

Idiom of the day

What is an idiom?

Idioms are semi-fixed expressions that are typically used in a figurative sense, such as *a carrot and stick* (approach) or (getting) *hot under the collar*. Many derive from specific areas of experience, such as sport, war, cooking, etc. Sometimes it may be possible to guess the meaning from the words (e.g. *my hands are tied* = it's out of my control, I can't do anything about it) but this is usually not possible (e.g. *to show someone the ropes* = to teach someone how to do a particular job).

General idioms

out of the blue – unexpected, from nowhere
in the dark – ignorant of a fact
at a loose end – not having any plans
over the moon – extremely pleased
on the ball – sharp-minded, quick-witted, intelligent
rings a bell – to jog your memory
pull your socks up – to work harder, improve
step up to the plate – face a challenge
play with fire – taking a risk
bite the bullet – to do something unpleasant

Idioms derived from boxing

throw in the towel – give in, surrender, admit defeat
below the belt – unfair

Idioms derived from sailing

we're all in the same boat – to all be in the same situation, facing the same problems
plain sailing – easy

Idioms derived from sport

jump the gun – to do something too early
score an own goal – to do something which has a negative consequence for yourself

Idioms derived from card games

Come up trumps – to get a piece of good luck, to be successful
Follow suit – to act in the same way as the person/people before you

What is a proverb?

A proverb is a short popular saying that gives advice about how people should behave or that expresses a belief that is generally thought to be true. Here are some examples:

Actions speak louder than words	Every cloud has a silver lining
Too many cooks spoil the broth	Absence makes the heart grow fonder
Talk of the devil and he will appear	Birds of a feather flock together
Beggars can't be choosers	Many hands make light work
A bad workman blames his tools	Rome wasn't built in a day

What's the difference between a proverb and an idiom?

Proverbs have more meaning, such as a lesson to learn. Idioms are just colourful expressions, not offered to provide any kind of moral or wisdom.