we land.* **2.** By extension, something used to signal future events and/or to urge people into a particular course of action. *This petition is just a warning shot, saying that we'll be arrested if we keep playing our music so loud. I say, turn it up!*

warrior ant A species of ant that is known to travel in armies and capture other ants. *In today's class, we will study the behavior of the warrior ant.*

wash a brick To do or attempt something futile. *That couch will never fit up the steps—tell them to stop trying to wash a brick!*

wash-and-wear (clothing) Of or made from cloth that is resistant to forming wrinkles after washing, and therefore requires little or no ironing after being dried. *I'm so happy I invested in these wash-and-wear shirts for work. Now I get all sorts of things done in the time that I would have been ironing all of them.*

wash (one's) dirty linen in public To discuss very private, personal matters, especially that which may be embarrassing, in public or with other people. *It always makes me uncomfortable when John starts going into all his personal problems whenever our friends get together. I just wish he wouldn't wash his dirty linen in public like that. People have an unnatural fixation on the personal lives of celebrities, but I don't see why they should be expected to wash their dirty linen in public.*



wash (one's) hands To clean one's hands, typically with soap and water. *Kids, be sure to wash your hands before coming to the dinner table! Everyone in my class is sick, so I've been washing my hands constantly.*

wash (someone's) mouth out (with soap) To punish someone for using rude, vulgar, or obscene language by cleaning their mouth with soap (usually used merely as a threat). *If you kids don't stop cussing in this house, I'm going to wash your mouths out with soap!*

waste no time (in) (doing something) To act or do something immediately or as expediently as possible. *Wow, Sarah wasted no time finding a new boyfriend after she and Rob split up. We have to have the application in by tomorrow morning, so we must waste no time in getting everyone's signature that we need.*

a waste of breath Talk or discussion that is without worth, done in vain, or likely to be ignored. *Don't bother trying to change my mind about this, it's a waste of breath! It looks like my whole pitch to the board of directors ended up being a waste of breath.*

a waste of energy A useless, vain, or redundant effort or action. *It turns out the boss had already chosen a direction for the project, so my presentation was a complete waste of energy.*

waste (one's) breath To talk of, discuss, or say things that are likely to be ignored or are in vain. *Don't bother trying to change my mind about this, you're wasting your breath! It looks like I wasted my breath trying to pitch my idea to the board of directors.*

watch (one's) mouth To be very mindful or cautious about what one says; to control what one says in order to avoid offensive language. *Watch your mouth! I don't care how you speak at home, that's not how we talk here. After being threatened with detention for my snide remarks in class, I knew I had to watch my mouth for the rest of the semester.*

watch (one's) tongue To be very mindful or cautious about what one says; to keep a check on one's language or control what one says. *You'd better watch your tongue around these parts, mister, or you'll find yourself on the wrong end of someone's fist! After being threatened with failure for my snide remarks in class, I knew had to watch my tongue for the rest of the semester.*

watch (oneself) 1. To be very careful in one's actions or speech, so as

not to do or say something harmful or offensive. *Knowing that Keith's family might not approve of her liberal beliefs, Janet reckoned she ought to watch herself at their barbecue that coming weekend. I'm so used to swearing with my friends that I really have to watch myself when I'm around my brother's kids.*

2. imperative Be cautious of danger or possible injury. *Watch yourself on the roads tonight, there are always a lot of crazy drivers out on New Year's Eve.*

watch (someone's) back To be willing and prepared to help or defend someone; to look out for someone in case they need assistance. *Don't worry about those thugs, buddy. I'll watch your back if they ever come bother you again. You can always rely on your parents to watch your back.*

a watched kettle never boils When you want something to happen, paying attention to it will make the wait feel much longer. *The doctor is never going to call with your test results if you sit by the phone. A watched kettle never boils, after all.*

a watched kettle never boils If you are waiting for something to happen, obsessively checking it does not make it happen faster. A variation on the more common phrase, "a watched pot never boils." *Would you stop refreshing the page? The results will be posted soon enough, and a watched kettle never boils!*

a watched pot never boils When you want something to happen, paying attention to it will make the wait feel much longer. *The doctor is never going to call with your test results if you sit by the phone. A watched pot never boils, after all.*

water feature A decorative landscaping element that incorporates moving water. Examples include fountains and artificial waterfalls. *I love the water feature in the backyard—it sounds so soothing!*

water power A form of energy that is created by flowing water sources (such as rivers). *The town now uses water power to generate electricity.*

water under the bridge A prior issue that is now resolved or considered resolved. *That argument we had is just water under the bridge now—don't even worry about it.*

watered-down 1. Literally, of a drink or solution that has been diluted with water. *To reduce my daughter's sugar intake, I give her watered-down*



juice. That cleaner has such a strong smell that I can only use a watered-down version of it. **2.** Inferior. That movie was terrible—it's basically just a watered-down version of *The Godfather*.

wave (a/the) white flag To offer a sign of surrender or defeat; to yield or give in. *After the prosecutors brought forward their newest evidence, the defendant waved the white flag and agreed to the plea bargain. We've been in negotiations for weeks, but it looks like the other company might finally be ready to wave a white flag.*

wave goodbye to (something) To lose or end something, especially suddenly; to be forced to accept such a loss or end. *You were caught drinking on school property? Well, you can wave goodbye to your brand new car, mister! After the final horse lost its race, I waved goodbye to all the money I'd won that day at the track. You do realize that you'll be waving goodbye to all the health insurance benefits the company has to offer if you decide to work as a freelancer?*

wave the bloody shirt To encourage violence and animosity. The phrase was especially popular during the US Civil War. Primarily heard in US. *A lot of people in our country are waving the bloody shirt right now, but I just can't support acts of violence, however justified they may be.*

way back A relatively long time ago, especially when recalling something that is not the case now. Primarily heard in UK. *I used to really like this band way back, but now that I'm older, they just sound silly to me. Way back, there were only a few channels on TV. Now there seem to be thousands!*

way back when A relatively long time ago, especially when recalling something that is not the case now. Primarily heard in US. *I used to really like this band way back when, but now that I'm older, they just sound silly to me. Way back when, there were only a few channels on TV. Now there seem to be thousands!*

way of life 1. The customs and activities that compose the lifestyle of a person or group. *Fishing and seafaring are a large part of the way of life of these coastal communities. Terrorism is a threat to our freedom and our very way of life. 2.* Something that is accepted as the status quo. *It's a shame that violence and drug use become a way of life for some troubled teens.*

(one's) way out of a paper bag A phrase use emphasize that one is particularly dim-witted, unintelligent, incompetent, or unable to do something

basic, simple, or straightforward. *Jeff's new boyfriend sure says some dumb things. The dude probably couldn't find his way out of a paper bag. Don't assign that project to her, she couldn't punch her way out of a paper bag!*

the way the cookie crumbles See [that's the way the cookie crumbles](#).

the way the mop flops See [that's the way the mop flops](#).

the way the wind blows What appears probable or likely; how a certain course or situation is likely to develop. *The politician is waiting to see the way the wind blows regarding public opinion on the issue before deciding how to take action. Our next strategy with this project depends on the way the wind blows in the focus test.*

the way the wind is blowing What appears probable or likely; how a certain course or situation is likely to develop. *The politician is waiting to see the way the wind blows regarding public opinion on the issue before deciding how to take action. Our next strategy with this project depends on the way the wind is blowing in the focus test.*

WCW An abbreviation for "woman crush Wednesday," a hashtag that accompanies a social media post of a woman that the poster finds attractive (often a significant other or a celebrity). Such posts occur on Wednesdays due to the name, created simply for alliteration. *Check out my gorgeous wife! #WCW Jennifer Lawrence is my #wcw.*

weak at the knees 1. Literally, in danger of collapsing because one's knees may buckle, due to faintness brought on by a strong emotion, exhaustion, etc. *Hearing the news of my father's sudden death, I went weak at the knees and could barely remain standing.* 2. By extension, affected by a strong emotional reaction to someone or something. In this usage, the reaction is usually positive and associated with romance. *Just thinking about Samantha makes me feel weak at the knees.*

weak in the knees Unsteady or flustered due to a strong emotional reaction to someone or something. *Hearing the news of my father's sudden death, I went weak in the knees and could barely remain standing. Just thinking about Samantha makes me feel weak in the knees.*

weak-kneed Lacking resolve; easily swayed or frightened. *You can definitely get someone weak-kneed like Tim to do this stupid project for you.*



You'll never convince them to give you a raise if you go into the meeting weak-kneed.

weak link Someone or something considered inferior to the other parts of a group, series, or mechanism. *The weak link in computer security is almost always the end user. Derek hardly ever comes to class, so I'm not surprised he was the weak link in our group project.*

weak tea slang Something that is particularly underwhelming or unimpressive. *Many have felt like the president's run in office has been rather weak tea compared to the bold promises he made during his campaign.*

weaker vessel A woman. The phrase comes from the New Testament. *I don't care if you think I'm just a weaker vessel—I've trained to fight on the front lines.*

wear (one's particular profession's) hat To act as one would in one's particular profession while in a different setting. *Bobby, I know you're off duty, but can you please wear your doctor's hat for five minutes and tell me what's wrong with my arm? I don't want to have to go to the hospital. My wife was still wearing her judge's hat when she tried to intervene with our neighbor's arguing kids.*

wear out (one's) welcome 1. To remain a guest in a place, especially someone's home, for too long, to the point where the host no longer wishes one to stay. *After the cool reception I received at breakfast, it was apparent that I had worn out my welcome at the cottage of my father's friend.* **2.** By extension, to do something that makes one no longer welcome in or at a place. *Things were going fine at the dinner meeting until my coworker made an off-color joke, at which point it seemed that we had worn out our welcome.*

wear rose-colored glasses To assume an unduly optimistic and cheerful attitude (toward something); to focus solely or primarily on the positive aspects (of something). Primarily heard in US. *Many of us wear rose-colored glasses when we think back to our childhoods. It's part of the reason nostalgia is such a powerful emotional draw. I find it a little irksome how you always wear rose-colored glasses, even in the worst of times!*

wear sackcloth and ashes To act in a way that shows one's penitence or remorse for one's misdeeds or poor behavior. *Darren has been wearing sackcloth and ashes ever since his girlfriend broke up with him for*

cheating on her. There's no way to turn back time on the way I treated my brother growing up. All I can do now is wear sackcloth and ashes.

wear several hats To hold or function in more than one position or role. *I work from home, so I'm able to wear several hats: stay-at-home dad, soccer coach, and website developer. Both our editorial assistant and our copywriter left the company at the same time, so I've been wearing several hats ever since.*

wear the bull's feather To have an adulterous wife; to be cuckolded. The cuckold is traditionally associated with horns, and a "bull's feather" was once a term for a horn. *I never thought I would wear the bull's feather, but it's true—my wife cheated on me.*

wear the cap and bells To provide humor and merriment (sometimes by acting as a target for mockery). The phrase refers to the hat adorned with bells that court jesters once wore. *Sean will wear the cap and bells—you can always count on him to liven up a party. I guess I'm wearing the cap and bells today because they are having a great time ridiculing me.*

wear the horns To have an adulterous wife; to be cuckolded. The cuckold is traditionally associated with horns. *I never thought I would wear the horns, but it's true—my wife cheated on me.*

wear the willow To grieve. The willow tree is traditionally associated with sadness. *My grandmother has been wearing the willow ever since my grandfather died. I wore the willow after my true love married another man.*

wear too many hats business slang To hold too many responsibilities or assume too many roles at the same time. *One of the pitfalls many entrepreneurs fall into when setting up a new company is to wear too many hats, which not only spreads themselves very thin, but ends up being counterproductive to the operation as a whole.*

wear two hats To hold or function in more than one position or role. *I'm able to work from home, so I'm able to wear two hats: stay-at-home dad and website developer. Ever since our editorial assistant left the company, I've been having to wear two hats.*

weather breeder A sudden period of sunny and/or clear skies. Poor weather usually resumes afterward. *Don't get too excited about the sun today, I think it's just a weather breeder. I wouldn't be surprised if it rained again*

tomorrow.

we'd better be going See [\(one had\) better be going](#).

we'd better get moving See [\(one had\) better get moving](#).

we'd better get on our horse See [\(one had\) better get on \(one's\) horse](#).

we'd better keep quiet about it See [\(someone had\) better keep quiet about it](#).

we'd better keep still about it See [\(someone had\) better keep still about it](#).

wedding cake The cake served at a wedding reception. It is traditionally tiered and elaborately-decorated, and usually is ceremonially cut by the newlyweds, who then feed the first slice to each other. *Did you see the eight-tiered wedding cake? It's beautiful! Jim and Julie are going to cut their wedding cake now!*

the wee small hours (of the night/morning) The very early hours after midnight. *I was studying for the exam until the wee small hours of the morning, and now I can barely keep my eyes open! We all danced until the wee small hours of the night. I love the wee small hours, when few are awake and one can be alone with one's thoughts.*

weeaboo slang A non-Japanese person with a very strong, perhaps obsessive, interest in Japanese culture. The term gained popularity on the forum 4chan. *Not every manga fan is a weeaboo, OK?*

weeb slang A non-Japanese person who has a very strong, perhaps obsessive, interest in Japanese culture. "Weeb" is a shortened form of "weeaboo," a word that gained popularity on the forum 4chan. *Not every manga fan is a weeb, OK?*

a week from next Tuesday An unspecified date or time far in the future, sometimes used to denote a time that will never come to pass. *At this rate, it will be a week from next Tuesday before I'm ready to start writing this report. You can keep crying until a week from next Tuesday and I still won't buy you that new video game.*

a week is a long time in politics Due to the fast-changing pace of the political landscape, the fortunes of a politician or political group can

change drastically just in the course of a single week. The phrase is attributed to British Prime Minister Harold Wilson, c. 1964. *The challenger is enjoying a surge in popularity after the debate, but there's still time before the election, and a week is a long time in politics.*

weep millstones Said hyperbolically of one who is deemed so cold and indifferent as to be unable to cry tears. *I've never seen Claire show any emotion—in fact, she probably weeps millstones. Why didn't you comfort that poor little girl? Do you weep millstones?*

weep (one's) heart out To weep copiously; to cry intensely and for a long time. *Lauren wept her heart out at the news of her father's sudden death. What did you say to upset your brother? He's been weeping his heart out upstairs for the last half hour!*

weigh anchor To hoist the anchor so that a ship can sail. *Weigh anchor, boys—we're going home!*

the weight of the world An immense or particularly worrisome burden or responsibility. (Often in the phrase "carry/have the weight of the world on one's shoulders.") *Have you seen Mike lately? It looks like he has the weight of the world on his shoulders. You need to learn to ask for help when things become overwhelming instead of trying to carry the weight of the world on your shoulders all the time.*

weight off (one's) mind The relief felt after sharing what one is thinking or feeling with others, or upon no longer having a particular problem. *Having a night out to talk over my problem with my close friend helped me get a weight off my mind. I finally completed my tax return for this year. That's a weight off my mind!*

welcome (someone or something) with open arms 1. To greet someone very happily and eagerly; to give someone a very warm, enthusiastic welcome. *When my brother left for the military, he and I didn't really get along too well. Now that he's coming home soon, I can't wait to welcome him with open arms. It was a little intimidating starting a new job at such a large firm, but everyone there welcomed me with open arms.* 2. To be very pleased and enthusiastic about something, especially that which is new or unexpected. *The president has announced a reversal on his controversial policy, and many people are welcoming the news with open arms.*

welfare Cadillac Used to describe a person or group who receives

government financial aid (perhaps fraudulently) and buys expensive, ostentatious things. *As a someone who is struggling financially without the help of the government, I find those welfare Cadillacs infuriating.*

well dog my cats See [dog my cats](#).

well met archaic A complimentary greeting or salutation. *Well met, lieutenant! It is a fine morning that sees us off to war!*

well padded (hyphenated if before a noun) Of a portly figure; fleshy or fat. *I used to be rather skinny in my youth, but when I hit middle age, I grew rather well padded. I fell off my bike this morning, but luckily my well-padded bottom broke my fall!*

we'll rue the day See [rue the day \(that something happened\)](#).

well-stacked slang Buxom. Primarily heard in UK. *That curvaceous new receptionist sure is well-stacked!*

well versed See [be well versed in \(something\)](#).

(well,) I'll be hanged! An expression of surprise or astonishment, especially regarding some recent revelation. *Bob: "You know, if you run your washing machine at night you can save a lot of money on your electric bill." John: "I'll be hanged, I never knew that before!" Well, I'll be hanged! Who knew so many people would show up to see our concert?*

(well,) I'll be! An expression of surprise or astonishment, especially regarding some recent revelation. *Bob: "You know, if you run your washing machine at night, you can save a lot of money on your electric bill." John: "I'll be, I never knew that before!" Well, I'll be! Who knew so many people would show up to see our concert?*

(well,) imagine that! An expression of surprise, astonishment, or disbelief, especially regarding some recent revelation. *Bob: "You know, if you run your washing machine at night you can save a lot of money on your electric bill." John: "Well, imagine that! I've never heard of such a thing!" Four hundred people came to see our concert tonight? Imagine that!*

well, well, (well) Used to express surprise or incredulity, either sincerely or sarcastically. *Well, well, I must say that I didn't expect to see results like that from the experiment! Well, well, well, what have we here? Up to your old tricks again, Daniel?*



welp A common alternative to "well" that is used to express disappointment, often in text messaging. *Welp, I guess he's not coming—he was supposed to be here an hour ago.*

we're beat See [be beat](#).

we're even See [be even \(with someone\)](#).

we're not in Kansas anymore See [be not in Kansas anymore](#).

we're shot See [be shot](#).

Were you born in a tent? Have you no basic manners? (Usually said after someone has left open a door to the outside.) *Shut the door, it's freezing outside! Were you born in a tent?*

werk slang A statement of praise or affirmation typically used on social media. *Wow, you look gorgeous! Werk.*

wet behind the ears Inexperienced, often because one is young. *You'll never win the case with him as your lawyer—he's just out of law school and still wet behind the ears! This group of interns seems especially wet behind the ears—I barely trust them to get my coffee!*

wet blanket Someone who ruins other people's fun. *Don't invite Nicole to the party. She's such a wet blanket that she'll probably just complain the whole time. David was tired of being called a wet blanket by his friends just because he doesn't drink alcohol.*

wet dream 1. A sexually stimulating dream during which a male ejaculates. *Most boys experience wet dreams when they begin to reach puberty.* 2. rude slang Something that is considered to be very exciting. *The Woodward Dream Cruise is a classic car buff's wet dream.*

wet (one's) beak To partake in part of the profits of another person's business, usually as a result of extortion. (Used especially in reference to organized crime, particularly "protection money" paid to the Italian Mafia.) *Trust me, you're better off just giving him what he wants whenever he comes round to wet his beak. If you don't pay up, you'll have bigger problems.*

wet (one's) pants 1. Literally, to urinate while wearing one's clothing. *I had to go to the bathroom so bad that I'd nearly wet my pants by the time I made it home. Sarah has just finished potty training, but she still wets her pants from time to time.* 2. To laugh hysterically or uncontrollably. (Usually

used in the continuous tense.) *Raj's new boyfriend is hilarious, he had us wetting our pants through the whole lunch!* **3.** To be extremely excited or giddy. (Usually used in the continuous tense.) *Abigail and I were wetting our pants with excitement waiting for the concert to start!*

wet (oneself) **1.** Literally, to urinate while wearing one's clothing. *I had to go to the bathroom so bad that I'd nearly wet myself by the time I made it home. Sarah has just finished potty training, but she still wets herself from time to time.* **2.** To laugh hysterically or uncontrollably. (Usually used in the continuous tense.) *Raj's new boyfriend is hilarious, he had us wetting ourselves through the whole lunch!* **3.** To be extremely excited or giddy. (Usually used in the continuous tense.) *Abigail and I were nearly wetting ourselves with excitement for the concert to start!*

wet the bed To urinate in one's bed, as commonly happens with children as they transition out of diapers. *How old was your son when he finally stopped wetting the bed? Julia wet the bed last night, so I have some extra things to clean up here.*

whack-a-mole **1.** Literally, an arcade game in which the player uses a small rubber mallet to hit robotic toy moles that pop up randomly in holes laid out across the surface of the machine. *I love coming to this old arcade. I have a lot of fond memories playing whack-a-mole and skee ball here as a kid.* **2.** By extension, a situation in which problems continue to arise faster than one is able to solve or cope with them, resulting in piecemeal, incomplete, or temporary results. *These dang pop-up ads are so annoying! It's a game of whack-a-mole every time I go online these days! Every time we think we have the software debugged, more problems show up. We've just been playing whack-a-mole from day one!*

a whale of a **1.** An exceptionally great or excellent. *I had a whale of a time at Pete's wedding—I danced all night long!* **2.** An exceptionally large. *Remodeling the kitchen will make a whale of a difference in the selling price of the home.*

a whale of a (good) time An exceptionally fun, exciting, or amusing experience. (Usually used in the phrase, "have a whale of a (good) time.") *Gee, Samantha, I sure had a whale of a time at the dance with you last night. We should go out again sometime! Come out to our party this weekend, it's sure to be a whale of a good time!*

whale tail slang The waistband of a thong or G-string when it becomes visible above the waistline of the wearer's pants or skirt. *I really don't like wearing thongs, because I'm always paranoid that I'll end up having a whale tail on display.*

What am I, chopped liver? A semi-serious expression of frustration, anger, or indignation at having been overlooked and/or regarded as inferior. The phrase likely originated as a part of Jewish humor, referring to the serving of chopped liver as a common side dish (thus overlooked in favor of the main course), the taste of which many do not find appealing. A: *"Mary is so smart, talented, and creative, I wish she were my best friend!"* B: *"And what am I then, chopped liver?"* They said they wanted to hire someone else for the job. *What am I, chopped liver?*

what are the odds 1. How likely do you think it is that (something will happen or something is the case)? *That new intern is a nightmare. What are the odds she screws up another order? I hear we're supposed to get over two feet of snow. What are the odds of them canceling school tomorrow, do you reckon?* **2.** That is or was incredible; that is or was extremely unlikely. *Wow, I just won money on a scratch card for the third time in a row! What are the odds? And then it turned out that our dads sat next to each other in a class in college. What are the odds?*

what are you angling at See [angle at \(something\)](#).

what are you like slang Said in response to one's funny or strange actions. Primarily heard in UK. *Why did you just march outside in your robe? What are you like?*

what did your last slave die of An expression of irritation, exasperation, or discontent to someone who is being imperious or makes excessive or unreasonable demands on one. *Bill: "Darren, I need you to pick up my dry cleaning before lunch, then arrange for a taxi to pick me up at five o'clock." Darren: "Sheesh, what did your last slave die of?" Bill: "Excuse me? One more outburst like that and you're fired!" Dad: "Sally, take out the garbage like your mother asks." Sally: "All right already! Gosh, what did your last slave die of?"*

what do I know Used to emphasize that what was just said is merely a guess or assumption. (Sometimes used sarcastically.) *If I had to take a guess, I'd say that the fan belt is loose. But I'm not a mechanic, so what do I know?*

If the country keeps trading at such unprofitable rates, there's no way we'll be out of this recession in the next five years. But what do I know, I'm only the top economist in the Midwest.

what do you want to bet (that) I think it is very likely that something will happen or is the case. *That new intern is a nightmare. What do you want to bet she screws up another order? There must be four feet of snow out there. What do you want to bet that they cancel school tomorrow?*

what do you want, a cookie A sarcastic response to one who is excited about or seeks praise for a minor or insignificant accomplishment. *OK, so you hung some Christmas decorations—what do you want, a cookie?*

What does that have to do with the price of cheese See [What's that got to do with the price of cheese?](#)

What does that have to do with the price of eggs See [What's that got to do with the price of eggs?](#)

What does that have to do with the price of fish See [What's that got to do with the price of fish?](#)

What does that have to do with the price of meat See [What's that got to do with the price of meat?](#)

What does that have to do with the price of tea in China See [What's that got to do with the price of tea in China?](#)

what does that have to do with the price of tea in China A rhetorical question calling attention to a non-sequitur or irrelevant statement or suggestion made by another person. *Yes, I agree that health care is an important issue, but what does that have to do with the price of tea in China? We're discussing tax incentives for local businesses—not exactly a related topic!*

what doesn't kill you makes you stronger You can grow and learn from even the most negative experiences. *I just know that you'll survive this illness and be better than ever afterward. What doesn't kill you makes you stronger, right?*

what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas Any scandalous activities that happen when one travels in a group are not to be discussed with other people afterward. The phrase alludes to Las Vegas, Nevada, a popular vacation destination with a reputation as a city of hedonism (due to its

casinos and clubs). The phrase can also be used simply to emphasize that something needs to be kept secret. Primarily heard in US. A: "*Guys, please don't tell my wife what happened while we were on vacation.*" B: "*Sure, man—what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas!*" I really want this party to be a surprise, so please don't share the details we discussed here with anyone else—*what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas, OK?*

what happens on the road stays on the road Any scandalous activities that happen when one travels in a group are not to be discussed with other people afterward. The phrase alludes to the stereotypical partying of musicians on tour. Primarily heard in US. A: "*Guys, please don't tell my wife about all the girls I've been with on the road.*" B: "*Sure, man—what happens on the road stays on the road!*"

what happens on tour stays on tour Any scandalous activities that happen when one travels in a group are not to be discussed with other people afterward. The phrase alludes to the stereotypical partying of musicians on tour. A: "*Guys, please don't tell my wife about all the girls I've been with on the road.*" B: "*Sure, man—what happens on tour stays on tour!*"

what has been seen cannot be unseen Disturbing or upsetting images are not easily forgotten. *Even though I'm back from the battlefield now, what has been seen cannot be unseen.*

what hath God wrought "What has God done"; usually used to express one's awe. The phrase originated in the Bible and, in 1844, Samuel Morse sent it as the first telegram. *Every time I look at my infant daughter, all I can do is marvel—what hath God wrought.*

what I am made of See [show \(someone\) what \(one's\) made of](#).

what in blazes See [in \(the\) blazes?](#)

what in blue blazes See [in blue blazes?](#)

what in creation See [in creation?](#)

what in hell An exclamation used to emphasize surprise, shock, anger, disgust, etc. *Just what in hell is going on here? Aw, what in hell! I just had this fixed, and now there's a dent in it! What in hell! Don't sneak up on me like that!*

what in Sam Hell See [in \(the\) Sam Hill?](#)



what in tarnation See [in tarnation?](#).

what in tarnation An exclamation used to emphasize surprise, shock, anger, disgust, etc. *Just what in tarnation is going on here? Aw, what in tarnation! I just had this fixed, and now there's a dent in it! What in tarnation! Don't sneak up on me like that!*

what (in) the devil An exclamation used to emphasize surprise, shock, or bafflement. *Just what the devil is going on here? What in the devil? I just put my sandwich down, and now it's gone!*

what in the hell An exclamation used to emphasize surprise, shock, anger, disgust, etc. In this phrase, "in the hell" is used as an intensifier. *What in the hell do you think you're doing? You can't come in here! What in the hell? I just had this fixed, and now there's a dent in it! Just what in the hell is going on here?*

what in the world An exclamation used to emphasize surprise, shock, anger, disgust, etc. *Just what in the world is going on here? Aw, what in the world! I just had this fixed, and now there's a dent in it! What in the world! Don't sneak up on me like that!*

what in thunderation See [in thunderation?](#).

what is the good See [what's the good of \(doing something\)](#).

what is the use See [what's the use \(of doing something\)](#).

what it (all) comes down to What it really amounts to is; what the most fundamental or basic aspect of it is. *I know this has been a complex trial, but what it all comes down to in the end is whether or not a shadow of a doubt exists as to my client's guilt. I guess what it comes down to is a lack of communication between team members.*

what must be, must be Whatever is meant or predestined to happen will happen; there is no use in regretting or resisting what one cannot control. *I'm really hoping that I get this job, but what must be, must be.*

what on earth An exclamation used to emphasize surprise, shock, anger, disgust, etc. *Just what on earth is going on here? Aw, what on earth! I just had this fixed, and now there's a dent in it! What on earth! Don't sneak up on me like that!*

what (one) has coming Consequences or punishments that one will

eventually encounter. *Of course she'll go to jail! After stealing that money, that's what she has coming!*

what the An exclamation of surprise, as if one is too startled or confused to finish one's sentence. *When my little brother came home covered in mud, all our mom could say was, "What the?" A: "Oh, your phone bill came today. I think there's some overage charges on it." B: "What the?"*

what the actual fuck rude slang An expression of dismay or indignation. The phrase can begin a question or stand alone. *What the actual fuck is my ex-boyfriend doing here? I can't believe she just said that to me! What the actual fuck!*

what the fuck rude slang An expression of dismay or indignation. The phrase can begin a question or stand alone. *What the fuck is my ex-boyfriend doing here? I can't believe she just said that to me! What the fuck?*

what the fuck 1. rude slang An exclamation of surprise and/or annoyance. *When the car in front of me suddenly slammed on its brakes, I couldn't help but scream, "What the fuck?" A: "Oh, your phone bill came today. I think there's some overage charges on it." B: "What the fuck?"* 2. rude slang Why not? An aside used to emphasize one's nonchalance toward something. *Sure, I'm not doing anything today, let's go to the beach—what the fuck?*

what the hell 1. An exclamation used to emphasize surprise, shock, anger, disgust, etc. In this phrase, "the hell" is used as an intensifier. *What the hell are you doing? You can't come in here! What the hell? I just had this fixed, and now there's a dent in it! Just what the hell is going on here?* 2. Why not; one might as well; it makes no difference anyway. *A: "Do you think we can add some extra effects to this scene?" B: "Sure, what the hell." Let's see, I'll take a gallon of milk, a carton of eggs, a loaf of bread, and... what the hell, one of those bouquets of flowers, too.*

what the hey slang Why not? An aside used to emphasize one's nonchalance toward something. Often used as a euphemism for "what the hell." *Sure, I'm not doing anything today, let's go to the beach—what the hey? What the hey, I'll go to the movies with you tonight.*

what was (one) smoking slang What were you thinking? Used to express confusion, annoyance, or surprise at someone's past actions. The phrase alludes to drug use. *What were you smoking when you picked out this*

hideous wallpaper? What were we smoking when we thought a flight at 6 AM was a good idea?

what was that I did not hear or understand what you just said, could you repeat that? *What was that, Bill? You'll need to speak up.*

what would Jesus do A reminder to act as Jesus Christ would. It is sometimes abbreviated as "WWJD." *Whenever you're faced with temptation, just think: what would Jesus do? Don't exclude the new kids. Come on, what would Jesus do?*

what you have coming See [what \(one\) has coming](#).

what you lose on the swings, you gain on the roundabouts The losses, setbacks, or negative aspects of a certain situation are offset or balanced by equally advantageous or positive elements, or vice versa. (The formation of the phrase can also be reversed.) Primarily heard in UK. *This promotion has meant I can provide for my family much more easily, but it's so demanding that I don't see them all that much—what you gain on the swings, you lose on the roundabouts. People here complain about the high level of taxes, but what you lose on the swings, you gain on the roundabouts—if I were to go into the hospital tomorrow for a major operation, I wouldn't pay a thing.*

what you're made of See [show \(someone\) what \(one's\) made of](#).

what you've never had you never miss If you've never had a particular item or experience, then you will not long for it. *Why would I be sad to be an only child? What you've never had you never miss. I don't care that I don't have a fancy car. What you've never had you never miss.*

what, me worry Said to emphasize one's calm, perhaps cavalier, attitude. The phrase is most often associated with *Mad* magazine and its cartoon cover boy Alfred E. Neuman. A: *"I can't believe you're so unconcerned with all the problems in the world today."* B: *"What, me worry?"*

whatever it takes Anything necessary to complete a task or goal, usually with a sense of reckless abandon. *I will do whatever it takes to get this promotion—even making sure that co-workers' blunders get back to the boss. Their team is more skilled than ours, so we'll have to do whatever it takes to win this game.*

what(ever) will be, will be Let whatever was meant or fated to happen come to pass; there is no use in regretting or resisting what one cannot control. *I'm really hoping that I get this job, but whatever will be, will be. I'm afraid there's no more the doctors can do for your wife. At this point, what will be, will be.*

what's good for the goose is good for the gander If something is good, acceptable, or beneficial for one person, it is or should be equally so for another person or persons as well. *Well I guess if you are entitled to stay out until all hours, then I'll do the same. After all, what's good for the goose is good for the gander, right?*

what's her take on that See [\(someone's\) take on \(something\)](#).

what's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander If something is good, acceptable, or beneficial for one person, it is or should be equally so for another person or persons as well. *Well I guess if you are entitled to stay out until all hours, then I'll do the same. What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander, right?*

what's (someone's) beef (with someone or something) What's wrong with someone? Why is someone upset? What is someone's problem? *Wow, what's Cheryl's beef today? She's been really snippy with me all day. I'll tell you what my beef with you is: I'm really annoyed that you would leave all these dishes for me to clean up, instead of just doing them yourself! What's your beef with this project? You've had some issue with it from day one.*

What's that got to do with the price of cheese? A rhetorical question calling attention to a non-sequitur or irrelevant statement or suggestion made by another person. Primarily heard in UK. *Yes, I agree that health care is an important issue, but what's that got to do with the price of cheese? We're discussing tax incentives for local businesses—not exactly a related topic!*

What's that got to do with the price of eggs? A rhetorical question calling attention to a non-sequitur or irrelevant statement or suggestion made by another person. Primarily heard in US. *Yes, I agree that health care is an important issue, but what's that got to do with the price of eggs? We're discussing tax incentives for businesses—not exactly a related topic!*

What's that got to do with the price of fish? A rhetorical question calling attention to a non-sequitur or irrelevant statement or suggestion made by another person. Primarily heard in UK. *Yes, I agree that health care is an important issue, but what's that got to do with the price of fish? We're discussing tax incentives for local businesses—not exactly a related topic!*

What's that got to do with the price of meat? A rhetorical question calling attention to a non-sequitur or irrelevant statement or suggestion made by another person. *Yes, I agree that health care is an important issue, but what's that got to do with the price of meat? We're discussing tax incentives for local businesses—not exactly a related topic!*

What's that got to do with the price of tea in China? A rhetorical question calling attention to a non-sequitur or irrelevant statement or suggestion made by another person. *Yes, I agree that health care is an important issue, but what's that got to do with the price of tea in China? We're discussing tax incentives for local businesses—not exactly a related topic!*

what's the difference 1. How do these things differ? Said in this way, the phrase is a legitimate question that the speaker wants answered. *What's the difference between these two recipes? They use the exact same ingredients and everything. What's the difference between all these cell phones?* **2.** What does it matter? Said in this way, the phrase is usually an aside highlighting the speaker's frustration. *We can take the long way home, or we can sit in traffic here. Both ways will take forever, so what's the difference? What's the difference if I come home on Friday night or Saturday morning? You guys will be asleep either way!*

what's the good of (doing something) What reason is there (to do something); why should one bother (doing something)? *What's the good of trying? I just don't have the brains for this class. What's the good of making your bed each morning when you're just going to mess up the sheets again at night?*

what's the use (of doing something) What reason is there (to do something); why should I bother (doing something)? A: "OK, so you didn't do so well on the test. Just study a bit harder next time!" B: "What's the use? I'm just not any good at math." *What's the use of making your bed each*

morning when you're just going to mess up the sheets again at night?

what's up with (someone) 1. What is new in someone's life? *Oh, hey Jim, what's up with you? Did you end up getting that job in Denver?* 2. Is there something wrong with someone? Is someone OK? Why is someone upset? *Wow, what's up with Cheryl today? She seems like she's in a really bad mood. I'll tell you what's up with me: I'm really annoyed at you for leaving all these dishes for me to clean up, instead of just doing them yourself!*

what's what slang The true facts or most fundamental information (about someone or something). *After putting it off for a week, Sarah finally told Jane what's what and ended their relationship. I think it's about time that you knew what's what about how this business is run.*

whatsamatta slang A playful variant of "what's the matter?" meaning "what's wrong?" *Oh, you poor baby, whatsamatta?*

the wheel has come full circle The situation or circumstance has returned to its original or a similar state. *After the banking sector brought on the economic collapse through lack of federal oversight, the wheel seems to have come full circle as politicians are beginning to call for deregulation of the industry once again.*

the wheel of fortune The incidental, unforeseen, or random occurrences of life. (Alludes to the wheel that the goddess Fortune was believed to spin, which determined the fate in a person's life.) *There's no knowing how this whole thing will pan out—we just have to leave it up to the wheel of fortune.*

wheel within a wheel Something that is very complex and perhaps overly complicated. The phrase originated in the Bible. *I can't figure out how to turn off this alarm system—it's really a wheel within a wheel.*

the wheels are in motion Things have begun developing, unfolding, or progressing. *If you're going to act, you have to do it now, but once the wheels are in motion, there is no going back! Boss: "Jeff, what's the status of our new deployment strategy?" Jeff: "The wheels are in motion, we're just waiting for some final tests from the development team."*

the wheels are turning Things have begun developing, unfolding, or progressing. *If you're going to act, you have to do it now, but once the wheels*



are turning, there is no going back. A: "What's the status of our new deployment strategy?" B: "The wheels are turning, we're just waiting for some feedback on how well it's being received."

the wheels fell off slang An unexpected problem arose, with (real or hyperbolically) disastrous effects. *The job interview was going well, but the wheels fell off once I started rambling about my personal life. My plan was to have dinner ready by the time you got home, but the wheels fell off when the washer flooded.*

when hell freezes over Never; at no time. *Bob, our family will relinquish control of this company to you when hell freezes over. It'll be when hell freezes over before that clown is allowed to run this great state of ours!*

when in blazes See [in \(the\) blazes?](#)

when in blue blazes See [in blue blazes?](#)

when in creation See [in creation?](#)

when in Sam Hell See [in \(the\) Sam Hill?](#)

when in tarnation See [in tarnation?](#)

when in thunderation See [in thunderation?](#)

when it rains, it pours When something good or bad happens, similarly good or bad things tend to follow. *After months of looking for a job, I suddenly have three job interviews this week. When it rains, it pours. Everyone in my house is sick right now because when it rains, it pours.*

when life gives you lemons, make lemonade Focus on the good in a bad situation and take action accordingly. *While I was devastated to lose my job, being unemployed gave me the time to finally go back to school. When life gives you lemons, make lemonade, right?*

when monkeys fly out of my butt See [monkeys might fly out of my butt.](#)

when one door closes, another opens The end of one situation or opportunity is often followed by the start of a new one. *Don't worry about not getting this job, honey—when one door closes, another opens.*

when one door shuts, another one opens The end of one situation or opportunity is often followed by the start of a new one. *Don't worry about not getting this job, honey—when one door shuts, another one*

opens.

when (one's) ship comes home When one becomes wealthy and/or successful. *When my ship comes home, I'm moving out of this disgusting little apartment first thing!*

when opportunity knocks See [opportunity knocks](#).

when pigs can fly At a time that will never come to pass. (Used to show skepticism or cynicism over someone's hypothetical remark.) *Bob: "If we could just get Democrats and Republicans to agree on a tax reform bill, we could bring the deficit down in no time." Dave: "Sure, when pigs can fly!"*

when pigs have wings At a time that will never come to pass. (Used to show skepticism or cynicism over someone's hypothetical remark.) *Bob: "If we could just get Democrats and Republicans to agree on a tax reform bill, we could bring the deficit down in no time." Dave: "Sure, when pigs have wings!"*

when (the) word gets out As soon as people start finding out (about this); as soon as information (about this) begins to spread. *When the word gets out that we're paying top dollar for skilled programmers, we'll be up to our ears in job applications. This scandal is going to ruin me when word gets out!*

when two Fridays come together Never. Usually said sarcastically. *A: "When are you going to help me clean out the garage?" B: "How about when two Fridays come together?"*

when two Sundays come together Never. Usually said sarcastically. *A: "When are you going to help me clean out the garage?" B: "How about when two Sundays come together?"*

when two Sundays meet Never. Usually said sarcastically. *A: "When are you going to help me clean out the garage?" B: "How about when two Sundays meet?"*

where (one) lives Personally or intimately, referring to an effect that something has on one. *People by nature only care about an issue if it hits them where they live. The boss's comments at my evaluation really got me where I live.*

where the shoe pinches Where trouble or stress originates. *I hate to say it, but I think this new project is where the shoe pinches—it's just taking*

too much of our time with too little payoff.

wherever you go, there you are No matter where you go, you can't escape yourself. *Sure, you'll get some distance from your family when you move to Alaska, but your problems will be there too. Wherever you go, there you are.*

(whether) by accident or design Intentionally or not. *Whether by accident or design, those high school kids have really created a solid, sustainable business.*

which way the wind blows What appears probable or likely; how a certain course or situation is likely to develop. *The politician is waiting to see which way the wind blows regarding public opinion on the issue before deciding how to take action. It looks like I might be considered for the job, but I'm waiting to see which way the wind blows.*

which way the wind lies What appears probable or likely; how a certain course or situation is likely to develop. *The politician is waiting to see which way the wind lies regarding public opinion on the issue before deciding how to take action. It looks like I might be considered for the job, but I'm waiting to see which way the wind lies.*

whichever way you slice it From any point of view; whichever way it is analyzed. *Her resume is so impressive that, whichever way you slice it, she is the best candidate for the job. Whichever way you slice it, Dan owns the cheapest auto body shop around.*

whichever way you slice it No matter how you consider it. Often emphasizes the speaker's opinion. *Whichever way you slice it, Mr. Smith is guilty. I forgot my textbook in my locker last night so, whichever way you slice, I'm going to fail this test!*

while we're young slang Hurry up! The phrase suggests that one might wait so long for something as to reach old age. *Come on, make a decision while we're young! While we're young, Jim! We need to get going!*

whip a U-ie To make a U-turn. Primarily heard in US, Australia. *Dang it, I forgot my keys! Whip a U-ie up ahead so I can go back and get them.*

whip-round A monetary collection used to buy a gift for someone. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *The office had a whip-round for Ellen's retirement party.*

whipping boy A person or thing that is blamed for problems, often those caused by someone or something else. *Bobby got tired of being the whipping boy for the mischief caused by his older brothers. Video games have become the whipping boy for the violent behavior displayed by today's youth.*

whips and jingles Withdrawal from alcohol or drugs. *The whips and jingles can be agonizing. Hope you never have to experience them.*

whisper sweet nothings To murmur words of affection to someone in a flirtatious manner. These words may be genuine or less serious. *My ex-boyfriend used to whisper sweet nothings to me and then sneak out with his mistress later! At the prom, I watched all the couples around me whispering sweet nothings to each other as they danced.*

whisper sweet nothings in (one's) ear To murmur words of affection to someone in a flirtatious manner. These words may be genuine or less serious. *My ex-boyfriend used to whisper sweet nothings in my ear and then sneak out with his mistress later!*

whispering campaign The spread of rumors, with the intent of damaging a person's reputation *The whispering campaign that the opposition has launched against me is just awful! I haven't done any of the things they've claimed! I'm always skeptical of the terrible allegations that come out in these whispering campaigns.*

whistle a different tune To change one's opinion or behavior. *He never used to support that political candidate, but he's whistling a different tune all of a sudden. I used to be very pessimistic, but ever since surviving that car wreck, I've been whistling a different tune!*

whistle (one) down the wind 1. To leave or abandon. *Once I found out that she had lied, I had to whistle her down the wind.* 2. To slander someone. *After the way he treated me, I made sure to whistle him down the wind. Now the whole town hates him!*

whistle-stop 1. A brief stop on a longer trip, especially by a politician. *Are you going to see the presidential candidate on his whistle-stop here tomorrow?* 2. A small town along a railroad line. *Our town is just a whistle-stop, best known for its proximity to the train line that runs to the big city.*

whistle-stop tour A brief trip to several locations. *My travel agent offered me such a great deal on a whistle-stop tour of Italy that I couldn't*

resist.

white around the gills Pale, typically due to nausea or fear. *I get terrible motion sickness, so I'm sure I was a little white around the gills when I stumbled off the plane. I was white around the gills for a while after my brother jumped out of the closet and scared me.*

white coat hypertension A phenomenon in which a patient experiences elevated blood pressure around medical professionals. A: *"I swear, I didn't feel dizzy until the doctor came in."* B: *"Hmm, sounds like a case of white coat hypertension to me."*

white elephant **1.** An expensive item that is troublesome or useless. The term comes from a story about the king of Siam, who was said to have given an albino elephant, considered sacred, to a member of the court whom he disliked, knowing that taking care of the animal would exhaust the person's fortune. *At first, Eve was excited to inherit the farm, but it soon proved to be a white elephant she couldn't afford.* **2.** A fundraiser in which unwanted items have been donated for sale. *The church is having a white elephant sale to raise funds for the new vestibule. I'm excited to see what kind of treasures people bring from their garages!* **3.** A gift exchange in which participants bring unwanted items that can then be chosen and swapped, depending on the particular rules of the gathering. A: *"What's with the ugly vase?"* B: *"We had a white elephant at work, and this is what I ended up with. I'll probably bring it next year."*

white flag A signal of surrender or defeat; a sign that one going to yield or give up. (From the literal white flag originating in military use, which signaled a protective truce or ceasefire so that negotiations could be arranged.) *The president's speech today was seen by many as a white flag regarding his controversial stance on the immigration debate. We've been in negotiations for weeks, but it looks like the other company might finally be ready to wave a white flag.*

white hole A hypothetical celestial object that releases matter (unlike a black hole, which absorbs matter). *I have devoted my career to proving the existence of white holes.*

the White House **1.** The residence of the president of the United States, located on 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, D.C. *The president has returned to the White House after his trip abroad.* **2.** By extension, the US

President or the executive branch of the government. *The White House will make an announcement about that bill later today.*

white knight **1.** One who saves another person from harm or a difficult situation. *I don't remember much from the accident, but I am forever grateful to the white knight who freed me from my car. When Sally came to help with the kids when I was in the hospital, she really was our white knight.* **2.** A person or company that purchases, or gives money to, another company that is in financial distress or about to be acquired by a third party. *We all thought we were going to lose our jobs, but then a white knight purchased the company and saved it from bankruptcy.*

a white lie See [\(little\) white lie](#).

white magic Magic that aims to foster good, either by bringing about positive outcomes or by keeping bad things from happening. *Her illness has gotten worse, so I did white magic focused on restoring her health. Can you do some white magic to stop this hurricane?*

white man **1.** A Caucasian male. *Can you see me? I'm standing next to a really tall white man.* **2.** Caucasians as a whole. *The destruction that the white man brought to the Native Americans is incalculable.*

white marriage A marriage that has not been consummated. This phrase is perhaps better known as its French counterpart, "mariage blanc." *Due to my husband's serious illness, we have had to have a white marriage.*

white on rice As close as can be. Often used in the phrase "like white on rice." *If that forward tries to get in our zone, I'll be on him like white on rice! You better pass this test, or else I'll be on you like white on rice, monitoring your every move when you claim to be doing homework.*

white paper **1.** An official report issued by the government. The phrase is often capitalized. Primarily heard in UK, Australia, Canada. *That issue will be addressed in a white paper later today.* **2.** By extension, an official report issued by any group or organization. *Yes, we will issue a white paper to our stockholders informing them of these changes.*

white sheep One who is dutiful and obedient, the opposite of a rebellious "black sheep." *Everyone likes me because I'm the white sheep of the family. The same cannot be said for my wild cousin Nathan!*

white wedding A traditional wedding held in a church in which the

bride wears a white gown. *After watching my sister stress over all the details of her white wedding, I decided to elope—in just a plain blue dress, no less! After all the white weddings in our family, Ted wants to get married in the back yard—can you believe it?*

white wine Wine that is made from light-colored grapes and thus is pale yellow in color. Some examples include Chardonnay and Pinot Grigio. *What kind of white wine are you serving tonight? I'll have a glass of white wine.*

Whitman's sampler 1. A box of assorted chocolates made by Whitman's, a US confectionary. Primarily heard in US. *I'm bringing a Whitman's sampler to the dinner tonight. I love chocolate, so I was thrilled that my boyfriend gave me a Whitman's sampler for Valentine's Day!* **2.** By extension, an assortment of something. Primarily heard in US. *Boy, this recital is a real Whitman's sampler—a piano virtuoso was just followed by a bunch of kids murdering "Hot Cross Buns" on the flute. The client wants a lot of options, so be sure to give him a Whitman's sampler of designs.*

whiz kid A person, usually a child or young adult, who is exceptionally skilled or intelligent. *He was developing software by the time he was 10 years old—he's a total computer whiz kid. Those whiz kids at the spelling bee are always so impressive to watch. Sarah's the new whiz kid in accounting. She'll help you tackle the budget in no time.*

who am I kidding An expression of self-doubt. *Oh, who am I kidding, running for mayor—I'll never win. Taking art classes at my age—who am I kidding?*

who are you, and what have you done with (someone) slang A humorous phrase emphasizing one's surprise at another's change in attitude or behavior, often for the better. *You took out the trash before I even asked? Wow, who are you, and what have you done with my son? Look at these excellent grades! Who are you, and what have you done with Stephanie?*

who ate all the pies A football chant that targets anyone overweight, especially players and officials. Primarily heard in UK. *What a terrible call, fatso! Who ate all the pies? Who ate all the pies?*

Who breaks a butterfly upon a wheel? A rhetorical question referring to an excessive amount of force that has been applied to achieve something minor, unimportant, or insignificant. The line is a quotation from

Alexander Pope's poem "Epistle to Dr Arbuthnot." To "break upon a wheel" refers to a mode of torture, in which a victim has their bones broken while strapped to a large wheel. *The government's use of drone strikes and artillery bombing on the town to wipe out a tiny faction of rebels is totally unjustifiable—who breaks a butterfly upon a wheel?*

who calls the shots here? Who is in charge of this situation? Who makes the decisions here? *Why are you kids eating candy for dinner? Who calls the shots here? When I entered the classroom of screaming children, I could only think, "who calls the shots here?"*

who died and left you in charge slang A set phrase used to express frustration with another's bossiness. A: *"You have to clean your room and take out the trash before you go out tonight."* B: *"Geez, who died and left you in charge?"* *Who died and left you in charge? Quit telling me what to do!*

who died and made you boss slang A set phrase used to express frustration with another's bossiness. A: *"You have to clean your room and take out the trash before you go out tonight."* B: *"Geez, who died and made you boss?"* *Who died and made you boss? Quit telling me what to do!*

who in blazes See [in \(the\) blazes?](#)

who in blue blazes See [in blue blazes?](#)

who in creation See [in creation?](#)

who in Sam Hell See [in \(the\) Sam Hill?](#)

who in tarnation See [in tarnation?](#)

who in thunderation See [in thunderation?](#)

who knows what One or more things described with no detail. *Our junk drawer has old remotes, instruction manuals, and who knows what else in it. You're supposed to be doing your homework, but instead you're slacking off and doing who knows what!*

who wears the trousers? Who is in charge of this situation? Typically used to describe who has more power in a relationship or household, with "trousers" denoting masculine authority, as women traditionally wore skirts throughout history. *She won't let you go out with me tonight? Who wears the trousers in your relationship, man?*

who writes this stuff slang A rhetorical question that emphasizes one's

disdain for how something is written. *Ugh, these greeting cards are all so sappy. Who writes this stuff? Who writes this stuff? That TV show wasn't funny at all—I didn't laugh once!*

who'd have thunk it slang Who would have anticipated that? Typically used to express one's surprise. *Wow, that show hasn't been canceled yet? Who'd have thunk it? Those two are dating? Who'd have thunk it?*

whole cloth Make-believe; invention. Usually appears in the phrase "out of whole cloth." *I broke curfew staying out too late with my boyfriend, but luckily I was able to make an excuse out of whole cloth about being at the library. When my sister refused to go to sleep without a bedtime story, I pulled a tale about princesses together out of whole cloth.*

a (whole) new ballgame A situation that is completely different from what one is used to or expecting. *Living away from home is a whole new ballgame for most young adults. I used to babysit, but having a child of my own is a new ballgame.*

a whole other kettle of fish See [be a whole other kettle of fish](#).

whomp on 1. To beat up. *While I was away at camp, I didn't miss my older brother whomping on me and giving me noogies whenever mom's back is turned.* 2. To defeat, especially decisively. *We had high hopes going into the game, but the other team totally whomped on us, giving us our first loss.*

whomp up To make quickly. *I wasn't expecting company, but don't worry, I can whomp up a dinner for us in no time!*

whoop-ass slang Physical violence (against someone). Usually used in a jocular or pseudo-serious threat. *If that punk doesn't shut up soon, I'm gonna have to go over there and give him some whoop-ass! Don't make me open a can of whoop ass on y'all.*

who's a pretty boy then An affectionate phrase said to pets, especially parrots. *"Aw, who's a pretty boy then?" she cooed while petting the puppy. Who's a pretty boy then? Here, Polly the Parrot, have a cracker.*

who's she, the cat's mother? A reprimand given to someone for using a pronoun ("she") instead of a proper name. A: *"Oh, and she was there too."* B: *"Who's she, the cat's mother?"*

who's (someone) when (he's/she's/they're) at home

humorous Who is that person? Primarily heard in UK. *Robert De Niro? Who's he when he's at home? I've never heard of that actress before, who's she when she's at home?*

why in God's name A phrase used for emphasis in the beginning of a question, usually because the speaker is incredulous. *Why in God's name would you let the kids have candy for dinner? That is so unhealthy! I understand that you had to let the dog out in the rain, but why in God's name didn't you dry him off when he came back in?*

why on earth A phrase used for emphasis in the beginning of a question, usually because the speaker is incredulous. *Why on earth would you let the kids have candy for dinner? That is so unhealthy! I understand that you had to let the dog out in the rain, but why on earth didn't you dry him off when he came back in?*

wicked tongue The tendency to speak maliciously. *Watch out for Ben—he has a wicked tongue and will probably say something upsetting before the night is over, Can't you say anything nice? You have such a wicked tongue!*

wide berth A good distance (between things, people, etc.). Originally referred to ships. *Once I learned that there was a lice outbreak, I kept a wide berth from all of my students for the rest of the day. We've been keeping a wide berth from John ever since he dumped our good friend.*

wide boy Someone who attempts to earn money in a dishonest way. Primarily heard in UK. *He's a wide boy who always tries to scam people out of money.*

wide of the mark 1. Literally, far from hitting a target. *Wow, that shot was really wide of the mark. Is the ball even still on the green? Watch out, that arrow is going wide of the mark!* 2. By extensions, inaccurate or wrong. *I never once said that! Your reporter is completely wide of the mark in her accusations. I thought I knew what real estate costs around here, but wow, I was wide of the mark.*

widen (one's) horizons To have or seek out new experiences, especially if one's experiences have been relatively limited. *I'm really nervous to live at school, but I know I need to widen my horizons and get some experience living without my family. I can't believe that Molly has never left the state before! She seriously needs to widen her horizons!*



widow's mite A small monetary contribution made by one who is poor. *Edna hardly has any money, and she still gives the church a widow's mite.*

widow's peak A point in the hairline in the middle of one's forehead. Now known to be a genetic trait, it was once believed to indicate early widowhood. *My sister has a widow's peak. Does this haircut make my widow's peak too noticeable?*

wiggle room The space, time, or freedom to make changes as needed. *Good news—I've done the math, and we have enough wiggle room in the budget to make some of those purchases we've been putting off. When I'm meeting up with someone, I always leave early, so that I have wiggle room in case I get lost.*

wigs on the green A physical fight. This now-outdated phrase was relevant when men wore powdered wigs (which could be pulled off or knocked loose in an altercation). *Conversation is very tense whenever Sir George and Lord Philip are together. I anticipate wigs on the green the next time they meet.*

wild abandon See [with wild abandon](#).

wild card **1.** In a card game, a card that the player can choose to represent any card. *He's going to play his wild card as an ace to win.* **2.** Someone or something that is unpredictable. *He is too much of a wild card to be a successful candidate. Nobody wants to vote for someone wildly unpredictable. The wild card in this game will be the weather.* **3.** A person or team who is permitted to participate in an event or competition, such as a round of playoffs, without having to adhere to the usual entry protocol. *The wild card rarely wins the championship, but anything is possible.* **4.** In computing, a character that is substituted for an unknown character in a search. *An asterisk is often used as a wild card in database searches.*

wild cherry An uncultivated cherry tree and/or its fruit. *These wild cherries are delicious!*

wild goose chase A prolonged or chaotic search for something that is difficult to find (often because it does not exist). *I've been on a wild goose chase trying to find a bag of Dan's favorite potato chips. Those jerks sent me on a wild goose chase to find a copy of a book that hasn't been released yet!*

a wild goose never laid a tame egg Something will not be

spontaneously different from that which came before. The phrase is used to describe things that are determined by nature and the environment, or else inherited from the generation before. *We must never presume that humanity will be without violence; after all, a wild goose never laid a tame egg.*

wild oats The youthful rebelliousness or promiscuity that one partakes in before settling down. Most commonly used in the phrase "sow (one's) wild oats." *Bill and I had to break up because I was looking to get married, and he just wanted to sow his wild oats! You can't sow your wild oats forever! Soon, you'll want a wife and a house, and you'll regret the things you're doing now.*

wild turkey 1. A turkey that has not been domesticated. *Why are all these wild turkeys suddenly showing up on our farm?* **2.** A brand of bourbon. Usually capitalized. *Hey, barkeep, can I get a shot of Wild Turkey?*

(will there be) anything else? Do you want anything else? The full phrase is typically used in the food service industry, while the shortened form is often said with a note of annoyance after one has been given a series of tasks or demands. *OK, two hamburgers and two orders of fries. Will there be anything else? Yeah, you want to me to clean the windows, hang the curtains, and vacuum every room. Anything else, mom?*

will to win An intense desire to succeed. *I used to slack off on my drills, but after making it to the championship last year, I developed the will to win and became much more dedicated. You don't understand how much I have the will to win. Watch out—I can take you in the ring.*

willful ignorance An intentional obliviousness to something that one knows to be true. *I can't believe you're still smoking, despite knowing all the risks! Your willful ignorance just blows me away.*

willing and able A phrase used to describe someone who is ready or capable of doing something *I think Nicky is finally willing and able to go back to school. It's fine, my mom is totally willing and able to lend me a few bucks.*

willing horse One who is ready and eager to work. *Mark is a willing horse, so we can definitely get him to do this stupid project.*

win one for the Gipper To do something in honor of someone else. This set phrase refers to celebrated Notre Dame football player George Gipp ("the Gipper"). Several years after Gipp's death at age 25, Notre Dame coach

Knut Rockne urged his team to "win one for the Gipper." *Let's work hard to meet the last sales goal before Jim retires—let's win one for the Gipper!*

win (something) in a walk To win (something) easily, handily, or without much or any effort. *Enjoying the benefit of a week off between games, the home team won this match in a walk.*

wind at (one's) back A favorable position that encourages forward momentum (as with a ship that has the wind at its back). *She really struggled in her studies last year, but she's had the wind at her back ever since changing her major.*

wind back the clock To go back in time. *If I could wind back the clock, I'd manage my finances better so that I wouldn't be declaring bankruptcy now. I wish I could wind back the clock and study harder before that exam I failed.*

wind (someone) around (one's) (little) finger To gain complete control, dominance, or mastery over somebody; to make someone do whatever one wishes. *The spoiled little brat has completely wound his parents around his little finger. Everyone accused her of winding the boss around her finger.*

wind (someone) round (one's) (little) finger To gain complete control, dominance, or mastery over somebody; to make someone do whatever one wishes. *The spoiled little brat has completely wound his parents round his little finger. Everyone accused her of winding the boss round her finger.*

wind up in To arrive someplace or in some situation, with the sense that getting there was not planned. *My brother is a very spontaneous traveler and just spends his time in whatever country he winds up in! We had some time to kill before the concert, so we walked around and wound up in a coffee shop.*

window dressing 1. literal A decorative display in a window, typically the window of a store. *When my mom and I go shopping at Christmastime, we always check out all the pretty holiday window dressings!* 2. figurative Something that makes a person or thing look or seem better than it really is. *To me, this new policy seems like window dressing to woo new employees. You say that you've changed, but how do I know it's not just window dressing to make you seem like less of a jerk?*



window-shopping The act of visiting stores, or looking in their windows, to see what is available without buying anything. *My bank account is so sad these days that I'll only be window-shopping for a while!* A: "You guys really went in that expensive boutique?" B: "Yeah, but we were only window-shopping, don't worry! We know we can't afford anything in there!"

wink of an eye See [in the wink of an eye](#).

wink wink (nudge nudge) spoken A phrase spoken after a statement which emphasizes or points out a euphemistic underlying meaning or innuendo. *To be honest, we didn't see many sights on our vacation. We spent most of the time in bed, though there wasn't much sleeping, wink wink, nudge nudge!*

winner takes all A competition in which the victor is granted all possible prizes. *I know we've been playing darts all night, but this will be the last round, winner takes all! My sister and I used to bet our Halloween candy on our report card grades, winner takes all.*

winning ways One's charming, endearing, or likeable personality or demeanor. *It wasn't hard for me to spot Kelly's winning ways immediately—she has been bubbly and upbeat since the moment we met.*

winning! A jubilant exclamation that can be spoken, written, or used as a hashtag. It is often used to humorously highlight minor successes but can be used ironically to point out failures. *The baby slept for five hours straight last night—winning! Winning: when the boss doesn't see you slip into your office 10 minutes late. Spilled coffee all over myself this morning! #winning*

winter rat A beat-up car that one does not mind driving in harsh winter weather. Primarily heard in US. A: "You don't take your Corvette out in the snow, do you?" B: "Of course not, that's what my winter rat is for!"

wipe (one's) slate clean To erase the record of one's wrong-doings, likened to wiping the contents off of a piece of slate, formerly used as a reusable writing surface. *I had been late a bunch of times, but after he heard that I'd been struggling so much at home, my boss said he would wipe my slate clean. Mom said she would wipe your slate clean if you pay for the vase you broke.*

wipe (someone's) eye To best someone. Primarily heard in UK. *After how much she bragged about her prowess at darts, I doubt she expected me*

to wipe her eye.

wipe the floor with (someone) To easily defeat an opponent. *Although he wasn't favored to win the race, Jack really wiped the floor with his competition.*

wireless network A system by which a computer, cell phone, or other device can access the Internet without being plugged into a router. *I can't connect to the Internet on my laptop—why isn't the wireless network working? What's the password for the wireless network?*

wise apple A smug, sarcastic person who constantly tries to upstage others (usually to their annoyance). *Does that kid ever shut up? He's a real wise apple. Quit making rude comments like that, or people will think you're a wise apple.*

wise-ass One who is sarcastic or makes jokes in an attempt to seem witty, usually to others' annoyance; a smart aleck. Primarily heard in US. *Joe is such a wise-ass that it's hard to know when he's being serious. Every class seems to have one disruptive wise-ass.*

wise guy 1. One who is sarcastic or makes jokes in an attempt to seem witty, usually to others' annoyance; a smart aleck. *Joe is such a wise guy that it's hard to know when he's being serious. Every class seems to have one disruptive wise guy.* 2. A mobster. *I wouldn't bother those shady characters sitting in the corner booth—they're all wise guys.*

wisecracker One who makes glib, facetious, and/or sardonic remarks. *Tony is such a wisecracker; he always has some remark lined up.*

wish list A list of items that a person or group desires. *Johnny's wish list for his birthday included a new bicycle and a puppy. I know that team's free agent wish list includes a new starting pitcher.*

witch hunt An attempt to blame and punish people who hold unpopular views and opinions, often under the guise of some other investigation. *The ruling party's witch hunt against its detractors sparked a civil war.*

with a heavy hand In an excessive, authoritarian, or oppressive way or manner. *The police dispersed the protesters with a heavy hand. My father always punished us with a heavy hand.*

with a heavy heart With much sadness; in a state of grief. *It is with a heavy heart that we announce the passing of our beloved father. After these*

tragedies, our nation will forge on, but with a heavy heart.

with a high hand In an overbearing or domineering manner. *You can't raise your kids with a high hand—you need to give them room to grow and express themselves.*

with a light heart With a carefree, uplifted attitude; in a happy or gladdened state. *Though it was, of course, bittersweet to leave my friends and family behind, I did so with a light heart because of the amazing opportunities that awaited me in Europe.*

with a loose screw Having or characterized by silliness, eccentricity, craziness, or mental instability. *There's some guy with a loose screw standing on the corner yelling obscenities at passersby. I have this strange fear that I'm going to turn into a lonely old bachelor with a loose screw when I get old.*

with a screw loose Having or characterized by silliness, eccentricity, craziness, or mental instability. *There's some guy with a screw loose standing on the corner yelling obscenities at passersby. I have this strange fear that I'm going to turn into a lonely old bachelor with a screw loose when I get old.*

with all (one's) might Utilizing all of one's power and strength to do something. *I pulled at the rope with all my might, but we still lost the tug-of-war. I swear, your dog pulls at these toys with all his might. He'll drag us through the yard one day!*

with an eye on Focused on a particular thing or area. *With an eye on advances in neurology, the hospital announced that it had acquired several new brain-scanning machines.*

with an eye towards Focused on a particular thing that could happen in the future. *With an eye towards fund-raising, I made sure to talk to all the trustees I could at the event. We moved back in with my parents, with an eye towards saving up for a house.*

with any luck An expression of hope that a particular thing will happen. *With any luck, our project will get funded, and we can start filming.*

with bloody hand Clearly guilty (as if one has been found with evidence of a crime or misdeed). *The squire was found with bloody hand, sir — how do you want to punish him?*

with both hands With total enthusiasm and focus. *Wow, Rob has definitely impressed me. He really grabbed the opportunity to be chief editor*

with both hands.

with child Pregnant. Although still used today, this term is somewhat formal and old-fashioned. *Yes, it's true—I'm with child and about three months along! Did you hear that Marissa is with child? Such happy news!*

with egg on (one's) face Extremely embarrassed or humiliated due to some failure or faux pas. *I was left with egg on my face after I fell off the stage in front of all those people.*

with half a heart With only a little or moderate amount of enthusiasm or interest; in an uninspired manner; halfheartedly. *You can't go out and play with half a heart and expect to win. You have to play with everything you've got!*

with honours even With both sides being equally matched or level, as in a competition or contest; with neither side having been victorious. Primarily heard in UK. *The two athletes are preparing to meet once again for a chance at the title, with honours even. An amazing match between two of the world's greatest football clubs has ended with honours even.*

(with) kind regards A common, semi-formal valediction (used to say farewell at the end of a letter or other written message; also known as a complimentary close) expressing well wishes to the recipient. *Please send a financial report for your company for the previous year at your earliest convenience. With kind regards, Alex Goodman. I hope I'll have the chance of meeting with you again soon. Kind regards, Brian*

(with) might and main With as much effort or strength as one can muster. *She attacked that punching bag with might and main. If you're not happy in your current job, then you should be working might and main to find a new one.*

with no frills With no extraneous details or embellishments. Not fancy, decorous, or elaborate. Simple. *My history teacher is not someone who gets impressed by a beautiful cover page, so I made sure that my project was straightforward and presented the information with no frills.*

with no further ado With no more delay. *And now, with no further ado, let's introduce the opening act!*

with no strings attached Having no special conditions, restrictions, obligations, or arrangements that must be met. *Take advantage of our huge*

summer sale, where you can earn up to \$5,000 cash back with no strings attached! Beware of any deal that claims to come with no strings attached.

with no trace With no evidence left behind. *Our house was totally ransacked after the break-in, with no trace of how the robbers got into the house. I'm allowed to use my mom's expensive blender, just as long as I do so with no trace of ever having touched it.*

with one accord Unanimously; in total agreement. *Yes, we made that decision with one accord.*

with (one's) eye on Focused on a particular thing or area. *With my eye on getting an A, I studied for my calculus exam for hours. She practiced free throws all night, with her eye on the upcoming championship game.*

with (one's) eyes closed With very little or no difficulty; in a relaxed, carefree, or effortless manner. *It took me a little while to get used to this job, but now I could do it with my eyes closed! You should ask Johnny for help—he does this level of math with his eyes closed.*

with (one's) eyes wide open With full awareness. *I know they're offering you a lot of money, but make sure you go into this situation with your eyes wide open—it could be a scam. Considering John's history of infidelity, Claudia knew she could only take him back with her eyes wide open.*

with (one's) head held high Displaying pride and confidence, often (but not always) after something has gone wrong. *Even though I knew I blew the presentation, I walked out of the conference room with my head held high... and then cried in my car. After hearing that he had been named to the all-star team, Paul walked through the halls with his head held high.*

with (one's) pants down Describing someone whose secret has been revealed or who has been caught doing something they wanted to keep hidden. *Boy, that politician totally got caught with his pants down when that surveillance footage showed him stealing money.*

with (one's) tongue in (one's) cheek Humorously or as a joke, though seeming or appearing to be serious. *The president gave a speech on April Fools' Day about the "War on Couch Potatoes," which he delivered with his tongue in his cheek. The zombie movie, very much with its tongue in its cheek, gives a clever criticism of American consumerism.*

with reckless abandon With rash, unrestrained impulsiveness,

enthusiasm, or zeal. *Ever since my brother got that car for his birthday, he's been motoring around at night with reckless abandon. The insurgents set upon the town and began firing their weapons with reckless abandon.*

with relation to Regarding or related to. The phrase highlights the relationship between multiple things. *I think that we should write up another report, with relation to this one, so that we have a full picture of the budget for next year. With relation to your vacation request, I'm sorry, but we can't grant it while we have three people out on leave.*

with reservations With doubts or feelings of unease. *Although Jim signed the contract, he did so with reservations about whether he was actually making the best decision.*

with strings attached Having one or more special conditions, restrictions, obligations, or arrangements that must be met. *The Republicans in the Senate are willing to allow the bill to pass, but with strings attached.*

with the best of intentions Aiming for a good or positive outcome. Often said after something has gone wrong. *Although I planned the family reunion with the best intentions, it turned into hours of fighting between relatives.*

with the exception of With the exclusion of a particular thing. *I really enjoy my new job, with the exception of the long hours.*

with the sweat of (one's) brow Through or because of one's own efforts or hard work. *With the sweat of his brow, my father turned a barren, fallow little plot of land into the flourishing farm you see today. This pair of entrepreneurs has created a billion-dollar company with the sweat of their brows.*

with time to spare Without exceeding the time allotted or anticipated; earlier than required. *Wow, with all that traffic, I can't believe I got home with time to spare! I finished my test with time to spare.*

(with) tongue in cheek Humorous or intended as a joke, though seeming or appearing to be serious. *I thought it was obvious that my comments were tongue in cheek, but I guess I delivered them with too much of a straight face, because it seems like I offended several people at the party. The zombie movie, very much with tongue in cheek, gives a clever criticism of American consumerism.*

with wild abandon With rash, unrestrained impulsiveness, enthusiasm, or zeal. *Ever since my brother got that car for his birthday, he's been motoring around at night with wild abandon. The insurgents set upon the town and began firing their weapons with wild abandon.*

within arms' length Approaching; within very close proximity (to something). Primarily heard in UK. *Madam, we are within arms' length of the town.*

within arm's reach Close enough to touch, either literally or hypothetically. Easily attainable. *Can you pass me that book over there? It's within arm's reach of you. Once I found out I had an A in Chemistry, I knew that 4.0 GPA was within arm's reach.*

within the bounds of possibility Possible. *You worked so hard this semester that I think an A is within the bounds of possibility.*

without a care in the world Having no concerns or worries. *I constantly feel stressed, and then there's my sister, who skips through life without a care in the world.*

without any strings attached Having no special conditions, restrictions, obligations, or arrangements that must be met. *I hear Janet is signing over the deed to her house to John without any strings attached! Take advantage of our huge summer sale, where you can earn up to \$5,000 cash back without any strings attached!*

without batting an eyelash See [bat an eyelash](#).

without batting an eyelid See [bat an eyelid](#).

without flinching Without showing any signs of fear or hesitation. *I'm terrified of needles, but my sister can get blood drawn without flinching.*

without letup Without slowing down or stopping. *I just want to go to the grocery store, but it's been raining all day without letup.*

without missing a beat Without slowing down, pausing, or being distracted, especially in spite of a potential disruption. *Even when the hecklers started singing obnoxiously, the speaker continued without missing a beat. The teacher asked us how photosynthesis begins, and, without missing a beat, John said, "With a 'P.'"*

without provocation Without cause. For no apparent reason. *Pam*

shrieked in surprise when the cat leapt onto her without provocation. I knew I wasn't speeding, so as far as I could tell—the officer pulled me over without provocation.

without reserve Readily or candidly. *Once the music starts at the reception, get your camera ready because Aunt Millie will be dancing without reserve! Thank you for speaking without reserve—that kind of honest feedback is exactly what we're looking for.*

without skipping a beat Without slowing down, pausing, or losing one's place, especially in spite of a potential distraction or disruption. *When his son-in-law staggered into the meeting reeking of booze, the boss continued his talk without skipping a beat.*

without turning a hair Without becoming upset, afraid, or emotional; with a perfectly calm demeanor. *My father was a tough man. When our family dog came down with rabies, he took him out back and shot him without turning a hair. Claire, without turning a hair, knocked out the two assailants with her bare hands!*

withstand the test of time 1. To work, function, or endure for a very long time. *As computer technology improves, it's ironically getting harder and harder to find a piece of equipment that can withstand the test of time.* **2.** To be particularly popular or well regarded for a long period of time. *Of all the other cast members, hers was the only career that withstood the test of time.*

wit's end A state of distress that is reached when someone has no more patience. Often used in the phrase "at wit's end" or "at (one's) wit's end." *The baby's been crying for hours, and I've reached my wit's end! I'm already at wit's end, so if this train gets delayed too, I'm going to scream.*

woke slang Aware of the need for and committed to social justice. This usage of the term (particularly in reference to activism against black oppression) is thought to have originated in the mid-20th century US. Often used in the phrase "stay woke." Primarily heard in US. *We can't just protest today and then ignore these issues tomorrow—we have to stay woke. You're not woke if you think the status quo is OK.*

woke up on the wrong side of bed See [wake up on the wrong side of \(the\) bed](#).



a wolf in sheep's clothing A person or thing that appears harmless but is actually dangerous or bad. *Don't trust Dana—she's a wolf in sheep's clothing who will try to steal your position if given the chance. The politician portrayed himself as moderate, but turned out to be a wolf in sheep's clothing with a radical agenda.*

wolf whistle A high-pitched, typically two-note whistle directed at a person (usually a woman) to indicate that the whistler (usually a man) finds them attractive. *Sharon did not appreciate the wolf whistles coming from the crew at the construction site.*

wolfpack A family group of wolves that live and hunt together. *Be careful out there at night—a wolfpack has been seen roaming that part of the woods.*

woman-about-town A fashionable woman known for socializing. *She's a woman-about-town who is always seen at all of the popular clubs.*

a woman after my own See [a person after \(one's\) own](#).

woman after (one's) own heart A woman admired by another because of perceived similarities. *I knew she was a woman after my own heart when I heard she rescued that puppy.*

woman crush Wednesday A phrase that accompanies social media posts of a woman that the poster finds attractive (often a significant other or a celebrity). Often abbreviated as "WCW." Such posts occur on Wednesdays due to the name, created simply for alliteration. *Check out my gorgeous wife on woman crush Wednesday! Jennifer Lawrence is my woman crush Wednesday.*

woman for all seasons A woman who is successful and talented in many areas. *Judy paints, does photography, and writes novels. She's a woman for all seasons.*

woman of few words A woman who does not speak often or at length. *Despite being a woman of few words, Sarah was well-respected in her field because of her actions.*

woman of God A woman who is devout in her belief in God. *She is a woman of God who has devoted her life to serving others.*

a woman of her word A woman who can be expected to keep or follow through with her promises or intentions; a truthful, trustworthy, or

reliable person. (Masculine: "man of his word.") *Bob, I'm a woman of my word. If I tell you I'll be at your house tomorrow morning at 10, then that's when I'll be there. I've found Mary to be a woman of her word so far, so I'm confident she'll get us the best deal possible.*

woman of letters A woman who is well-versed in literature and related scholarly pursuits. *As a woman of letters, the professor could easily speak for hours on the works of Shakespeare.*

woman of many parts A woman who is capable of doing many things. *Ruth is a woman of many parts—she's a loving mother, a successful industry leader, and a great cook.*

woman of means A wealthy woman. *Her extravagant spending habits led everyone to believe that she was a woman of means.*

the woman of the hour See [\(the\) man/woman of the hour](#).

(the) woman of the moment A woman who is currently being celebrated, honored, or admired by others, especially for a recent victory, accomplishment, or other cause for celebration. (Masculine: "man of the moment.") *Janet was woman of the moment at the office after securing the biggest customer their business had ever had. Ruth: "Hey, what's going on here?" Dave: "It's a surprise birthday party for you, Ruth! You're the woman of the moment!"*

woman of the people See [a man/woman of the people](#).

woman of the world A woman who is very experienced and sophisticated. *I value Janine's advice because she's a woman of the world and can provide good insight into the customs of high society.*

a woman on a mission See [a man/woman on a mission](#).

a woman with a mission See [a man/woman with a mission](#).

a woman's place is in the home A sexist maxim asserting that woman should focus on housekeeping and raising children, as opposed to working outside of the home. *I don't believe that a woman's place is in the home—I love my family, but I also love being a lawyer. Some cultures still believe that a woman's place is in the home.*

a woman's work is never done A woman is nearly always working in some way. The phrase especially refers to tasks traditionally associated

with women, such as housework and child-rearing. *Of course I come home from work to a messy house and starving kids because a woman's work is never done.*

womp womp A humorous phrase used to indicate or highlight minor disappointment. It mimics the sad trombone noise often used as a trope in movies and TV shows. *I tried to stop at that boutique on my way home from work, but it was already closed. Womp womp.*

won in a walk See [win \(something\) in a walk](#).

won one for the Gipper See [win one for the Gipper](#).

won't budge an inch Will not move, change, or shift in any way at all. *Once my brother gets his mind made up, he won't budge an inch, so don't bother trying to reason with him. I can't believe how tight this bolt is on here—it won't budge an inch!*

won't take no for an answer Will not stop with what one has planned or desires, regardless of others' lack of agreement. *Once my brother gets his mind made up, he won't take no for an answer, so don't bother trying to reason with him. It's nice of you to refuse, sweetheart, but this car is a gift from your grandmother and me—we won't take no for an answer!*

wooden mare An ancient torture device involving a wooden horse, typically used for military punishments. *I was so terrified of what my parents would do when they found out I'd failed my exam that I had visions of them making me ride the wooden mare.*

wooden spoonist slang The person or team that finishes last in a competition. So-named because the imaginary prize for a last-place finish is a wooden spoon. Primarily heard in UK. *Of course Roy was the wooden-spoonist in today's race—I didn't know a person could run so slow!*

wooden top A beet-shaped wooden toy that spins on a metal point at the bottom. *What are you kids complaining about? When I was your age, I only had a wooden top to play with!*

woot slang A happy or celebratory interjection. Sometimes doubled as "woot woot." *Woot! I never expected to hear back from that company, but they want to bring me in for an interview! That cute barista finally asked me out, woot!*

woot woot slang A happy or celebratory interjection. *Woot woot! I never*

expected to hear back from that company, but they want to bring me in for an interview! That cute barista finally asked me out, woot woot!

word gets around News about something or someone inevitably reaches other people. The "news" is often a rumor of some sort. *I know that Julia wanted to keep her break-up a secret, but considering how word gets around at this school, people were going to find out about it in no time. A: "How did you find out I won the contest?" B: "Word gets around!"*

word of mouth The verbal sharing of information. A: *"How did you hear about our bakery?" B: "Oh, word of mouth. My dad told me about it." We don't have the budget for a big marketing campaign, so we'll just have to hope that buzz about our shop gets spread by word of mouth.*

word on the street The information, or the version of that information, that is currently spreading from person to person, often in a particular setting, like school or work. A: *"The word on the street is that you're pregnant." B: "What? That is simply not true!" There are so many people stopping by Shelly's office because word on the street is that she's leaving the company.*

word on the wire The information, or the version of that information, that is currently spreading from person to person, often in a particular setting, like school or work. A: *"The word on the wire is that you're pregnant." B: "What? That is simply not true!" There are so many people stopping by Shelly's office because word on the wire is that she's leaving the company.*

a word to the wise A phrase that emphasizes a statement as advice. It is a shortening of the phrase "a word to the wise is sufficient," meaning that a wise or intelligent person can take a hint and does not need a long explanation. *A word to the wise—don't use Amy's baby shower as an opportunity to announce your engagement. Stay away from the boss today, he's in a bad mood. Just a word to the wise.*

a word to the wise is enough Someone who is wise heeds a warning or a piece of advice, even if it is very brief. The shorter phrase, "a word to the wise," is more common. *I heard about a terrible traffic jam on the news, so I'm avoiding the highway. A word to the wise is enough!*

wordplay The use of words in a clever or amusing way, as seen in puns or double entendres. A: *"Why was six afraid of seven? Because seven ate nine! Get it?" B: "Ah yes, wordplay with 'eight' and 'ate'—a classic."*



words of one syllable Very simple words; terms that are easy to understand. *You're an astrophysicist and I'm not, so please, explain this concept in words of one syllable so I might have a chance of understanding it!*

words stick in (one's) throat One is unable to say something, due to their emotional state. *I'm still mad at John, so even though he wanted me to apologize, I knew the words would stick in my throat. Susie was crying so hard at the funeral that when she tried to speak, the words just stuck in her throat.*

words to that effect An intentionally vague phrase used to omit the exact wording of some statement while indicating its general meaning, or the meaning one wants it to convey. *A: "Did she flat-out say she was coming to dinner?" B: "Well, words to that effect."*

work for peanuts To work for very little money. *Geez, I need a raise—I'm sick of still working for peanuts after three years!*

work for pittance To work for very little money. *Geez, I need a raise—I'm sick of still working for pittance after three years!*

work nights To work in the evenings, as opposed to during the day. *I used to work nights, but it took such a toll on my sleeping that I switched back to the day shift.*

work (one's) butt off To work really hard (on or at something). *I know you thought it was just a silly New Year's resolution, but I've been working my butt off at the gym! Sally and Jim work their butts off when we hold our user conference—I don't know what I'd do without them!*

work (one's) magic To use one's unique talents or charm to obtain a desired thing or outcome. *I never thought the boss would approve our business trip, but Sam worked her magic, and now, we're off to Denver! Whenever I can't get my car running, I have my dad come over and work his magic on the engine.*

work (one's) way through To stay engaged in a task continuously. Often used when the task is long-term or plodding. *Kate is working her way through college, but it's taken a while, as she's only been able to attend classes part-time. I have to work my way through any book I start, even if I don't like it very much.*

work smarter, not harder A business axiom that prioritizes efficiency above all else. *Before we begin coding, let's think if we can reuse any of the old code. Work smarter, not harder, right?*

work spouse Someone's closest friend, companion, or confidante at a job. *Meg is definitely my work spouse—we are totally inseparable, and she's the first person I call when I have an issue with my computer or need advice before a meeting.*

work the crowd To excite or entertain an audience. *Man, that singer sure knows how to work a crowd! They're going wild for him! The keynote speaker was late, so I had to work the crowd for a while to stall.*

work the oracle To manipulate something for one's personal gain (often financially). Primarily heard in UK. *In order to win that much money gambling, he must have worked the oracle.*

work the room To interact with many people at an event or function. Often, but not always, applied to business situations. *At networking events, Ben totally works the room, with the goal of meeting as many people as he possibly can. At parties, my dad always works the room and chats with everyone, but I'm too shy for that.*

work till you drop To make an effort to complete some task until one has no more energy to devote to it; to work as hard as possible for as long as possible. *You better work 'til you drop if you want an A on this assignment!*

work to rule A situation in which employees work only as much as has been agreed upon and no more, typically as a bargaining strategy (by unions). Instead of going on strike and stopping their work altogether, workers keep a more limited schedule than usual (i.e., no overtime), in order to slow down productivity. *A: "The boss wants me to work some overtime tonight, but I can't, right?" B: "No. Because we're in a work to rule, you can only work your normal eight hours."*

work until you drop To make an effort to complete some task until one has no more energy to devote to it; to work as hard as possible for as long as possible. *You better work until you drop if you want an A on this assignment!*

work up to the collar To work hard; to exert oneself. This now-outdated phrase refers to the collar on a beast of burden. *I ended up doing*

most of the project myself because I didn't trust my partner to work up to the collar—he's lazy.

working girl A prostitute. *The vice squad always patrols this area, looking to arrest any working girls on the street.*

a working over A harsh reprimand, often one that lasts a lengthy amount of time. *She gave her teenage daughter a good working over for breaking curfew. I got a good working over from the professor after I submitted my project late.*

world at (one's) feet A phrase used to indicate someone's success in a particular area. *Betsy is such a talented singer that I'm sure she'll have the world at her feet one day and be courted by record execs.*

a world of difference **1.** A stark contrast. *There's a world of difference between high school classes and college classes.* **2.** A vast improvement. *A fresh coat of paint has made a world of difference in that old house.*

the world over See [\(all\) the world over](#).

world shattering Totally and completely surprising, with the sense that whatever is described as such is shocking enough to change one's view of the world. However, the phrase is often used hyperbolically. *Finding out that my dad isn't my biological father has been completely world shattering. I don't know who to trust anymore. A: "Oh my God, did you hear the world shattering news?" B: "Yeah, I can't believe that Sue is leaving the company. It won't be the same without her!"*

worldly desires Desires for tangible things (such as wealth, property, or other material goods) or for pleasures of the body (such as sexual activity, gluttony, or other hedonistic pursuits). *Buddhism teaches us to try to let go of our worldly desires, freeing our minds and bodies for a state of enlightenment. Because our worldly desires are a reflection of our sins, we should shun them if we wish to receive God's light.*

worldly wisdom Knowledge gained from experience and everyday life. *My dad never finished college, but he has much more worldly wisdom than I do, as a perpetual student.*

worlds apart Very different. *My sister and I are very close now, but we were worlds apart growing up and fought all the time. The level of quality of these two products is worlds apart.*

worlds away Very different from something else. *This new school is worlds away from the old one I taught at. For one, the kids actually listen!*

worm information To get someone (sometimes with a touch of trickery) to reveal details that likely would not have been volunteered. Usually followed by "out of," as in "worm information out of." *Bill was keeping quiet about his break-up, but I knew I could worm information out of him if I tried hard enough. Kira worms information about upcoming tests out of her teachers by complimenting them and straightening up their classrooms.*

worm (one's) way in To get oneself into a place or a situation, with a touch of trickery, artistry, or cunning. *I plan on worming my way into the big meeting by schmoozing with my boss for a while.*

worm's eye view A limited understanding of something. Primarily heard in UK, Australia. *Because he was stuck in the same menial position for so long, he only had a worm's eye view of how the business operated.*

worn rose-colored glasses See [wear rose-colored glasses](#).

worn too many hats See [wear too many hats](#).

worried sick Very concerned or anxious about a person or situation. *The next time you're going to be this late getting home, please call me, because I was worried sick! Your father is worried sick about what this merger will mean for his job.*

worship the porcelain god To vomit into a toilet. Doing so often requires one to kneel in front of or bend over the toilet (the "porcelain god"), a position that is likened to kneeling before or bowing to a sacred idol. Also written as "worship the porcelain goddess." *I bet that if Tommy doesn't stop drinking, he'll worship the porcelain god all night. I've never thrown up so much in my life. I can't wait till I stop worshipping the porcelain god.*

worst comes to worst The least ideal or preferred outcome happens. Often used with "if," as in "if worst comes to worst." *Even if worst comes to worst and it rains on our wedding day, we'll make the best of it. I know you don't want to think about it, but, worst comes to worst—what would you do in a zombie apocalypse?*

worth a Jew's eye Very valuable. This phrase likely refers to the violent methods that were once used to extort money from Jews. *Have you*

seen that painting? It's an original, so it must be worth a Jew's eye.

worth every penny Deserving of the money that an item, experience, etc. cost. *I was skeptical that we needed such a fancy vacuum, but it does such a great job that I now think it's worth every penny. I have a lot of debt, but if I get this job, my college degree will have been worth every penny!*

worth (its/one's) weight in gold Very valuable, important, or useful. *When you're in a foreign country, you'll find that a translator is worth his weight in gold. A computer system that didn't crash all the time would be worth its weight in gold around here!*

worth (one's) while Beneficial and not a waste of one's time. *I was reluctant to do research at a different library, but it turned out to be totally worth my while, as they had a ton of books on my topic! Staying up late tonight won't be worth my while because then I'll be exhausted the whole rest of the week. Will you drive me to the party tonight? I'll make it worth your while—how about I do your chores for a week?*

worth pondering Deserving of consideration. A: *"I did so well on my report card that I think I should be allowed to borrow the car tomorrow night."* B: *"Hmm, it's worth pondering."*

worth the whistle So important or admirable as to merit the effort of being whistled at. *Oh yes, that author is really worth the whistle—her debut novel was simply masterful.*

worthwhile cause Something that deserves time, attention, or funding. A: *"Do you want to donate to my marathon team? I'm trying to raise money for cancer research."* B: *"Sure, that's a worthwhile cause."*

worthy cause A cause that merits attention, aid, or action due to an inherent goodness of values or intention. *The lawyer decided to waive her fees because she felt that the young man's case was a worthy cause.*

(one) would do well to (do something) One would benefit or fare better from, or be prudent or responsible by, doing some specific task or action. *You would do well to show up to work on time tomorrow if you care to keep your job. You would do well to hire a lawyer now in case he decides to sue.*

would sooner Would rather. Often used to show one's disgust or displeasure with a potential event, outcome, or course of action. *I would*

sooner join the nunnery than go on another date with John! His arrogance was positively repulsive! Susie just has no interest in softball this year. I think she would sooner spend her afternoons at the library than on the field.

(would you) care to dance Would you like to dance with me? *This is a beautiful song—care to dance? You look lovely tonight. Would you care to dance?*

(would you) care to join me/us An invitation for one to engage in a particular action or activity with someone else (or a group). *I'm going out for a jog—care to join me? Would you care to join us for dinner tonight?*

wouldn't shout if a shark bit him Cheap, miserly. In Australia, "to shout" is to buy someone something, usually a drink. Primarily heard in Australia. *You expect Steve to buy you a drink? Ha! That guy wouldn't shout if a shark bit him!*

wouldn't touch it with a bargepole Would not do or be involved with something at all; would not get close to something. Primarily heard in UK. *Do you really think I'm the person to call when you see a spider? I wouldn't touch it with a bargepole! I know that Sue is a terrible cook, so I wouldn't touch that meal with a bargepole!*

wouldn't you know Can you believe it? *I was skeptical that the store would accept my return without a receipt, but, wouldn't you know, they took it back!*

wouldn't you know it Can you believe it? *I was skeptical that the store would accept my return without a receipt, but, wouldn't you know it, they took it back!*

wound up in See [wind up in](#).

wrack and ruin Utter destruction or ruination; severe or total decay or degradation, as from disuse or lack of upkeep. ("Wrack," a now-archaic word meaning wreckage or destruction, is also often spelled "rack.") Used especially in the phrase "go to wrack and ruin." *The wrack and ruin of my grandfather's estate pains me greatly. If only we'd been able to afford for someone to look after it for all these years. The neighbor's property has really gone to wrack and ruin lately. I'm thinking about filing a complaint with the neighborhood association!*

wrangle for an ass's shadow To argue over trivial matters. The

phrase derives from a Greek legend in which a traveler rents an ass and then squabbles with its owner when they both want to sit in the ass's shadow to avoid the sun. Primarily heard in UK. *There's no correct way to hang Christmas lights, so quit wrangling for an ass's shadow and decorate the house already!*

wrangle (something) out To work really hard to get something (often information) out of someone or something else. *I know my brother is dating someone new, but I have not been able to wrangle the information out of him yet. Bill's computer is running so slow that he has to wrangle any document out of it.*

wrangle (something) out of (someone) To work really hard to get something (often information) out of someone else. *I know my brother is dating someone new, but I have not been able to wrangle the information out of him yet.*

wrap it before you tap it slang Make sure you put on a condom before you have sex. *Bring condoms tonight, man—you gotta wrap it before you tap it!*

wrap (one's) head around To comprehend something that one considers challenging, confusing, or a foreign concept. *Kate is willing to pay full price for an expensive handbag, but I just can't wrap my head around that. Sam tries to wrap her head around snow and freezing temperatures, but she's always lived in Florida, so real winter is not something she has experienced.*

wrap (someone) around (one's) little finger To completely charm another person. Usually used with a negative connotation, as if the other person is under your spell. *When I heard that my brother was going to do volunteer work with his new girlfriend, I knew that she had wrapped him around her little finger. When I overheard Ms. Smith giving Ben extra credit, I couldn't help but roll my eyes and think that he had totally wrapped her around his little finger.*

wrap (someone) around (one's) (little) finger To gain complete control, dominance, or mastery over somebody; to make someone do whatever one wishes. *The spoiled little brat has completely wrapped his parents around his little finger. Everyone accused her of wrapping the boss around her finger.*

wrap (someone) round (one's) (little) finger To gain complete control, dominance, or mastery over somebody; to make someone do whatever one wishes. *The spoiled little brat has completely wrapped his parents round his little finger. Everyone accused her of wrapping the boss round her finger.*

wrap up 1. To wrap something, such as a gift. *Don't forget to wrap up Dan's present before you go to the party.* **2.** To complete something, such as a task; to put the finishing touches on something. *You go on ahead, I just need to wrap up some work before I head home. OK, everyone, let's wrap it up for tonight.*

wrapped around (one's) little finger Completely charmed by another person. Usually used with a negative connotation, as if one is under the other person's spell. *When I heard that my brother was going to do volunteer work with his new girlfriend, I knew that she had him wrapped around her little finger. When I overheard Ms. Smith giving Ben extra credit, I couldn't help but roll my eyes and think that he had her totally wrapped around his little finger.*

wrestle with a pig To attempt a futile task with someone who enjoys the struggle (just as a pig would enjoy wrestling in the mud). *I swear, trying to get the truth out of a teenager is like wrestling with a pig! My daughter has an excuse for everything, and I think she enjoys frustrating me!*

wriggle off the hook To avoid having to do something, likened to a fish escaping from the hook of a fishing rod. *My mom wanted me to help her clean out the garage this weekend, but I was able to wriggle off the hook, thanks to my away basketball game.*

writ large Apparent in a more noticeable or obvious way or to a greater extent. *The new blockbuster is really just a simple old story writ large. Come election season, we see all our national concerns writ large.*

write a bum check To submit a money order as payment when the account being drawn upon does not or will not have adequate funds for the order to clear. Primarily heard in US. *My ex-husband was so addicted to shopping that, by the end of our marriage, he had started writing bum checks just to keep making purchases. Being in debt has always scared the hell out of me, so I've made sure to never write a bum check in my life.*

write home about To express excitement about, as if something is so good, it is worth the effort of writing a letter about it. Typically used in the phrase "nothing to write home about," showing disinterest or disappointment *This lotion is so great that I would write home about it! Bill said that show was nothing to write home about, but I actually think it's pretty entertaining.*

write off (one's) losses **1.** To record one's financial losses during the accounting process. *We've had such a rough third quarter that being able to write off our losses for a tax break is the only upside.* **2.** By extension, to move on from a situation that has gone badly. *I started out as an engineering major, but after failing all of my classes, I decided to write off my losses and switch to communications.*

write on water To have a fleeting impact, as opposed to a lasting legacy. *People will forget these superficial pop stars in no time—their careers are written on water.*

writing is like chicken scratch See [\(one's\) \(hand\)writing is like chicken scratch](#).

written all over (one's) face Evident by one's facial expression. Said of one's emotions or inner thoughts. *Jenny said she wasn't scared before we went into the haunted house, but terror was written all over her face. John said nothing, but his response was written all over his face.*

the wrong crowd A group of people, typically peers, who partake in and elicit immoral, criminal, and/or dangerous behavior and attitudes. *Mary had been a model student all her life, but when she got to senior year of high school, she started hanging out with the wrong crowd, and her grades suffered as a result. Because there is no sort of network in place to keep young people active and engaged in this part of the city, it's all too easy for them to fall in with the wrong crowd.*

the wrong foot A bad start. Often used in the phrases "get/got off on the wrong foot" or "start (off) on the wrong foot," applied to situations in which something goes or has gone awry at the very beginning. *I know we got off on the wrong foot when I was a half hour late to the interview, but I promise that I will always be on time once I start working here.*

the wrong side of (someone) A status in which one is disliked by someone, usually for a particular reason. *I know I'm on the wrong side of the*

teacher because I handed in my report late.

the wrong side of the bed A bad mood. Typically used in the phrase "woke up on the wrong side of the bed," meaning one is in a bad mood, usually for no reason. *Mark just snapped at us for no reason! Geez, he must have woken up on the wrong side of the bed today.*

WTF rude slang An abbreviation for "what the fuck," an expression of dismay or indignation, especially in text messages or other written communication. The phrase can begin a question or stand alone. *WTF is my ex-boyfriend doing here? I can't believe she just said that to me! WTF!*

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X

x factor A unique and noteworthy quality that makes someone or something exceptional. *There are a lot of really talented singers in this contest, but I think Molly's x factor is her stage presence. A lot of similar products are on the market right now—ours has to have an X factor!*

x's and o's **1.** sports The symbols used to denote the players on one's team (and usually those of the opposing team) in a diagram of a play (i.e., the formation the players will take when trying to score or move the ball). The term often refers to the plays themselves. *That coach is great with the x's and o's, but the team's execution has been very disappointing.* **2.** By extension, knowledge of how something works. *Before you start on that report, call Shelly—she knows all the x's and o's of the budget.*

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Y

yak shaving tech Small, seemingly-insignificant tasks that need to be completed before a larger one can be done. *I know you're waiting on me for the software update, I'm doing this yak shaving as fast as I can!*

yankee dime A kiss. *My grandmother would always say, "Come give me a yankee dime, my dear," when she wanted a kiss.*

Yankee go home An outcry against the intrusion of the US and/or Americanisms into other cultures. *As the spread of American culture has increased throughout the world, so have the calls of "Yankee go home!"*

yap, yap, yapping all day Talking nonstop, especially about insignificant things. *Connie's nice enough, but once she starts yap, yap, yapping all day, I feel a headache coming on.*

yap, yap, yapping all day long Talking nonstop, especially about insignificant things. *Connie's nice enough, but once she starts yap, yap, yapping all day long, I feel a headache coming on.*

yardarm to yardarm outdated Really close together. *When I planted the bushes, I put them yardarm to yardarm—I hope they don't overcrowd each other once they start blooming.*

yasss slang An more enthusiastic alternative to "yes." The number of a's and s's can vary. *School is closed today? Yasss. Yasss, pumpkin spice lattes are finally back at Starbucks!*

yasss queen slang An expression of excitement and approval. The number of a's and s's can vary. *Yaasss queen! You look gorgeous!*

year dot An unspecified date in time that occurred long ago, usually used in the phrases "since year dot" and "from year dot." *My grandmother always says that she's loved cooking since year dot, but my grandfather is quick to point out that she hated cooking when they first met.*

yearning desire A deep longing. *I want to see as much as I can on my trip to England because I've always had a yearning desire to go there.*

yell (one's) head off To scream or shout very loudly and lengthily.

Suzy yelled her head off when I told her she couldn't have an ice cream cone. The stadium was packed with fans yelling their heads off. Don't bother listening to the cranks who stand on street corners and yell their heads off at passersby.

yell silently To think angry thoughts without verbalizing them. *Bill knew he couldn't talk back to Mrs. Miller, so instead he yelled silently in his head as she reprimanded him.*

yellow brick road A path believed to lead to success or adventure. A reference to the path of the same name in the fictional land of Oz, popularized by the film *The Wizard of Oz*, based on the works of L. Frank Baum. *Jenna took the internship thinking that it would be the yellow brick road to her dream job.*

yellow cake 1. A spongy cake that is yellow in color, due to the use of egg yolks. It is often frosted and served at birthday parties. *Do we have any yellow cake mix? I think I want a yellow cake for my birthday—I'm not in the mood for chocolate right now.* **2.** Uranium oxide powder that is produced by the milling of uranium ore. Often spelled as one word. *Yellowcake can be used in the making of nuclear weapons, so its trade is heavily scrutinized.*

yellow dog A despicable person or thing. *I can't believe you get so invested in these debates—all politicians are yellow dogs that can't be trusted.*

yellow grease Used cooking oil, often in the fast food industry. A: *"What are those huge containers for?"* B: *"Oh, I think they hold the restaurant's yellow grease."*

yellow light An indication to slow down, likened to a yellow traffic light, which means slow down, proceed with caution, or prepare to stop. *I would not ask her out yet, dude—she was totally giving you the yellow light. Sally took the comments from her teacher as a yellow light not to push for extra credit just yet.*

yellow press Journalism with the primary aim of sparking reader interest—reporting the facts are secondary. *I can't believe you read those tabloids—they're just yellow press stuffed with ads.*

yellow state A US state strongly influenced by the Libertarian Party. *This will never be a yellow state—the Libertarians are just not as entrenched here*



as the Democrats and Republicans.

yen A desire. Often used in the phrase "have a yen for (someone/something)." *Meredith has a real yen to be a surgeon, which, combined with her work ethic, should bring her much success.*

yeoman's service Service that is good enough, but in no way extravagant. *This rickety wooden ladder has done me yeoman's service over the years, but now it's time to upgrade.*

yes-man Someone who agrees to everything, seemingly without giving it a thought. Usually a derisive term suggesting that the person is a mindless follower of what/whomever they are agreeing to/with. *You can't trust what Chad says, he's just the boss's yes-man. I doubt he has an original thought in his head!*

yes man One who always agrees with authority figures, in order to gain favor with them. *Stephanie only hired Tim because he's a yes man and won't challenge her authority.*

yes (one) to death To repeatedly answer questions with "yes," often because one is bored or annoyed. *All right, stop yessing me to death and give me real some feedback here! My teenage daughter won't talk to me anymore; she just yesses me to death.*

yesterday's man/woman Someone who has passed the pinnacle of their career. *Bob is never going to give up his cushy job—he's yesterday's man, and his next career move is retirement!*

yield the ghost To die. Based on the idea that one's spirit leaves the body when one dies. More commonly expressed in the phrase "give up the ghost." *Susie called me in tears when grandma yielded the ghost after her long illness. Well, if the mechanic can't work his magic this time, it looks like Marshall's car will finally yield the ghost.*

yield to pressure To give into outside forces urging someone to do something. *Sally wasn't even going to apply for that boring job, but she yielded to pressure from her mother and submitted her resume nonetheless.*

YOLO slang An abbreviation for "you only live once," a phrase that prioritizes action, and often impulsivity, over contemplation in the pursuit of life experiences. Popularized by Drake's 2011 song "The Motto." A: "Come to the music festival with us, Colleen!" B: "Yeah Colleen, YOLO!" That

carnival ride looks totally terrifying, but YOLO—let's do it!

you ain't particular See [\(one\) ain't particular](#).

you all A group of people that someone is addressing collectively. *You all are my most talented designers, so I knew you were the best fit for this project.*

you and whose army A childish response to a threat, implying that an adversary is not powerful enough to carry out the threat alone (hence the need for an "army"). A: *"If you don't leave, I'll make you get off this playground!"* B: *"Oh yeah? You and whose army?"*

you are what you eat One's overall health is linked to one's eating habits. The phrase is often used to promote proper nutrition. A: *"Sam has a terrible diet, and I think that's why she gets sick so often."* B: *"Well, you are what you eat."*

you attract more flies with honey than vinegar You are more apt to get the results you want when you use kindness, rather than anger or aggression. *I think the kids would visit you more if you were nicer to them. You attract more flies with honey than vinegar, you know.* A: *"The board rejected my proposal!"* B: *"Well, maybe if you didn't scream at them every time something went wrong, they would be more eager to work with you. After all, you attract more flies with honey than vinegar."*

you be the judge of that You decide the worth, value, accuracy, etc. of something. Mother: *"Did the kids finish their chores?"* Father: *"You be the judge of that." I think this cake tastes good, but you be the judge of that.*

you bet your bottom You can be sure that something will happen. A less vulgar alternative to "you can bet your ass." *I just know Sally will get the lead in the school play—you can bet your bottom!*

you can barely hear yourself think See [can barely hear \(oneself\) think](#).

you can bet on it See [bet on it](#).

you can dish it out, but you can't take it You can voice harsh thoughts, criticisms, or insults toward others, but you do not like when someone else does the same to you. *You were all over your sister about her eating habits, but you start pouting when I point out that you had a cupcake for dinner last night! What, you can dish it out, but you can't take it?*

you can dispense with (something) You can stop doing or get rid of something. *You're still not allowed to borrow my car Saturday night, and you can dispense with the attitude. The library dispenses with its normal operating hours during finals week and instead stays open 24 hours.*

you can hardly believe your eyes See [\(one\) can hardly believe \(one's\) eyes](#).

you can hardly hear yourself think See [can hardly hear \(oneself\) think](#).

you can have too much of a good thing A warning against excess. *Ugh, I definitely ate too much candy last night. Believe me, you can have too much of a good thing! How many times have you been to the spa this month? You can have too much of a good thing, you know!*

you can run, but you can't hide No matter what you do, you can't escape the consequences that you are trying to avoid. *I know you took money from me. You can run, but you can't hide—I'll find you eventually.*

you can scarcely believe your eyes See [\(one\) can scarcely believe \(one's\) eyes](#).

you can sell sawdust to a lumber mill See [\(someone\) could sell sawdust to a lumber mill](#).

you can take a horse to water, but you can't make him drink You can't force someone to do something that they don't want to do, even if it's good for them. *A: "I worked really hard to get Sean this interview, and he doesn't seem interested in it at all!" B: "Well, you can take a horse to water, but you can't make him drink."*

you can't beat that See [\(one\) can't beat that](#).

you can't believe your ears See [\(one\) can't believe \(one's\) ears](#).

you can't bluff a bluffer It is very difficult to fool someone who is experienced in the ways of fooling other people. *I know Bill thinks he can keep up with these star poker players, but you can't bluff a bluffer—they'll see through him for sure!*

(you) can't fight city hall You cannot defeat or prevail over a bureaucratic system or its rules. *You might as well pay those parking tickets now because you'll never win in court. You can't fight city hall, after all.*

you can't go home again You can't truly go back to a place you once lived because so much will have changed since you left that it is not the same place anymore. *Jim is so excited to visit his childhood town—I hope he knows that you can't go home again. I had such a great time in college that I'm nervous to go back for my reunion, since you can never go home again.*

you can't live with them, you can't live without them A phrase used to express frustration with someone or something that the speaker ultimately cannot give up. *My husband is a total slob, but but I still love him. Men: you can't live with them, you can't live without them. Sports: you can't live with them, you can't live without them. This soccer game is going to make me crazy!*

you can't live with them, you can't live without them A phrase used to express frustration with someone or something that the speaker ultimately cannot give up. The object of frustration always precedes the statement, and most commonly is "women." *My husband is a total slob, but I still love him. Men: you can't live with them, you can't live without them. Sports: you can't live with 'em, you can't live without 'em. This soccer game is going to make me crazy!*

you can't polish a turd You can't make something unpleasant seem more appealing than it really is—attempting to do so is often a futile effort. "Turd" is a slang term for a piece of feces. *Look, man, your term paper was bad before, and all of your edits are just making it worse—you can't polish a turd, you know.*

you can't put a wise head on young shoulders A young person cannot be expected to have or display the wisdom and sound judgment of an older person. *I know that you can't put an wise head on young shoulders, and yet, I still get so frustrated with my son and the ridiculous things that he does!*

you can't put an old head on young shoulders A young person cannot be expected to have or display the wisdom and sound judgment of an older person. *I know that you can't put an old head on young shoulders, and yet, I still get so frustrated with my son and the ridiculous things that he does!*

you can't run with the hare and hunt with the hounds When two parties are in conflict, you can't support both of them—you must

choose one. *Come on, you can't run with the hare and hunt with the hounds—pick a side! You're either in favor of renovating the library, or you're not.*

(you) can't take it with you (when you go) A warning against materialism that alludes to the fact that you can't keep your money or possessions when you die. *It doesn't matter how much money you make in your lifetime—you can't take it with you when you go. Quit buying so much expensive stuff! You can't take it with you!*

you can't tell a book by its cover You can't base your opinion of something (or someone) on the way it (or one) looks. A variant of "don't judge a book by its cover." *This report may look dull, but you can't tell a book by its cover—I will have you riveted by the facts and figures in no time! I know she's a little frumpy, but you can't tell a book by its cover, man!*

you can't unring a bell You can't rescind information that has been shared publicly, especially when it is damaging to a person or organization's reputation. Attempting to do so is usually as futile as "unringing" a bell. *How confident are you in this information? Because once we announce it, there's no changing it—you can't unring a bell. You can't unring a bell, even with the best lawyers. So I doubt this scandal is going away anytime soon.*

you can't win for losing See [\(one\) can't win for losing](#).

(you) can't win them all A phrase said, often as an attempt at consolation, when one has lost or failed to achieve a desired result, especially after previous success. "Them" is sometimes abbreviated as "'em." *I know you're disappointed to have the lost the game, but you can't win them all, honey. A: "I'm sorry, I know you worked really hard and were expecting an A+." B: "Eh, can't win 'em all."*

(you) could have fooled me Really? I thought the opposite was true. *A: "This neighborhood has really improved in recent years—it's quite popular now." B: "Wow. With all the boarded-up buildings, you could have fooled me." Maria is shy? Could have fooled me. She was talking all night.*

you could have knocked me down with a feather An expression of great or utter surprise, bewilderment, or astonishment. *I was so taken aback when I found out I'd won the lottery that you could have knocked me down with a feather!*

you could have knocked me down with a feather See [knock](#)



[\(someone\) down with a feather.](#)

you could have knocked me over with a feather See [knock \(someone\) over with a feather.](#)

you could have knocked me over with a feather An expression of great or utter surprise, bewilderment, or astonishment. *I was so taken aback when I found out I'd won the lottery that you could have knocked me over with a feather!*

you could hear a pin drop See [could hear a pin drop.](#)

you could hear the grass grow(ing) It is so still or quiet that one would be able to hear even the tiniest, imperceptible sounds. *I reckon you could hear the grass growing in the awkward silence that followed that dreadful performance.*

you could sell an icebox to an Eskimo See [\(someone\) could sell an icebox to an Eskimo.](#)

you could sell ice to Eskimos See [\(someone\) could sell ice to Eskimos.](#)

you crumb An interjection said to a repulsive or irritating person. *Oh, you crumb! How could you leave the house this filthy? I can't believe you tried to run the bill up on us, you crumb!*

you deal with it A directive to handle some task or address some situation, usually that which is annoying or troublesome, or which the speaker believes is not their responsibility. *You're the one who double-booked me, so you deal with it.*

you do not wash your dirty linen in public See [\(one\) does not wash \(one's\) dirty linen in public.](#)

You don't change horses in the middle of the race. It is dangerous or inadvisable to choose or back a different political figure for an election after the decision has already been made or the position filled. *Many people are dissatisfied with the senator's performance but will likely carry his party's support through to the next election—you don't change horses in the middle of the race, as the saying goes.*

You don't change horses mid-race. It is dangerous or inadvisable to choose or back a different political figure for an election after



the decision has already been made or the position filled. *Many people are dissatisfied with the senator's performance but will likely carry his party's support through to the next election—you don't change horses mid-race, as the saying goes.*

you don't know when to quit See [\(someone\) \(just\) doesn't know when to quit](#).

you dope You fool. *Don't push that, you dope! That's the eject button!*

you feel like a million dollars See [feel like a million dollars](#).

you figure See [\(one\) figures \(that\)](#).

you gals A friendly way of addressing a group of women collectively. *I can't wait to see you gals on Saturday!*

you got to crack a few eggs to make an omelet See [you've got to crack a few eggs to make an omelette](#).

you guys A friendly way of addressing a group collectively. Can be used for both men and women, or a group of both. A: *"Hey, are you guys going to the concert on Saturday?"* B: *"Rick and I definitely are, but Jen is undecided."*

you had better be going See [\(one had\) better be going](#).

you had better get moving See [\(one had\) better get moving](#).

you had better get on your horse See [\(one had\) better get on \(one's\) horse](#).

you had better keep quiet about it See [\(someone had\) better keep quiet about it](#).

you had better keep still about it See [\(someone had\) better keep still about it](#).

you heel You jerk. *I can't believe you left me at the movie theater, you heel!*

you just don't get it You don't understand. The statement often refers to something that affects the speaker emotionally. A: *"It stinks that you're injured right now, but there's always next year."* B: *"You just don't get it—so many scouts are coming out for the championship that it's a huge missed opportunity!"*

you kiss your mother with that mouth? Said to someone using expletives or other inappropriate language. *Stop cursing around all these little kids! Geez, you kiss your mother with that mouth?*

you know it An affirmation confirming what has just been said. A: "Are you coming to the concert on Saturday?" B: "Oh, you know it!"

you know what 1. A phrase used to convey a realization, often mid-sentence. *I wasn't going to go out with you guys tonight, but hey, you know what, I'm in!* **2.** A rhetorical question posed before a statement one considers to be the blunt truth, often during an argument or heated exchange. *You know what, John? I think you never really loved me.* **3.** A statement asserting that the person to whom one is speaking does in fact know something that they claim not to. A: "What is the matter with you?" B: "You know what!"

you little imp An expression of dismay after someone (the "imp") has done something surprising or has misbehaved in some way. *I can't believe you got into my make-up drawer, you little imp!*

you little scallywag An expression of dismay after someone (the "scallywag") has done something surprising or has misbehaved in some way. *I can't believe you got into my make-up drawer, you little scallywag!*

you look a little peaked You look ill, especially as if you might vomit. *You look a little peaked since you got off that roller coaster. Do you want some ginger ale to settle your stomach?*

you look like a million You look great! A shortening of the more common phrase "you look like a million bucks." *Look at you in that fancy cocktail dress! You look like a million!*

you look like a million bucks See [look like a million bucks](#).

you lot A way to address a group of people. Primarily heard in UK. *What do you lot want? I could hear Bill saying, "Let's go, you lot!" to the kids dawdling in our yard.*

you lucky devil See [lucky devil](#).

you make me sick You disgust me. *I can't believe you're dating Tom's ex-boyfriend. You make me sick!*

you never know what you've got till it's gone You don't fully appreciate people or things until you lose them. *My grandfather passed away*

last month, and I miss him so much. Truly, you never know what you've got till it's gone. Having an old junker of a car was better than having no car at all—now I have to walk everywhere! I guess it's true that you never know what you've got till it's gone.

you old fart See [old fart](#).

you only live once A phrase that prioritizes action, and often impulsivity, over contemplation in the pursuit of life experiences. A: *"Come to the music festival with us, Colleen!"* B: *"Yeah Colleen, you only live once! That carnival ride looks totally terrifying, but you only live once, so let's do it!"*

you put your pants on one leg at a time See [\(one\) puts \(one's\) pants on one leg at a time](#).

you put your trousers on one leg at a time See [puts \(one's\) trousers on one leg at a time \(just like everybody else\)](#).

you read me See [\(do\) you read me?](#)

you saved the day You fixed a problem or addressed an issue that would have negatively impacted something else. *Thank you so much for picking up the cake on your way to the party—you saved the day!*

you should know a man seven years before you stir his fire In interactions with people you don't know well, you should behave with caution and avoid meddling in their affairs. *Mother, you don't know Sir Harold well enough to inquire about his personal life. Remember: you should know a man seven years before you stir his fire.*

you shouldn't have A message of thanks for a (usually unexpected) gift. Can be used sincerely or sarcastically. *You got me a present? Aww, you shouldn't have! More files to copy? Thanks, you shouldn't have.*

(you) silly goose childish You silly, goofy person! *You can't have cookies before we eat dinner, you silly goose! You'll spoil your appetite!*

you snooze, you lose If you wait too long to do something, that opportunity might become unavailable. The phrase can be used as a warning for events to come, or to describe past things that one has already missed. *Come on, we have to get to the bakery early, before all the donuts are sold out! You snooze, you lose!* A: *"Aw man, I can't believe I missed the chance to*



meet my favorite author." B: "Well, you snooze, you lose."

you so-and-so An exclamation of surprise or dismay that avoids using harsh language. *I can't believe you got into my make-up drawer, you so-and-so!*

you take it See [I take it](#).

you think **1.** A question one uses at the end of a sentence to express uncertainty. *We're not going to get into trouble—you think?* **2.** A sarcastic rhetorical question used as a retort when someone states the obvious. A: "Wow, I bet that fire is really hot." B: "You think?"

you want to start something You want to get into a fight? A: "How did you even get into this school anyway?" B: "Oh, you want to start something?"

you weasel You sneaky person. *You weasel! I can't believe you stole the song I was going to do for the audition!*

you what You did what? Usually said in dismay after the speaker has learned what the other person has done. A: "So I spilled a little wine on that dress I borrowed from you..." B: "You what?"

you will rue the day See [rue the day \(that something happened\)](#).

you wish A sarcastic retort about something that most likely will not happen. A: "Oh, I'm definitely getting into Harvard." B: "You wish!"

you would do well to See [\(one\) would do well to \(do something\)](#).

you'd better be going See [\(one had\) better be going](#).

you'd better get moving See [\(one had\) better get moving](#).

you'd better get on your horse See [\(one had\) better get on \(one's\) horse](#).

you'd better keep quiet about it See [\(someone had\) better keep quiet about it](#).

you'd better keep still about it See [\(someone had\) better keep still about it](#).

you'll be the death of me If your behavior continues like this, it will cause me the maximum amount of aggravation. *You'll be the death of me! Please call if you're going to be home late, so I don't worry.*

you'll catch your death You'll get sick if you do what you're about to do (often, go outside without being properly dressed). A shortened version of "you'll catch your death of cold." *You can't go out without a coat at this time of year, you'll catch your death!*

you'll catch your death of cold You'll get sick if you do what you're about to do (often, go outside without being properly dressed). *You can't go out without a coat at this time of year, you'll catch your death of cold!*

you'll catch your death (of cold) A warning issued (often hyperbolically) to one deemed vulnerable to becoming ill with the common cold. *You'll catch your death of cold if you leave the house with wet hair—it's freezing outside! You'll catch your death in this weather if you don't put on a coat!*

you'll never guess You won't believe (something). *You'll never guess who I ran into today at the supermarket!* A: "What did you get for your birthday?" B: "You'll never guess!"

young fogey A young person who acts older than they are, due to conservative and/or outdated beliefs and behaviors. A play on the more common phrase "old fogey"—and older person with outdated ideals. Primarily heard in UK. *You don't want to come to the club? Ah, you're such a young fogey. I can't believe you're going to bed early on a Saturday night so that you can go to church in the morning—you're such a young fogey!*

young lady 1. A girl, typically one who is between adolescence and adulthood. *You are becoming quite the responsible young lady.* **2.** An admonishment for a girl, typically given by her parents. *You are in so much trouble, young lady! I can't believe you borrowed my car without my permission!*

young man 1. A boy, typically one who is between adolescence and adulthood. *You are becoming quite the responsible young man.* **2.** An admonishment for a boy, typically given by his parents. *You are in so much trouble, young man! I can't believe you borrowed my car without my permission!*

young once A phrase emphasizing that someone will not be young forever. Typically used in the phrase "you're only young once." *You need to*



go skydiving with us. Come on, you're only young once—it's time for an adventure!

younger brother One's younger male sibling. *Yeah, I have a younger brother—his name is Jim. Johnny is Bella's younger brother.*

younger sister One's younger female sibling. *Yeah, I have a younger sister—her name is Jill. Bella is Johnny's younger sister.*

your ass A humorous (and perhaps inappropriate, depending on the audience) slang term for "you" or "yourself." *Mom is looking for you, and she is not happy. Your ass must be in trouble! Get your ass down here now!*

your blood's worth bottling You are invaluable. Primarily heard in Australia. *You're such a huge asset to the committee—your blood is worth bottling.*

your man **1.** One's male significant other. *Where's your man? Is he coming to the party tonight? I'm so glad I got to meet your man on Saturday! He seems like such a nice guy.* **2.** A man who can complete or help with a task or job because he is skilled in that particular area. *I used to play basketball in college, so if you need any tips, I'm your man! Todd's a great mechanic—if your car breaks down, he's your man.*

your mom slang A juvenile retort meant to insult one's mother. The term is often used with provocative wordplay to suggest that one has engaged in sexual acts with the listener's mother. *A: "What did you guys do last night?" "B: "Your mom!" A: "You really need to get to band practice on time." B: "Your mom really needs to get to band practice on time!"*

you're a godsend You are wonderful and/or helpful. *You brought me coffee? Ah, you're a godsend. Thank you much for picking up the cupcakes on your way to the party—you're a godsend.*

you're a lifesaver You are wonderful and/or helpful. *You brought me coffee? Ah, you're a lifesaver. Thank you much for picking up the cupcakes on your way to the party—you're a lifesaver.*

you're a numbskull You are really stupid. *If you think no one will catch you cheating on your exam, you're a numbskull and deserve to get caught.*

you're a peach You are wonderful and/or helpful. *You brought me coffee? Ah, you're a peach. Thank you much for picking up the cupcakes on*

your way to the party—you're a peach.

you're an angel You are sweet and or/perfect. You can do no wrong. *You brought me coffee? Ah, you're an angel. Right, like you stole the mascot. You're an angel, and you were at the library when it happened!*

you're chicken You're a coward. *You would never steal the mascot, you're chicken! You're shaking just thinking about it right now!*

you're imagining things You're making things up or seeing things that are not real. *You're imagining things—there's nothing going on between Bill and me.*

you're nuts You're crazy! *If you think I'm going to tell the scary upstairs neighbor that his music is too loud, you're nuts!*

you're on! An exclamation of agreement to something that was said or that is happening, often (but not always) a challenge or a wager. *A: "Want to see who can run to the end of the road the fastest?" B: "You're on!" A: "I bet you \$50 that my team beats yours in the championship." B: "You're on!"*

you're only as old as you feel Your health is a bigger factor in what you are able to do than your actual age. *A: "We're too old to go hiking on that trail." B: "Oh come on! You're only as old as you feel."*

you're pulling my leg You're lying to me. Often refers to some kind of playful deceit, not a malicious lie. *A: "I swear that guy is a famous body-builder." B: "You're pulling my leg—I'm bigger than that guy!"*

you're seeing things You're making things up or seeing things that are not real. *There's no dog in the backyard, you're seeing things. You're seeing things—there's nothing going on between Bill and me.*

yours sincerely A common closing of a letter. *I hope that we can work together again soon. Yours sincerely, Victoria*

you've got a lot of nerve You're audacious, brazen, or sassy. Can be positive or negative. *Did you seriously steal my prom date ? Oh, you've got a lot of nerve! You've got a lot of nerve walking in here after how you left the last time. You've got a lot of nerve, kid. You're hired.*

you've got a point there Your point of view or opinion makes sense. *A: "It's snowing—should we really go out for ice cream?" B: "Hmm, you've got a point there." A: "I don't think we need to add that chart to the report,*

considering all of the others we have." B: "Yeah, you've got a point there."

you've got me I don't know the answer to your question. A: *"Is Bill coming in today?"* B: *"Hmm, you've got me."*

you've got to be in it to win it You must participate if you want to win something. The phrase is often applied to winning the lottery. *Did you see that great prize? I hope you bought your raffle ticket because you've got to be in it to win it!*

you've got to crack a few eggs to make an omelette Sometimes, you have to do unpleasant things in order to complete a task or meet a goal. *Your students clearly don't respect you. I know you don't want to yell at them, but you've got to crack a few eggs to make an omelette. If I don't cut people's salaries, the company is going to go bankrupt. It's unfortunate, but you've got to crack a few eggs to make an omelette.*

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Z

zealous devotee A passionate follower (of someone or something). *My boyfriend is a zealous devotee of this new diet, but if I have to eat another plate of vegetables, I'll lose my mind.*

zenith of (one's) career The highest point of one's career. *Now that I got a big promotion, I'm at the zenith of my career—it can't get any better than this!*

zero day See [0-day](#).

zero hour The time at which something starts. *I have so much studying left to do before the exam, and zero hour is 8 AM! Zero hour for our vacation is 4:30—the minute we're all done work!*

zero-sum game A situation, process, competition, or outcome in which the winner's gain is exactly equal to the loser's loss. *Poker is a zero-sum game because the amount of money won by one player is equivalent to the amount lost by the other players.*

zero to hero See [go from zero to hero](#).

zit face derogatory slang Someone with very bad acne or severe scarring therefrom. (Sometimes hyphenated.) *I was a bit of a zit face in high school, but thankfully my face cleared up in college. Wow, a zit-face like you will never get a date to the dance!*

ZZZ A written symbol of sleep. It can include more than three z's. *All sleeping comics characters have "zzz" written above them.*



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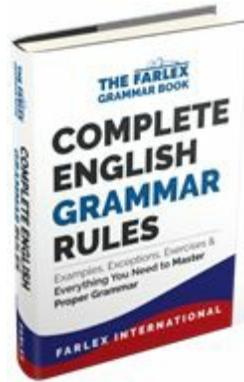
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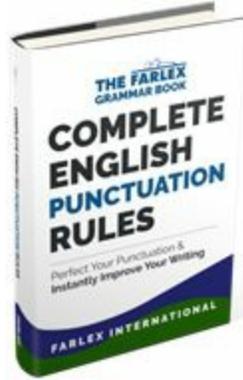
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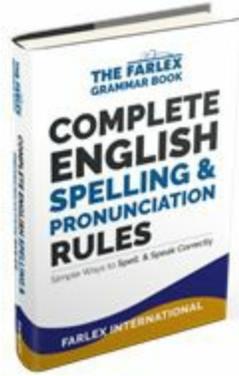
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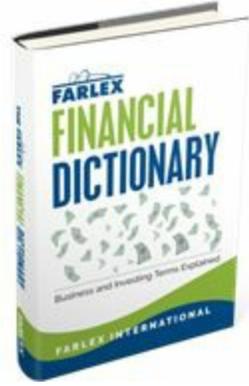
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