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130

IDIOMS

3

LEVELS

390

EXAMPLES

British English • Humorous Examples • Complete Reference

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A Piece Of Cake

BEGINNER

HIGH

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

Something that is very easy to do

SYNONYMS: easy simple effortless

ANTONYMS: difficult hard challenging

EXAMPLES

"James attempted it once, failed miserably, and claimed the task was A PIECE OF CAKE. Naturally, Charlotte did it while eating a sandwich."

"They claimed it would be A PIECE OF CAKE, much like climbing Everest in flip-flops."

"Charlotte said it was A PIECE OF CAKE, then proceeded to spend three hours explaining why she couldn't do it."

Cost An Arm And A Leg

BEGINNER

HIGH

BODY

DEFINITION

To be very expensive

SYNONYMS: expensive costly pricey

ANTONYMS: cheap inexpensive

EXAMPLES

"The repairs cost COST AN ARM AND A LEG, though James insists he only paid for the 'experience'."

"Charlotte's new hobby cost COST AN ARM AND A LEG, which is concerning since her salary is mostly made of disappointment."

"The renovations cost COST AN ARM AND A LEG, and the result looks exactly like the original but slightly more crooked."

Break A Leg

BEGINNER

HIGH

BODY

DEFINITION

Good luck (usually said to performers before they go on stage)

SYNONYMS:

good luck

all the best

EXAMPLES

"The repairs cost BREAK A LEG, though James insists he only paid for the 'experience'."

"That car cost BREAK A LEG, but James says the emotional damage was included free of charge."

"The renovations cost BREAK A LEG, and the result looks exactly like the original but slightly more crooked."

Once In A Blue Moon

BEGINNER

HIGH

COLOUR

DEFINITION

Very rarely; almost never

SYNONYMS: rarely seldom hardly ever

ANTONYMS: often frequently regularly

EXAMPLES

"James decided to ONCE IN A BLUE MOON, which everyone agreed was a terrible idea that he'd definitely regret."

"Charlotte's been ONCE IN A BLUE MOON since last Tuesday, and nobody has the heart to tell her to stop."

"The committee decided to ONCE IN A BLUE MOON, then formed a subcommittee to avoid actually doing it."

Time Flies

BEGINNER

HIGH

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

Time passes very quickly

SYNONYMS: time passes quickly

EXAMPLES

"We're running TIME FLIES, mostly because James spent the morning 'preparing' which means staring at a wall."

"Charlotte's running TIME FLIES, though she has time to explain exactly why she's late."

"The deadline is TIME FLIES, which everyone knows is corporate speak for 'we should have started last week!'"

Under The Weather

BEGINNER

HIGH

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

Feeling slightly ill or sick

SYNONYMS: ill sick unwell

ANTONYMS: healthy well

EXAMPLES

"The committee decided to UNDER THE WEATHER, then formed a subcommittee to avoid actually doing it."

"They proceeded to UNDER THE WEATHER with considerable enthusiasm and minimal competence."

"Charlotte's been UNDER THE WEATHER since last Tuesday, and nobody has the heart to tell her to stop."

See Eye To Eye

INTERMEDIATE

HIGH

BODY

DEFINITION

To agree with someone; to have the same opinion

SYNONYMS:

agree

be in accord

share the same view

ANTONYMS:

disagree

have differences

EXAMPLES

"They proceeded to SEE EYE TO EYE with considerable enthusiasm and minimal competence."

"James decided to SEE EYE TO EYE, which everyone agreed was a terrible idea that he'd definitely regret."

"You really ought to SEE EYE TO EYE, assuming you want things to go according to plan."

Speak Of The Devil

INTERMEDIATE

HIGH

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

Said when the person you have just been talking about appears

EXAMPLES

"Charlotte's been SPEAK OF THE DEVIL since last Tuesday, and nobody has the heart to tell her to stop."

"James decided to SPEAK OF THE DEVIL, which everyone agreed was a terrible idea that he'd definitely regret."

"You really ought to SPEAK OF THE DEVIL, assuming you want things to go according to plan."

Bite The Bullet

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

To force yourself to do something unpleasant or difficult

SYNONYMS:

face the difficulty

confront the situation

EXAMPLES

"James attempted it once, failed miserably, and claimed the task was BITE THE BULLET. Naturally, Charlotte did it while eating a sandwich."

"Charlotte said it was BITE THE BULLET, then proceeded to spend three hours explaining why she couldn't do it."

"After watching Phil struggle with the instructions, James concluded the task was anything but BITE THE BULLET."

Hit The Nail On The Head

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

To describe exactly what is causing a situation or problem; to be exactly right

SYNONYMS: be exactly right be spot on

EXAMPLES

"James really HIT THE NAIL ON THE HEAD with that one, in the sense that he achieved maximum embarrassment with minimum effort."

"Phil managed to HIT THE NAIL ON THE HEAD, which surprised everyone including himself."

"They HIT THE NAIL ON THE HEAD in the same way a brick swims - with enthusiasm but no positive outcome."

Let The Cat Out Of The Bag

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

To reveal a secret, often by accident

SYNONYMS:

spill the beans

reveal a secret

blow the cover

EXAMPLES

"The plan was LET THE CAT OUT OF THE BAG, until someone mentioned it in the elevator."

"It was meant to be LET THE CAT OUT OF THE BAG, much like an elephant hiding in a telephone box."

"They kept it LET THE CAT OUT OF THE BAG, which in this office means 'Charlotte knew within five minutes'."

Pull Someone's Leg

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

BODY

DEFINITION

To joke with someone; to tease someone in a playful way

SYNONYMS:

tease

joke with

kid

EXAMPLES

"The wedding cost PULL SOMEONE'S LEG, and frankly, the divorce was priced similarly."

"The renovations cost PULL SOMEONE'S LEG, and the result looks exactly like the original but slightly more crooked."

"Charlotte's new hobby cost PULL SOMEONE'S LEG, which is concerning since her salary is mostly made of disappointment."

Get Cold Feet

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

BODY

DEFINITION

To suddenly become nervous or afraid to do something you had planned to do

SYNONYMS:

become nervous

lose courage

chicken out

ANTONYMS:

be confident

be brave

EXAMPLES

"You really ought to GET COLD FEET, assuming you want things to go according to plan."

"James decided to GET COLD FEET, which everyone agreed was a terrible idea that he'd definitely regret."

"They proceeded to GET COLD FEET with considerable enthusiasm and minimal competence."

Go All Out

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

To do something with as much effort and enthusiasm as possible

SYNONYMS:

give it your all

do your utmost

put maximum effort

EXAMPLES

"You really ought to GO ALL OUT, assuming you want things to go according to plan."

"Charlotte's been GO ALL OUT since last Tuesday, and nobody has the heart to tell her to stop."

"They proceeded to GO ALL OUT with considerable enthusiasm and minimal competence."

Give It A Shot

BEGINNER

HIGH

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

To try or attempt to do something

SYNONYMS:

give it a try

attempt it

have a go

EXAMPLES

"James found himself GIVE IT A SHOT, which is where he spends most of his waking hours."

"Phil managed to get GIVE IT A SHOT while literally doing nothing at all."

"Charlotte's in GIVE IT A SHOT again, and this time it's not even her fault. Probably."

Miss The Boat

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

To be too late to take advantage of an opportunity

SYNONYMS: be too late lose your chance

ANTONYMS: be in time seize the opportunity

EXAMPLES

"Charlotte's running MISS THE BOAT, though she has time to explain exactly why she's late."

"Phil's running MISS THE BOAT, or as he calls it, 'operating at peak inefficiency'."

"The deadline is MISS THE BOAT, which everyone knows is corporate speak for 'we should have started last week'."

Out Of The Blue

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

COLOUR

DEFINITION

Suddenly and unexpectedly; without warning

SYNONYMS:

unexpectedly

suddenly

without warning

EXAMPLES

"James decided to OUT OF THE BLUE, which everyone agreed was a terrible idea that he'd definitely regret."

"You really ought to OUT OF THE BLUE, assuming you want things to go according to plan."

"The committee decided to OUT OF THE BLUE, then formed a subcommittee to avoid actually doing it."

Play It By Ear

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

To decide what to do as the situation develops, rather than making detailed plans

SYNONYMS:

improvise

decide as you go

wing it

EXAMPLES

*"You really ought to **PLAY IT BY EAR**, assuming you want things to go according to plan."*

*"They proceeded to **PLAY IT BY EAR** with considerable enthusiasm and minimal competence."*

*"The committee decided to **PLAY IT BY EAR**, then formed a subcommittee to avoid actually doing it."*

Read Between The Lines

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

To understand someone's real feelings or intentions from what they say or write, rather than from the literal meaning

SYNONYMS:

interpret the hidden meaning

understand the implication

EXAMPLES

"Phil tried to explain, leaving everyone READ BETWEEN THE LINES and slightly concerned for his mental health."

"The instructions were READ BETWEEN THE LINES, rather like being given a map to somewhere that doesn't exist."

"Charlotte was READ BETWEEN THE LINES after the meeting, mainly because nothing made sense and everyone was shouting."

Safe And Sound

BEGINNER

HIGH

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

Completely safe and without injury or harm

SYNONYMS: unharmed out of danger secure

ANTONYMS: in danger harmed

EXAMPLES

"You really ought to SAFE AND SOUND, assuming you want things to go according to plan."

"The committee decided to SAFE AND SOUND, then formed a subcommittee to avoid actually doing it."

"Charlotte's been SAFE AND SOUND since last Tuesday, and nobody has the heart to tell her to stop."

In Stitches

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

Laughing a lot or uncontrollably

SYNONYMS:

laughing uncontrollably

in fits of laughter

EXAMPLES

"They proceeded to IN STITCHES with considerable enthusiasm and minimal competence."

"The committee decided to IN STITCHES, then formed a subcommittee to avoid actually doing it."

"You really ought to IN STITCHES, assuming you want things to go according to plan."

Feel Like A Million Dollars

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

To feel extremely healthy, attractive, or happy

SYNONYMS: feel fantastic feel wonderful

ANTONYMS: feel terrible feel awful

EXAMPLES

"The committee decided to FEEL LIKE A MILLION DOLLARS, then formed a subcommittee to avoid actually doing it."

"Charlotte's been FEEL LIKE A MILLION DOLLARS since last Tuesday, and nobody has the heart to tell her to stop."

"You really ought to FEEL LIKE A MILLION DOLLARS, assuming you want things to go according to plan."

A Blessing In Disguise

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

Something that seems bad or unlucky at first but results in something good happening later

SYNONYMS: good thing from bad situation

EXAMPLES

"We're A BLESSING IN DISGUISE, which gives us exactly enough time to panic and make poor decisions."

"Charlotte's running A BLESSING IN DISGUISE, though she has time to explain exactly why she's late."

"The deadline is A BLESSING IN DISGUISE, which everyone knows is corporate speak for 'we should have started last week'."

The Elephant In The Room

ADVANCED

MEDIUM

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

A major problem or controversial issue that is obviously present but is being avoided or ignored

SYNONYMS: obvious problem being ignored

EXAMPLES

*"James found himself **THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM**, which is where he spends most of his waking hours."*

*"Charlotte's in **THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM** again, and this time it's not even her fault. Probably."*

*"Phil managed to get **THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM** while literally doing nothing at all."*

Burn The Midnight Oil

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

To work late into the night

SYNONYMS:

work late

work all night

EXAMPLES

"Charlotte's running BURN THE MIDNIGHT OIL, though she has time to explain exactly why she's late."

"We're BURN THE MIDNIGHT OIL, which gives us exactly enough time to panic and make poor decisions."

"The deadline is BURN THE MIDNIGHT OIL, which everyone knows is corporate speak for 'we should have started last week'."

Call It A Day

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

To decide to stop working on something

SYNONYMS:

stop working

finish for the day

wrap it up

EXAMPLES

"You really ought to CALL IT A DAY, assuming you want things to go according to plan."

"They proceeded to CALL IT A DAY with considerable enthusiasm and minimal competence."

"The committee decided to CALL IT A DAY, then formed a subcommittee to avoid actually doing it."

Cut Corners

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

To do something in the easiest, cheapest, or quickest way, often by ignoring rules or not doing it properly

SYNONYMS: do something poorly to save time/money

ANTONYMS: do things properly follow all procedures

EXAMPLES

"James decided to CUT CORNERS, which everyone agreed was a terrible idea that he'd definitely regret."

"The committee decided to CUT CORNERS, then formed a subcommittee to avoid actually doing it."

"Charlotte's been CUT CORNERS since last Tuesday, and nobody has the heart to tell her to stop."

Get Out Of Hand

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

BODY

DEFINITION

To become difficult to control

SYNONYMS: become uncontrollable spiral out of control

ANTONYMS: be under control be manageable

EXAMPLES

"Charlotte said it was GET OUT OF HAND, then proceeded to spend three hours explaining why she couldn't do it."

"The council insisted the project would be GET OUT OF HAND, which everyone knows means 'catastrophically difficult'."

"They claimed it would be GET OUT OF HAND, much like climbing Everest in flip-flops."

Give Someone The Cold Shoulder

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

BODY

DEFINITION

To deliberately ignore someone or be unfriendly to them

SYNONYMS: ignore someone freeze someone out

give someone the silent treatment

ANTONYMS: welcome someone be friendly

EXAMPLES

"They proceeded to GIVE SOMEONE THE COLD SHOULDER with considerable enthusiasm and minimal competence."

"The committee decided to GIVE SOMEONE THE COLD SHOULDER, then formed a subcommittee to avoid actually doing it."

"Charlotte's been GIVE SOMEONE THE COLD SHOULDER since last Tuesday, and nobody has the heart to tell her to stop."

Go Downhill

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

To get worse; to decline in quality

SYNONYMS: decline worsen deteriorate

ANTONYMS: improve get better

EXAMPLES

"Charlotte's been GO DOWNHILL since last Tuesday, and nobody has the heart to tell her to stop."

"They proceeded to GO DOWNHILL with considerable enthusiasm and minimal competence."

"The committee decided to GO DOWNHILL, then formed a subcommittee to avoid actually doing it."

Kill Two Birds With One Stone

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

To achieve two things with a single action

SYNONYMS: achieve two things at once

EXAMPLES

"Phil managed to KILL TWO BIRDS WITH ONE STONE, which surprised everyone including himself."

"James really KILL TWO BIRDS WITH ONE STONE with that one, in the sense that he achieved maximum embarrassment with minimum effort."

"They KILL TWO BIRDS WITH ONE STONE in the same way a brick swims - with enthusiasm but no positive outcome."

Let Sleeping Dogs Lie

INTERMEDIATE

LOW

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

To avoid interfering in a situation that is currently causing no problems but might do so if you disturb it

SYNONYMS:

leave well enough alone

don't stir up trouble

EXAMPLES

"Phil managed to get LET SLEEPING DOGS LIE while literally doing nothing at all."

"After that email, they're all LET SLEEPING DOGS LIE and nobody knows whose fault it actually is."

"Charlotte's in LET SLEEPING DOGS LIE again, and this time it's not even her fault. Probably."

Make A Long Story Short

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

To summarize something briefly; to get to the point

SYNONYMS:

in short

briefly

to cut a long story short

EXAMPLES

"You really ought to MAKE A LONG STORY SHORT, assuming you want things to go according to plan."

"The committee decided to MAKE A LONG STORY SHORT, then formed a subcommittee to avoid actually doing it."

"Charlotte's been MAKE A LONG STORY SHORT since last Tuesday, and nobody has the heart to tell her to stop."

On The Ball

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

Alert, competent, and understanding the situation quickly

SYNONYMS: alert sharp on top of things

ANTONYMS: asleep at the wheel not paying attention

EXAMPLES

"The instructions were ON THE BALL, rather like being given a map to somewhere that doesn't exist."

"Charlotte was ON THE BALL after the meeting, mainly because nothing made sense and everyone was shouting."

"The explanation left James ON THE BALL, which is his natural state anyway."

See Red

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

COLOUR

DEFINITION

To become very angry

SYNONYMS:

become furious

become enraged

lose your temper

EXAMPLES

"You really ought to SEE RED, assuming you want things to go according to plan."

"James decided to SEE RED, which everyone agreed was a terrible idea that he'd definitely regret."

"They proceeded to SEE RED with considerable enthusiasm and minimal competence."

Green With Envy

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

COLOUR

DEFINITION

Very jealous; wanting something that someone else has

SYNONYMS:

very jealous

envious

EXAMPLES

"Charlotte's been GREEN WITH ENVY since last Tuesday, and nobody has the heart to tell her to stop."

"You really ought to GREEN WITH ENVY, assuming you want things to go according to plan."

"They proceeded to GREEN WITH ENVY with considerable enthusiasm and minimal competence."

Tickled Pink

INTERMEDIATE

LOW

COLOUR

DEFINITION

Very pleased or delighted

SYNONYMS: delighted very pleased thrilled

EXAMPLES

"The committee decided to TICKLED PINK, then formed a subcommittee to avoid actually doing it."

"Charlotte's been TICKLED PINK since last Tuesday, and nobody has the heart to tell her to stop."

"James decided to TICKLED PINK, which everyone agreed was a terrible idea that he'd definitely regret."

Feeling Blue

BEGINNER

MEDIUM

COLOUR

DEFINITION

Feeling sad or depressed

SYNONYMS: sad depressed down

ANTONYMS: happy cheerful

EXAMPLES

"Charlotte's been FEELING BLUE since last Tuesday, and nobody has the heart to tell her to stop."

"They proceeded to FEELING BLUE with considerable enthusiasm and minimal competence."

"James decided to FEELING BLUE, which everyone agreed was a terrible idea that he'd definitely regret."

A Golden Opportunity

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

COLOUR

DEFINITION

An excellent chance or opportunity

SYNONYMS:

perfect chance

excellent opportunity

EXAMPLES

"The committee decided to A GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY, then formed a subcommittee to avoid actually doing it."

"You really ought to A GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY, assuming you want things to go according to plan."

"They proceeded to A GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY with considerable enthusiasm and minimal competence."

Silver Lining

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

COLOUR

DEFINITION

A positive aspect in an otherwise negative situation

SYNONYMS:

positive aspect

bright side

EXAMPLES

"Charlotte's been SILVER LINING since last Tuesday, and nobody has the heart to tell her to stop."

"You really ought to SILVER LINING, assuming you want things to go according to plan."

"James decided to SILVER LINING, which everyone agreed was a terrible idea that he'd definitely regret."

Black And White

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

COLOUR

DEFINITION

Very clear and simple; seeing things as either completely good or completely bad

SYNONYMS: clear-cut straightforward

EXAMPLES

"The council insisted the project would be BLACK AND WHITE, which everyone knows means 'catastrophically difficult'."

"After watching Phil struggle with the instructions, James concluded the task was anything but BLACK AND WHITE."

"They claimed it would be BLACK AND WHITE, much like climbing Everest in flip-flops."

In The Red

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

COLOUR

DEFINITION

Owing money to the bank; not making a profit

SYNONYMS: in debt losing money

ANTONYMS: in the black making a profit

EXAMPLES

"Despite IN THE RED, James managed to turn victory into a near-death experience for everyone involved."

"They IN THE RED in the same way a brick swims - with enthusiasm but no positive outcome."

"James really IN THE RED with that one, in the sense that he achieved maximum embarrassment with minimum effort."

In The Black

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

COLOUR

DEFINITION

Making a profit; not in debt

SYNONYMS: profitable making money

ANTONYMS: in the red in debt

EXAMPLES

*"You really ought to **IN THE BLACK**, assuming you want things to go according to plan."*

*"They proceeded to **IN THE BLACK** with considerable enthusiasm and minimal competence."*

*"James decided to **IN THE BLACK**, which everyone agreed was a terrible idea that he'd definitely regret."*

A Red Letter Day

INTERMEDIATE

LOW

COLOUR

DEFINITION

A special, memorable, or happy day

SYNONYMS:

special day

memorable day

EXAMPLES

"Charlotte's been A RED LETTER DAY since last Tuesday, and nobody has the heart to tell her to stop."

"The committee decided to A RED LETTER DAY, then formed a subcommittee to avoid actually doing it."

"James decided to A RED LETTER DAY, which everyone agreed was a terrible idea that he'd definitely regret."

Red Tape

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

COLOUR

DEFINITION

Official rules and processes that seem unnecessary and delay results

SYNONYMS: bureaucracy official procedures

EXAMPLES

"James decided to RED TAPE, which everyone agreed was a terrible idea that he'd definitely regret."

"Charlotte's been RED TAPE since last Tuesday, and nobody has the heart to tell her to stop."

"The committee decided to RED TAPE, then formed a subcommittee to avoid actually doing it."

Caught Red-Handed

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

COLOUR

DEFINITION

To discover someone in the act of doing something wrong or illegal

SYNONYMS: caught in the act

EXAMPLES

"Charlotte's been CAUGHT RED-HANDED since last Tuesday, and nobody has the heart to tell her to stop."

"The committee decided to CAUGHT RED-HANDED, then formed a subcommittee to avoid actually doing it."

"You really ought to CAUGHT RED-HANDED, assuming you want things to go according to plan."

The Grass Is Always Greener (On The Other Side)

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

COLOUR

DEFINITION

Other people's situations always seem better than your own

SYNONYMS: other situations seem better

EXAMPLES

*"You really ought to **THE GRASS IS ALWAYS GREENER (ON THE OTHER SIDE)**, assuming you want things to go according to plan."*

*"James decided to **THE GRASS IS ALWAYS GREENER (ON THE OTHER SIDE)**, which everyone agreed was a terrible idea that he'd definitely regret."*

*"They proceeded to **THE GRASS IS ALWAYS GREENER (ON THE OTHER SIDE)** with considerable enthusiasm and minimal competence."*

Off The Top Of My Head

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

BODY

DEFINITION

Without careful thought or research; from memory

SYNONYMS: from memory without checking

EXAMPLES

"James decided to OFF THE TOP OF MY HEAD, which everyone agreed was a terrible idea that he'd definitely regret."

"The committee decided to OFF THE TOP OF MY HEAD, then formed a subcommittee to avoid actually doing it."

"Charlotte's been OFF THE TOP OF MY HEAD since last Tuesday, and nobody has the heart to tell her to stop."

On The Tip Of My Tongue

BEGINNER

HIGH

BODY

DEFINITION

Almost able to remember or say something but not quite

SYNONYMS: about to remember

EXAMPLES

"James decided to ON THE TIP OF MY TONGUE, which everyone agreed was a terrible idea that he'd definitely regret."

"They proceeded to ON THE TIP OF MY TONGUE with considerable enthusiasm and minimal competence."

"Charlotte's been ON THE TIP OF MY TONGUE since last Tuesday, and nobody has the heart to tell her to stop."

Keep Your Chin Up

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

BODY

DEFINITION

To stay positive and cheerful in a difficult situation

SYNONYMS: stay positive stay hopeful

ANTONYMS: give up be discouraged

EXAMPLES

"They claimed it would be KEEP YOUR CHIN UP, much like climbing Everest in flip-flops."

"James attempted it once, failed miserably, and claimed the task was KEEP YOUR CHIN UP. Naturally, Charlotte did it while eating a sandwich."

"After watching Phil struggle with the instructions, James concluded the task was anything but KEEP YOUR CHIN UP."

In Over Your Head

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

BODY

DEFINITION

In a situation that is too difficult for you to deal with

SYNONYMS:

out of your depth

can't cope

EXAMPLES

"The council insisted the project would be IN OVER YOUR HEAD, which everyone knows means 'catastrophically difficult'."

"James attempted it once, failed miserably, and claimed the task was IN OVER YOUR HEAD. Naturally, Charlotte did it while eating a sandwich."

"Charlotte said it was IN OVER YOUR HEAD, then proceeded to spend three hours explaining why she couldn't do it."

Cost An Arm And A Leg

BEGINNER

HIGH

BODY

DEFINITION

To be very expensive

SYNONYMS: very expensive costly pricey

ANTONYMS: cheap inexpensive

EXAMPLES

"Charlotte's new hobby cost COST AN ARM AND A LEG, which is concerning since her salary is mostly made of disappointment."

"The wedding cost COST AN ARM AND A LEG, and frankly, the divorce was priced similarly."

"The repairs cost COST AN ARM AND A LEG, though James insists he only paid for the 'experience'."

Give A Hand

BEGINNER

HIGH

BODY

DEFINITION

To help someone

SYNONYMS: help assist lend a hand

EXAMPLES

"You really ought to GIVE A HAND, assuming you want things to go according to plan."

"Charlotte's been GIVE A HAND since last Tuesday, and nobody has the heart to tell her to stop."

"They proceeded to GIVE A HAND with considerable enthusiasm and minimal competence."

Lend An Ear

INTERMEDIATE

LOW

BODY

DEFINITION

To listen to someone, especially sympathetically

SYNONYMS: listen to hear someone out

EXAMPLES

"Charlotte's been LEND AN EAR since last Tuesday, and nobody has the heart to tell her to stop."

"You really ought to LEND AN EAR, assuming you want things to go according to plan."

"The committee decided to LEND AN EAR, then formed a subcommittee to avoid actually doing it."

On The Same Wavelength

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

Thinking in the same way; having the same ideas and opinions

SYNONYMS:

think alike

see eye to eye

are in sync

EXAMPLES

"You really ought to ON THE SAME WAVELENGTH, assuming you want things to go according to plan."

"James decided to ON THE SAME WAVELENGTH, which everyone agreed was a terrible idea that he'd definitely regret."

"Charlotte's been ON THE SAME WAVELENGTH since last Tuesday, and nobody has the heart to tell her to stop."

In The Same Boat

BEGINNER

HIGH

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

In the same difficult situation

SYNONYMS: in the same situation all together

EXAMPLES

"James attempted it once, failed miserably, and claimed the task was IN THE SAME BOAT. Naturally, Charlotte did it while eating a sandwich."

"After watching Phil struggle with the instructions, James concluded the task was anything but IN THE SAME BOAT."

"The council insisted the project would be IN THE SAME BOAT, which everyone knows means 'catastrophically difficult'."

Hot Potato

ADVANCED

LOW

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

A controversial issue or difficult situation that people don't want to deal with

SYNONYMS: controversial issue difficult topic

EXAMPLES

*"After watching Phil struggle with the instructions, James concluded the task was anything but **HOT POTATO**."*

*"James attempted it once, failed miserably, and claimed the task was **HOT POTATO**. Naturally, Charlotte did it while eating a sandwich."*

*"The council insisted the project would be **HOT POTATO**, which everyone knows means 'catastrophically difficult'."*

Back To The Drawing Board

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

To start over because a previous attempt failed

SYNONYMS: start over start from scratch

EXAMPLES

"Phil managed to BACK TO THE DRAWING BOARD, which surprised everyone including himself."

"They BACK TO THE DRAWING BOARD in the same way a brick swims - with enthusiasm but no positive outcome."

"James really BACK TO THE DRAWING BOARD with that one, in the sense that he achieved maximum embarrassment with minimum effort."

Beat Around The Bush

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

To avoid talking about what is important; to delay getting to the main point

SYNONYMS:

avoid the main point

hesitate

talk around the subject

ANTONYMS:

get to the point

be direct

EXAMPLES

"You really ought to BEAT AROUND THE BUSH, assuming you want things to go according to plan."

"Charlotte's been BEAT AROUND THE BUSH since last Tuesday, and nobody has the heart to tell her to stop."

"The committee decided to BEAT AROUND THE BUSH, then formed a subcommittee to avoid actually doing it."

The Best Of Both Worlds

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

A situation where you can enjoy the advantages of two very different opportunities at the same time

SYNONYMS: advantages of two situations

EXAMPLES

"We're running THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS, mostly because James spent the morning 'preparing' which means staring at a wall."

"Phil's running THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS, or as he calls it, 'operating at peak inefficiency'."

"We're THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS, which gives us exactly enough time to panic and make poor decisions."

Curiosity Killed The Cat

INTERMEDIATE

LOW

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

Being too curious or inquisitive can get you into trouble

SYNONYMS: being too nosy can cause problems

EXAMPLES

"Phil managed to get CURIOSITY KILLED THE CAT while literally doing nothing at all."

"James found himself CURIOSITY KILLED THE CAT, which is where he spends most of his waking hours."

"Charlotte's in CURIOSITY KILLED THE CAT again, and this time it's not even her fault. Probably."

Don't Count Your Chickens (Before They Hatch)

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

Don't make plans for something that might not happen

SYNONYMS:

don't assume success

wait until it's certain

EXAMPLES

"James decided to DON'T COUNT YOUR CHICKENS (BEFORE THEY HATCH), which everyone agreed was a terrible idea that he'd definitely regret."

"The committee decided to DON'T COUNT YOUR CHICKENS (BEFORE THEY HATCH), then formed a subcommittee to avoid actually doing it."

"They proceeded to DON'T COUNT YOUR CHICKENS (BEFORE THEY HATCH) with considerable enthusiasm and minimal competence."

Every Cloud Has A Silver Lining

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

COLOUR

DEFINITION

There is something positive in every negative situation

SYNONYMS: there's always a bright side

EXAMPLES

"Charlotte's been EVERY CLOUD HAS A SILVER LINING since last Tuesday, and nobody has the heart to tell her to stop."

"James decided to EVERY CLOUD HAS A SILVER LINING, which everyone agreed was a terrible idea that he'd definitely regret."

"You really ought to EVERY CLOUD HAS A SILVER LINING, assuming you want things to go according to plan."

Jump On The Bandwagon

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

To join others in doing or supporting something because it is fashionable or likely to be successful

SYNONYMS:

follow the crowd

join the trend

EXAMPLES

"Charlotte thought she'd JUMP ON THE BANDWAGON, but the results suggest otherwise."

"Despite JUMP ON THE BANDWAGON, James managed to turn victory into a near-death experience for everyone involved."

"Phil managed to JUMP ON THE BANDWAGON, which surprised everyone including himself."

Sit On The Fence

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

To delay making a decision; to be undecided

SYNONYMS:

be undecided

be neutral

avoid choosing sides

EXAMPLES

"James decided to SIT ON THE FENCE, which everyone agreed was a terrible idea that he'd definitely regret."

"Charlotte's been SIT ON THE FENCE since last Tuesday, and nobody has the heart to tell her to stop."

"They proceeded to SIT ON THE FENCE with considerable enthusiasm and minimal competence."

Steal Someone's Thunder

INTERMEDIATE

LOW

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

To get the attention or praise that someone else was expecting or deserved

SYNONYMS:

take credit

draw attention away from someone

EXAMPLES

"The committee decided to STEAL SOMEONE'S THUNDER, then formed a subcommittee to avoid actually doing it."

"James decided to STEAL SOMEONE'S THUNDER, which everyone agreed was a terrible idea that he'd definitely regret."

"They proceeded to STEAL SOMEONE'S THUNDER with considerable enthusiasm and minimal competence."

Take Something With A Grain Of Salt

ADVANCED

LOW

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

To not completely believe something; to be skeptical about something

SYNONYMS:

be skeptical

don't take too seriously

EXAMPLES

"The committee decided to TAKE SOMETHING WITH A GRAIN OF SALT, then formed a subcommittee to avoid actually doing it."

"Charlotte's been TAKE SOMETHING WITH A GRAIN OF SALT since last Tuesday, and nobody has the heart to tell her to stop."

"You really ought to TAKE SOMETHING WITH A GRAIN OF SALT, assuming you want things to go according to plan."

The Whole Nine Yards

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

Everything; the whole thing; all of it

SYNONYMS:

everything

the whole thing

all of it

EXAMPLES

"The committee decided to THE WHOLE NINE YARDS, then formed a subcommittee to avoid actually doing it."

"They proceeded to THE WHOLE NINE YARDS with considerable enthusiasm and minimal competence."

"James decided to THE WHOLE NINE YARDS, which everyone agreed was a terrible idea that he'd definitely regret."

Wouldn't Be Caught Dead

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

Would never like to do something; would never want to be seen doing something

SYNONYMS:

would never do

hate to be seen

EXAMPLES

*"James decided to **WOULDN'T BE CAUGHT DEAD**, which everyone agreed was a terrible idea that he'd definitely regret."*

*"Charlotte's been **WOULDN'T BE CAUGHT DEAD** since last Tuesday, and nobody has the heart to tell her to stop."*

*"The committee decided to **WOULDN'T BE CAUGHT DEAD**, then formed a subcommittee to avoid actually doing it."*

Your Guess Is As Good As Mine

BEGINNER

HIGH

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

To have no idea; used when you don't know the answer to a question

SYNONYMS:

I don't know

I have no idea

EXAMPLES

"They proceeded to YOUR GUESS IS AS GOOD AS MINE with considerable enthusiasm and minimal competence."

"The committee decided to YOUR GUESS IS AS GOOD AS MINE, then formed a subcommittee to avoid actually doing it."

"You really ought to YOUR GUESS IS AS GOOD AS MINE, assuming you want things to go according to plan."

Hear It On The Grapevine

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

To hear rumors about something or someone

SYNONYMS:

hear rumors

hear through word of mouth

EXAMPLES

"James decided to HEAR IT ON THE GRAPEVINE, which everyone agreed was a terrible idea that he'd definitely regret."

"You really ought to HEAR IT ON THE GRAPEVINE, assuming you want things to go according to plan."

"They proceeded to HEAR IT ON THE GRAPEVINE with considerable enthusiasm and minimal competence."

Go Dutch

BEGINNER

MEDIUM

NATIONALITY

DEFINITION

To split the bill equally; to each pay for their own meal

SYNONYMS:

split the bill

pay separately

EXAMPLES

"You really ought to GO DUTCH, assuming you want things to go according to plan."

"Charlotte's been GO DUTCH since last Tuesday, and nobody has the heart to tell her to stop."

"They proceeded to GO DUTCH with considerable enthusiasm and minimal competence."

It's All Greek To Me

BEGINNER

HIGH

NATIONALITY

DEFINITION

I don't understand anything about this (usually because it's complex or technical)

SYNONYMS: incomprehensible confusing

EXAMPLES

"Charlotte was IT'S ALL GREEK TO ME after the meeting, mainly because nothing made sense and everyone was shouting."

"The instructions were IT'S ALL GREEK TO ME, rather like being given a map to somewhere that doesn't exist."

"Phil tried to explain, leaving everyone IT'S ALL GREEK TO ME and slightly concerned for his mental health."

Pardon My French

INTERMEDIATE

LOW

NATIONALITY

DEFINITION

Used to apologize for using bad language or swearing

SYNONYMS: excuse my language

EXAMPLES

"You really ought to PARDON MY FRENCH, assuming you want things to go according to plan."

"Charlotte's been PARDON MY FRENCH since last Tuesday, and nobody has the heart to tell her to stop."

"They proceeded to PARDON MY FRENCH with considerable enthusiasm and minimal competence."

Take French Leave

INTERMEDIATE

LOW

NATIONALITY

DEFINITION

To leave without saying goodbye or asking permission

SYNONYMS:

leave without permission

slip away

EXAMPLES

"James decided to TAKE FRENCH LEAVE, which everyone agreed was a terrible idea that he'd definitely regret."

"The committee decided to TAKE FRENCH LEAVE, then formed a subcommittee to avoid actually doing it."

"They proceeded to TAKE FRENCH LEAVE with considerable enthusiasm and minimal competence."

An Indian Summer

INTERMEDIATE

LOW

NATIONALITY

DEFINITION

A period of warm weather in late autumn

SYNONYMS: late warm period

EXAMPLES

"The deadline is AN INDIAN SUMMER, which everyone knows is corporate speak for 'we should have started last week'."

"Charlotte's running AN INDIAN SUMMER, though she has time to explain exactly why she's late."

"We're AN INDIAN SUMMER, which gives us exactly enough time to panic and make poor decisions."

Memory Like A Sieve

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

BODY

DEFINITION

A very bad memory; to forget things easily

SYNONYMS: bad memory forgetful

ANTONYMS: memory like an elephant excellent memory

EXAMPLES

"James decided to MEMORY LIKE A SIEVE, which everyone agreed was a terrible idea that he'd definitely regret."

"They proceeded to MEMORY LIKE A SIEVE with considerable enthusiasm and minimal competence."

"You really ought to MEMORY LIKE A SIEVE, assuming you want things to go according to plan."

Bear In Mind

INTERMEDIATE

HIGH

BODY

DEFINITION

To remember something for future reference

SYNONYMS:

keep in mind

remember

consider

EXAMPLES

"You really ought to BEAR IN MIND, assuming you want things to go according to plan."

"Charlotte's been BEAR IN MIND since last Tuesday, and nobody has the heart to tell her to stop."

"The committee decided to BEAR IN MIND, then formed a subcommittee to avoid actually doing it."

In One Ear And Out The Other

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

BODY

DEFINITION

Heard but not remembered or paid attention to

SYNONYMS: ignored not listened to

EXAMPLES

"James decided to IN ONE EAR AND OUT THE OTHER, which everyone agreed was a terrible idea that he'd definitely regret."

"They proceeded to IN ONE EAR AND OUT THE OTHER with considerable enthusiasm and minimal competence."

"The committee decided to IN ONE EAR AND OUT THE OTHER, then formed a subcommittee to avoid actually doing it."

Food For Thought

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

Something that makes you think deeply

SYNONYMS:

something to consider

thought-provoking

EXAMPLES

"Charlotte's been FOOD FOR THOUGHT since last Tuesday, and nobody has the heart to tell her to stop."

"The committee decided to FOOD FOR THOUGHT, then formed a subcommittee to avoid actually doing it."

"James decided to FOOD FOR THOUGHT, which everyone agreed was a terrible idea that he'd definitely regret."

Gut Feeling

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

BODY

DEFINITION

An instinctive or intuitive response; a feeling that something is true without having evidence

SYNONYMS:

intuition

instinct

EXAMPLES

"Charlotte's been GUT FEELING since last Tuesday, and nobody has the heart to tell her to stop."

"You really ought to GUT FEELING, assuming you want things to go according to plan."

"The committee decided to GUT FEELING, then formed a subcommittee to avoid actually doing it."

Be In Two Minds

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

BODY

DEFINITION

To be undecided or uncertain about something

SYNONYMS: undecided uncertain torn

EXAMPLES

"They proceeded to BE IN TWO MINDS with considerable enthusiasm and minimal competence."

"You really ought to BE IN TWO MINDS, assuming you want things to go according to plan."

"James decided to BE IN TWO MINDS, which everyone agreed was a terrible idea that he'd definitely regret."

Lose The Plot

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

To become confused, crazy, or no longer understand what's happening

SYNONYMS:

become confused

lose control

go crazy

EXAMPLES

"Phil tried to explain, leaving everyone LOSE THE PLOT and slightly concerned for his mental health."

"Charlotte was LOSE THE PLOT after the meeting, mainly because nothing made sense and everyone was shouting."

"After three hours of discussion, they were all LOSE THE PLOT and no closer to a decision."

Miles Away

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

Not paying attention; daydreaming

SYNONYMS:

daydreaming

distracted

not paying attention

EXAMPLES

"James decided to MILES AWAY, which everyone agreed was a terrible idea that he'd definitely regret."

"They proceeded to MILES AWAY with considerable enthusiasm and minimal competence."

"You really ought to MILES AWAY, assuming you want things to go according to plan."

Lose Your Train Of Thought

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

To forget what you were saying or thinking about

SYNONYMS: forget what you were saying

EXAMPLES

"You really ought to LOSE YOUR TRAIN OF THOUGHT, assuming you want things to go according to plan."

"The committee decided to LOSE YOUR TRAIN OF THOUGHT, then formed a subcommittee to avoid actually doing it."

"Charlotte's been LOSE YOUR TRAIN OF THOUGHT since last Tuesday, and nobody has the heart to tell her to stop."

Ring A Bell

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

To sound familiar; to seem familiar but you can't quite place it

SYNONYMS: sound familiar

EXAMPLES

"They proceeded to RING A BELL with considerable enthusiasm and minimal competence."

"You really ought to RING A BELL, assuming you want things to go according to plan."

"The committee decided to RING A BELL, then formed a subcommittee to avoid actually doing it."

Rack Your Brain

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

BODY

DEFINITION

To try very hard to remember or think of something

SYNONYMS: think hard try to remember

EXAMPLES

"Charlotte said it was RACK YOUR BRAIN, then proceeded to spend three hours explaining why she couldn't do it."

"The council insisted the project would be RACK YOUR BRAIN, which everyone knows means 'catastrophically difficult'."

"After watching Phil struggle with the instructions, James concluded the task was anything but RACK YOUR BRAIN."

Hit The Sack

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

To go to bed or go to sleep

SYNONYMS:

go to bed

go to sleep

hit the hay

EXAMPLES

"James really HIT THE SACK with that one, in the sense that he achieved maximum embarrassment with minimum effort."

"They HIT THE SACK in the same way a brick swims - with enthusiasm but no positive outcome."

"Phil managed to HIT THE SACK, which surprised everyone including himself."

Hang In There

BEGINNER

HIGH

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

To persist and not give up; to keep trying despite difficulties

SYNONYMS:

keep going

don't give up

persist

EXAMPLES

"After watching Phil struggle with the instructions, James concluded the task was anything but HANG IN THERE."

"They claimed it would be HANG IN THERE, much like climbing Everest in flip-flops."

"The council insisted the project would be HANG IN THERE, which everyone knows means 'catastrophically difficult'."

No Pain, No Gain

BEGINNER

HIGH

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

You have to work hard or suffer to achieve something worthwhile

SYNONYMS: you must work hard to succeed

EXAMPLES

"After watching Phil struggle with the instructions, James concluded the task was anything but NO PAIN, NO GAIN."

"James attempted it once, failed miserably, and claimed the task was NO PAIN, NO GAIN. Naturally, Charlotte did it while eating a sandwich."

"They claimed it would be NO PAIN, NO GAIN, much like climbing Everest in flip-flops."

Better Late Than Never

BEGINNER

HIGH

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

It is better to do something late than not do it at all

SYNONYMS: late is better than never

EXAMPLES

"Charlotte's running BETTER LATE THAN NEVER, though she has time to explain exactly why she's late."

"We're running BETTER LATE THAN NEVER, mostly because James spent the morning 'preparing' which means staring at a wall."

"We're BETTER LATE THAN NEVER, which gives us exactly enough time to panic and make poor decisions."

Rome Wasn't Built In A Day

BEGINNER

HIGH

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

Important work takes time; you can't expect to do great things quickly

SYNONYMS: great things take time

EXAMPLES

"Charlotte's running ROME WASN'T BUILT IN A DAY, though she has time to explain exactly why she's late."

"We're running ROME WASN'T BUILT IN A DAY, mostly because James spent the morning 'preparing' which means staring at a wall."

"Phil's running ROME WASN'T BUILT IN A DAY, or as he calls it, 'operating at peak inefficiency'."

When In Rome (Do As The Romans Do)

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

When you are in a different place or situation, you should follow the customs or behavior of those around you

SYNONYMS:

follow local customs

adapt to the situation

EXAMPLES

"They proceeded to WHEN IN ROME (DO AS THE ROMANS DO) with considerable enthusiasm and minimal competence."

"Charlotte's been WHEN IN ROME (DO AS THE ROMANS DO) since last Tuesday, and nobody has the heart to tell her to stop."

"James decided to WHEN IN ROME (DO AS THE ROMANS DO), which everyone agreed was a terrible idea that he'd definitely regret."

Easy Does It

BEGINNER

MEDIUM

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

Proceed slowly and carefully; don't rush

SYNONYMS:

take it easy

be careful

go slowly

EXAMPLES

"James decided to EASY DOES IT, which everyone agreed was a terrible idea that he'd definitely regret."

"You really ought to EASY DOES IT, assuming you want things to go according to plan."

"They proceeded to EASY DOES IT with considerable enthusiasm and minimal competence."

Take It Easy

BEGINNER

HIGH

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

To relax and not work too hard; to not get stressed

SYNONYMS:

relax

rest

chill out

EXAMPLES

"They claimed it would be TAKE IT EASY, much like climbing Everest in flip-flops."

"After watching Phil struggle with the instructions, James concluded the task was anything but TAKE IT EASY."

"Charlotte said it was TAKE IT EASY, then proceeded to spend three hours explaining why she couldn't do it."

Sleep On It

BEGINNER

HIGH

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

To delay making a decision until the following day

SYNONYMS: decide later think about it overnight

EXAMPLES

"Charlotte thought she'd SLEEP ON IT, but the results suggest otherwise."

"Phil managed to SLEEP ON IT, which surprised everyone including himself."

"They SLEEP ON IT in the same way a brick swims - with enthusiasm but no positive outcome."

Keep Your Fingers Crossed

BEGINNER

HIGH

BODY

DEFINITION

To hope for good luck or success

SYNONYMS:

hope for the best

wish for luck

EXAMPLES

"They KEEP YOUR FINGERS CROSSED in the same way a brick swims - with enthusiasm but no positive outcome."

"Charlotte thought she'd KEEP YOUR FINGERS CROSSED, but the results suggest otherwise."

"Phil managed to KEEP YOUR FINGERS CROSSED, which surprised everyone including himself."

Throw In The Towel

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

To quit or give up; to admit defeat

SYNONYMS: give up quit admit defeat

ANTONYMS: persevere keep trying

EXAMPLES

"They proceeded to THROW IN THE TOWEL with considerable enthusiasm and minimal competence."

"The committee decided to THROW IN THE TOWEL, then formed a subcommittee to avoid actually doing it."

"Charlotte's been THROW IN THE TOWEL since last Tuesday, and nobody has the heart to tell her to stop."

Face The Music

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

To accept punishment or criticism for something you have done wrong

SYNONYMS:

accept consequences

face the consequences

EXAMPLES

"James decided to FACE THE MUSIC, which everyone agreed was a terrible idea that he'd definitely regret."

"Charlotte's been FACE THE MUSIC since last Tuesday, and nobody has the heart to tell her to stop."

"The committee decided to FACE THE MUSIC, then formed a subcommittee to avoid actually doing it."

Under Someone's Thumb

INTERMEDIATE

LOW

BODY

DEFINITION

Completely controlled by someone else

SYNONYMS: controlled dominated

EXAMPLES

"The committee decided to UNDER SOMEONE'S THUMB, then formed a subcommittee to avoid actually doing it."

"James decided to UNDER SOMEONE'S THUMB, which everyone agreed was a terrible idea that he'd definitely regret."

"Charlotte's been UNDER SOMEONE'S THUMB since last Tuesday, and nobody has the heart to tell her to stop."

Rule Of Thumb

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

BODY

DEFINITION

A general rule or principle that is usually true but not always

SYNONYMS: general rule practical guideline

EXAMPLES

"James decided to RULE OF THUMB, which everyone agreed was a terrible idea that he'd definitely regret."

"They proceeded to RULE OF THUMB with considerable enthusiasm and minimal competence."

"The committee decided to RULE OF THUMB, then formed a subcommittee to avoid actually doing it."

Be All Ears

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

BODY

DEFINITION

To be listening very carefully and eagerly

SYNONYMS: listening carefully very attentive

EXAMPLES

"James decided to BE ALL EARS, which everyone agreed was a terrible idea that he'd definitely regret."

"Charlotte's been BE ALL EARS since last Tuesday, and nobody has the heart to tell her to stop."

"You really ought to BE ALL EARS, assuming you want things to go according to plan."

Elbow Grease

INTERMEDIATE

LOW

BODY

DEFINITION

Hard physical work; effort and hard work

SYNONYMS:

hard work

effort

EXAMPLES

"They claimed it would be ELBOW GREASE, much like climbing Everest in flip-flops."

"The council insisted the project would be ELBOW GREASE, which everyone knows means 'catastrophically difficult'."

"After watching Phil struggle with the instructions, James concluded the task was anything but ELBOW GREASE."

Keep Someone At Arm's Length

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

BODY

DEFINITION

To keep someone at a distance; to avoid becoming too friendly with someone

SYNONYMS: keep distant avoid getting close

ANTONYMS: get close to embrace

EXAMPLES

*"Charlotte's new hobby cost **KEEP SOMEONE AT ARM'S LENGTH**, which is concerning since her salary is mostly made of disappointment."*

*"The renovations cost **KEEP SOMEONE AT ARM'S LENGTH**, and the result looks exactly like the original but slightly more crooked."*

*"That car cost **KEEP SOMEONE AT ARM'S LENGTH**, but James says the emotional damage was included free of charge."*

Up In Arms

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

BODY

DEFINITION

Very angry and ready to protest or fight

SYNONYMS:

angry

outraged

protesting

EXAMPLES

"The repairs cost UP IN ARMS, though James insists he only paid for the 'experience'."

"Charlotte's new hobby cost UP IN ARMS, which is concerning since her salary is mostly made of disappointment."

"The wedding cost UP IN ARMS, and frankly, the divorce was priced similarly."

Give Your Right Arm For

INTERMEDIATE

LOW

BODY

DEFINITION

To want something very much; to be willing to sacrifice a lot for something

EXAMPLES

"The repairs cost GIVE YOUR RIGHT ARM FOR, though James insists he only paid for the 'experience'."

"The wedding cost GIVE YOUR RIGHT ARM FOR, and frankly, the divorce was priced similarly."

"The renovations cost GIVE YOUR RIGHT ARM FOR, and the result looks exactly like the original but slightly more crooked."

Twist Someone's Arm

INTERMEDIATE

LOW

BODY

DEFINITION

To pressure or force someone to do something

SYNONYMS:

pressure someone

force someone

EXAMPLES

"Charlotte's new hobby cost TWIST SOMEONE'S ARM, which is concerning since her salary is mostly made of disappointment."

"The renovations cost TWIST SOMEONE'S ARM, and the result looks exactly like the original but slightly more crooked."

"The repairs cost TWIST SOMEONE'S ARM, though James insists he only paid for the 'experience'."

Wash Your Hands Of

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

BODY

DEFINITION

To refuse to be involved or responsible for something or someone anymore

SYNONYMS: disassociate from abandon refuse responsibility

EXAMPLES

"They proceeded to WASH YOUR HANDS OF with considerable enthusiasm and minimal competence."

"Charlotte's been WASH YOUR HANDS OF since last Tuesday, and nobody has the heart to tell her to stop."

"You really ought to WASH YOUR HANDS OF, assuming you want things to go according to plan."

In Good Hands

BEGINNER

HIGH

BODY

DEFINITION

Being looked after by someone who is capable and responsible

SYNONYMS: safe well cared for

ANTONYMS: in danger at risk

EXAMPLES

"They proceeded to IN GOOD HANDS with considerable enthusiasm and minimal competence."

"You really ought to IN GOOD HANDS, assuming you want things to go according to plan."

"Charlotte's been IN GOOD HANDS since last Tuesday, and nobody has the heart to tell her to stop."

Get A Grip

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

BODY

DEFINITION

To control your emotions; to gain control of a situation

SYNONYMS:

control yourself

calm down

EXAMPLES

"Charlotte's been GET A GRIP since last Tuesday, and nobody has the heart to tell her to stop."

"They proceeded to GET A GRIP with considerable enthusiasm and minimal competence."

"The committee decided to GET A GRIP, then formed a subcommittee to avoid actually doing it."

Get A Handle On

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

BODY

DEFINITION

To start to understand and deal with a situation or problem

SYNONYMS:

understand

get control of

manage

EXAMPLES

"Phil tried to explain, leaving everyone GET A HANDLE ON and slightly concerned for his mental health."

"Charlotte was GET A HANDLE ON after the meeting, mainly because nothing made sense and everyone was shouting."

"The instructions were GET A HANDLE ON, rather like being given a map to somewhere that doesn't exist."

Off The Hook

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

No longer responsible for something; freed from a difficult situation or obligation

SYNONYMS: off the hook freed from responsibility

ANTONYMS: on the hook responsible

EXAMPLES

"The council insisted the project would be OFF THE HOOK, which everyone knows means 'catastrophically difficult'."

"Charlotte said it was OFF THE HOOK, then proceeded to spend three hours explaining why she couldn't do it."

"They claimed it would be OFF THE HOOK, much like climbing Everest in flip-flops."

By The Skin Of My Teeth

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

BODY

DEFINITION

By a very narrow margin; barely managing to do something

SYNONYMS: barely narrowly

EXAMPLES

"They proceeded to BY THE SKIN OF MY TEETH with considerable enthusiasm and minimal competence."

"The committee decided to BY THE SKIN OF MY TEETH, then formed a subcommittee to avoid actually doing it."

"You really ought to BY THE SKIN OF MY TEETH, assuming you want things to go according to plan."

Down In The Dumps

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

Feeling sad or depressed

SYNONYMS: sad depressed unhappy

ANTONYMS: happy cheerful

EXAMPLES

"The committee decided to DOWN IN THE DUMPS, then formed a subcommittee to avoid actually doing it."

"You really ought to DOWN IN THE DUMPS, assuming you want things to go according to plan."

"Charlotte's been DOWN IN THE DUMPS since last Tuesday, and nobody has the heart to tell her to stop."

On Cloud Nine

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

Extremely happy and excited

SYNONYMS: extremely happy overjoyed delighted

ANTONYMS: down in the dumps depressed

EXAMPLES

"You really ought to ON CLOUD NINE, assuming you want things to go according to plan."

"Charlotte's been ON CLOUD NINE since last Tuesday, and nobody has the heart to tell her to stop."

"The committee decided to ON CLOUD NINE, then formed a subcommittee to avoid actually doing it."

Over The Moon

BEGINNER

HIGH

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

Extremely happy or delighted about something

SYNONYMS: extremely happy delighted thrilled

ANTONYMS: devastated disappointed

EXAMPLES

"Charlotte's been OVER THE MOON since last Tuesday, and nobody has the heart to tell her to stop."

"The committee decided to OVER THE MOON, then formed a subcommittee to avoid actually doing it."

"You really ought to OVER THE MOON, assuming you want things to go according to plan."

Walk On Air

INTERMEDIATE

LOW

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

To feel extremely happy and excited

SYNONYMS:

extremely happy

on cloud nine

EXAMPLES

"James attempted it once, failed miserably, and claimed the task was WALK ON AIR. Naturally, Charlotte did it while eating a sandwich."

"Charlotte said it was WALK ON AIR, then proceeded to spend three hours explaining why she couldn't do it."

"They claimed it would be WALK ON AIR, much like climbing Everest in flip-flops."

Hit The Roof

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

To become extremely angry suddenly

SYNONYMS: become furious explode with anger

EXAMPLES

"Despite HIT THE ROOF, James managed to turn victory into a near-death experience for everyone involved."

"James really HIT THE ROOF with that one, in the sense that he achieved maximum embarrassment with minimum effort."

"Charlotte thought she'd HIT THE ROOF, but the results suggest otherwise."

Go Through The Roof

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

To increase to a very high level; to become very angry

SYNONYMS:

skyrocket

increase dramatically

EXAMPLES

"Charlotte's been GO THROUGH THE ROOF since last Tuesday, and nobody has the heart to tell her to stop."

"James decided to GO THROUGH THE ROOF, which everyone agreed was a terrible idea that he'd definitely regret."

"They proceeded to GO THROUGH THE ROOF with considerable enthusiasm and minimal competence."

Raise The Roof

INTERMEDIATE

LOW

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

To make a lot of noise when celebrating or partying; to complain loudly

SYNONYMS:

party loudly

complain loudly

EXAMPLES

"The committee decided to RAISE THE ROOF, then formed a subcommittee to avoid actually doing it."

"You really ought to RAISE THE ROOF, assuming you want things to go according to plan."

"They proceeded to RAISE THE ROOF with considerable enthusiasm and minimal competence."

Go To The Dogs

INTERMEDIATE

LOW

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

To deteriorate; to get worse in quality

SYNONYMS:

deteriorate

decline

get worse

EXAMPLES

"They proceeded to GO TO THE DOGS with considerable enthusiasm and minimal competence."

"You really ought to GO TO THE DOGS, assuming you want things to go according to plan."

"Charlotte's been GO TO THE DOGS since last Tuesday, and nobody has the heart to tell her to stop."

Barking Up The Wrong Tree

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

To be wrong about the reason for something; to be looking in the wrong place; accusing the wrong person

SYNONYMS:

wrong

mistaken

looking in the wrong place

EXAMPLES

"They proceeded to BARKING UP THE WRONG TREE with considerable enthusiasm and minimal competence."

"The committee decided to BARKING UP THE WRONG TREE, then formed a subcommittee to avoid actually doing it."

"Charlotte's been BARKING UP THE WRONG TREE since last Tuesday, and nobody has the heart to tell her to stop."

Let The Cat Out Of The Bag

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

To reveal a secret, often accidentally

SYNONYMS:

spill the beans

reveal the secret

blow the secret

EXAMPLES

"The plan was LET THE CAT OUT OF THE BAG, until someone mentioned it in the elevator."

"They kept it LET THE CAT OUT OF THE BAG, which in this office means 'Charlotte knew within five minutes'."

"It was meant to be LET THE CAT OUT OF THE BAG, much like an elephant hiding in a telephone box."

Has The Cat Got Your Tongue

INTERMEDIATE

LOW

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

Said to someone who is silent and refuses to speak

SYNONYMS:

why aren't you speaking?

say something!

EXAMPLES

*"You really ought to **HAS THE CAT GOT YOUR TONGUE**, assuming you want things to go according to plan."*

*"Charlotte's been **HAS THE CAT GOT YOUR TONGUE** since last Tuesday, and nobody has the heart to tell her to stop."*

*"They proceeded to **HAS THE CAT GOT YOUR TONGUE** with considerable enthusiasm and minimal competence."*

Raining Cats And Dogs

BEGINNER

HIGH

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

Raining very heavily

SYNONYMS: raining heavily pouring

EXAMPLES

"James decided to RAINING CATS AND DOGS, which everyone agreed was a terrible idea that he'd definitely regret."

"Charlotte's been RAINING CATS AND DOGS since last Tuesday, and nobody has the heart to tell her to stop."

"You really ought to RAINING CATS AND DOGS, assuming you want things to go according to plan."

Like A Hermit

INTERMEDIATE

LOW

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

Living alone and avoiding other people

SYNONYMS: isolated reclusive

EXAMPLES

"They proceeded to LIKE A HERMIT with considerable enthusiasm and minimal competence."

"Charlotte's been LIKE A HERMIT since last Tuesday, and nobody has the heart to tell her to stop."

"The committee decided to LIKE A HERMIT, then formed a subcommittee to avoid actually doing it."

A Wild Goose Chase

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

A hopeless search or pursuit of something unattainable

SYNONYMS: futile search waste of time

EXAMPLES

"James decided to A WILD GOOSE CHASE, which everyone agreed was a terrible idea that he'd definitely regret."

"Charlotte's been A WILD GOOSE CHASE since last Tuesday, and nobody has the heart to tell her to stop."

"They proceeded to A WILD GOOSE CHASE with considerable enthusiasm and minimal competence."

Swan Song

ADVANCED

LOW

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

The final performance or work of an artist or athlete before they retire

SYNONYMS: final performance last work

EXAMPLES

"Charlotte's been SWAN SONG since last Tuesday, and nobody has the heart to tell her to stop."

"James decided to SWAN SONG, which everyone agreed was a terrible idea that he'd definitely regret."

"They proceeded to SWAN SONG with considerable enthusiasm and minimal competence."

Dark Horse

INTERMEDIATE

LOW

EVERYDAY

DEFINITION

A competitor or candidate about whom little is known but who unexpectedly wins or succeeds

SYNONYMS:

unexpected winner

surprise candidate

EXAMPLES

"Phil managed to DARK HORSE, which surprised everyone including himself."

"James really DARK HORSE with that one, in the sense that he achieved maximum embarrassment with minimum effort."

"They DARK HORSE in the same way a brick swims - with enthusiasm but no positive outcome."

Black Sheep

INTERMEDIATE

MEDIUM

COLOUR

DEFINITION

A person who is considered a disgrace or an outsider by their family or group

SYNONYMS:

outcast

disgrace

EXAMPLES

"You really ought to BLACK SHEEP, assuming you want things to go according to plan."

"The committee decided to BLACK SHEEP, then formed a subcommittee to avoid actually doing it."

"Charlotte's been BLACK SHEEP since last Tuesday, and nobody has the heart to tell her to stop."

APPENDIX: ALL IDIOMS

Complete alphabetical list from 130 idioms

a blessing in disguise	go downhill	once in a blue moon
a golden opportunity	go dutch	out of the blue
a piece of cake	go through the roof	over the moon
a red letter day	go to the dogs	pardon my french
a wild goose chase	green with envy	play it by ear
an indian summer	gut feeling	pull someone's leg
back to the drawing board	hang in there	rack your brain
barking up the wrong tree	has the cat got your tongue	raining cats and dogs
be all ears	hear it on the grapevine	raise the roof
be in two minds	hit the nail on the head	read between the lines
bear in mind	hit the roof	red tape
beat around the bush	hit the sack	ring a bell
better late than never	hot potato	Rome wasn't built in a day
bite the bullet	in good hands	rule of thumb
black and white	in one ear and out the other	safe and sound
black sheep	in over your head	see eye to eye
break a leg	in stitches	see red
burn the midnight oil	in the black	silver lining
by the skin of my teeth	in the red	sit on the fence
call it a day	in the same boat	sleep on it
caught red-handed	it's all greek to me	speak of the devil
cost an arm and a leg	jump on the bandwagon	steal someone's thunder
cost an arm and a leg	keep someone at arm's length	swan song
curiosity killed the cat	keep your chin up	take french leave
cut corners	keep your fingers crossed	take it easy
dark horse	kill two birds with one stone	take something with a grain of salt
don't count your chickens (before they hatch)	lend an ear	the best of both worlds
down in the dumps	let sleeping dogs lie	the elephant in the room
easy does it	let the cat out of the bag	the grass is always greener (on the other side)
elbow grease	let the cat out of the bag	the whole nine yards
every cloud has a silver lining	like a hermit	throw in the towel
face the music	lose the plot	tickled pink
feel like a million dollars	lose your train of thought	time flies
feeling blue	make a long story short	twist someone's arm
food for thought	memory like a sieve	under someone's thumb
get a grip	miles away	under the weather
get a handle on	miss the boat	up in arms
get cold feet	no pain, no gain	walk on air
get out of hand	off the hook	wash your hands of
give a hand	off the top of my head	when in Rome (do as the Romans do)
give it a shot	on cloud nine	