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List of Important Idioms

Idioms	Meaning
A blessing in disguise	Seems bad, but is actually good
A cat has nine lives	Cats seem to get away with dangerous things
A cat nap	A short sleep during the day
A chip on your shoulder	A tendency to be easily annoyed or angered, especially over petty issues.
A clean slate	A new beginning, with no mistakes or errors.
A closed book	To be difficult to know or understand
A dark horse	Someone who is not well known but has the potential to be successful.
A dime a dozen	Something that is very common or easy to find.
A drop in the bucket	A very small or unimportant amount.
A feather in your cap	An achievement or accomplishment that is a source of pride.
A fish out of water	Someone who is in a situation where they are not comfortable or competent.
A flash in the pan	Something that is briefly successful but does not last.
A foot in the door	An initial advantage or opportunity that can lead to something more.
A gem of a person	Someone who is valuable or precious.
A handful	Someone or something that is difficult to manage or control.
A leopard can't change its spots	People cannot change their basic nature.
A penny saved is a penny earned	You will save money by being careful about how much you spend
A piece of cake	Easy
A scaredy cat	Someone who is excessively scared or afraid.

A sight for sore eyes	Something or someone that is very welcome or pleasing to see.
A taste of your own medicine	To experience the same thing that you have done to others.
Ace in the hole	A secret advantage or resource that can be used in a pinch.
Ace up your sleeve	A secret advantage or resource that can be used when needed.
Add fuel to the fire	To make a situation worse or more intense.
Add insult to injury	To make a bad situation worse by saying or doing something hurtful or thoughtless.
Against all odds	Despite difficulties or challenges.
Against the clock	Working as fast as possible to meet a deadline.
Ahead of the curve	Ahead of others in terms of knowledge or progress.
Air rage	Angry behavior inside an airplane
Air your dirty laundry	To publicly reveal or discuss private or embarrassing information about someone or something.
Alive and kicking	Still alive and active.
All bark and no bite	Someone who talks a lot but doesn't actually do anything.
All bets are off	The rules or expectations are no longer in place.
All ears	Listening attentively.
All in a day's work	Something that is routine or expected.
All in a tizzy	Confused or agitated.
All of a sudden	Suddenly, without warning.
All systems go	Everything is ready to start.
All thumbs	Clumsy, awkward.
An arm and a leg	Something that is very expensive.
An eye for an eye	The idea that when someone does something wrong to you, you should do something wrong to them in return.

Apple of my eye	Someone who is very dear to you.
As easy as pie	Something that is very easy to do.
As fit as a fiddle	To be healthy and physically fit
At the drop of a hat	Without hesitation, immediately.
Back to square one	starting something over from the beginning
Baker's dozen	13 of something
Ball is in your court	It is your turn to take action or make a decision
Barking up the wrong tree	Pursuing the wrong course of action
Barrel of laugh	Someone who is very funny
Beating around the bush	Not discussing what is important/ procrastinating
Bend over backwards	Make a lot of effort
Bent out of shape	To feel upset or annoyed about something
Big task on your hand	Having something important to finish
Bite off more than you can chew	Take on more than you can handle
Bite the bullet	To face something difficult or unpleasant
Blow one's stack	To lose one's temper and explode in anger
Break a leg	Good luck
Bring home the bacon	Provide for one's family financially
Bull in a China shop	Someone who is clumsy or careless and causes damage or destruction
Burn the midnight oil	Work late into the night
Butter someone up	Flatter someone in order to get something from them
Buy a lemon	To buy something that doesn't work well (usually refers to cars)
Buy a pig in a poke	Purchase something without knowing all the details or facts
By the skin of your teeth	Barely, narrowly
Cakewalk	Something that is very easy
Calm before the storm	A period of quiet or tranquility before a difficult or tumultuous event

Can't stand (something)	To dislike something
Cast pearls before swine	Offer something valuable to someone who does not appreciate it
Cat on a hot tin roof	Be extremely nervous
Cat out of the bag	Reveal a secret
Chalk up	Attribute to
Change your tune	Change your opinion about something or someone
Chase rainbows	Pursue something that is unattainable
Cheap as dirt	Very inexpensive
Chicken out	To back out of something due to fear or lack of courage
Chip on your shoulder	A tendency to be angry or resentful over something
Chuck a wobbly	To act in an emotional way
Clean bill of health	A report or certificate that a person or animal is healthy
Close but no cigar	Close but failed at the end
Cold shoulder	To ignore or reject someone
Cook the books	To change accounts and figures dishonestly, usually to get money
Cool as a cucumber	Very calm, not nervous
Cool cat	Someone who has the respect of their peers in a young, casual way
Couch potato	Someone who lies around and barely moves
Cream of the crop	The best of a group of similar things or people
Crocodile tears	Fake tears or false sadness
Cry crocodile tears	To feign sadness or remorse
Cry foul	To protest or complain about something being unfair
Cry havoc and let slip the dogs of war	A quote from Shakespeare's play "Julius Caesar," meaning to create chaos and start a war
Cry havoc	Create chaos or confusion
Cry one's eyes out	Cry a lot and for a long time

Cry over spilt milk	Complain about something that cannot be changed
Cry uncle	Give up, admit defeat
Cry wolf	To raise a false alarm
Cry your eyes out	To be extremely sad
Curiosity killed the cat	Being too curious can get you into trouble
Curry favor	Try to gain favor or support from someone
Cut and dry	Straightforward, no room for debate
Cut the mustard	To meet the required standards or expectations
Cut to the chase	Get to the point
Damp squib	A failure or disappointment.
Dark horse	A person who is not well known but has the potential to be successful.
Dead in the water	Not making progress or not able to be completed.
Dead to the world	Deeply asleep or unconscious.
Devil's advocate	Someone who takes a contrary position or argues against a belief or proposition just for the sake of an argument.
Diamond in the rough	Someone or something with potential or talent that is not yet fully developed or recognized.
Die is cast	A decision has been made and cannot be changed.
Dim the lights	To reduce the brightness of the lights.
Dime a dozen	Very common and no special value; easily available
Dinner and a show	An event or outing that combines a meal with entertainment.
Dip your toe in the water	To try something new or test the waters before fully committing to it.
Dog days of summer	The hottest, most humid days of summer
Don't swear it	Don't worry about it
Down in the dumps	Depressed, sad
Draw a blank	Be unable to remember something
Dressed to the nines	Dressed fashionably

Drive a hard bargain	To arrange a transaction so that it benefits oneself
Drive someone up the wall	Deeply irritate someone
Driving me bananas	Making me feel crazy
Each to their own	A way of saying that everyone has different opinions and preferences and that is okay.
Early bird gets the worm	The person who arrives or takes action early has an advantage.
Ears are burning	A feeling that someone is talking about you or that you are the topic of conversation.
Easier said than done	Easy to say, but hard to actually do
Easy as pie	Something that is very easy to do.
Eat crow	To have to admit that you made a mistake
Eat your heart out	To feel jealous or envious of someone or something.
Egg on	To encourage or incite someone to do something.
Elbow grease	Hard physical work or effort.
End of the road	The end or conclusion of something.
Even a cat can look at a king/queen	I have every right to do this
Every cloud has a silver lining	There is a positive aspect to every negative situation.
Everyone's cup of tea	Something that is enjoyed by everyone or suitable for everyone.
Face like a wet week end	Look sad and miserable
Face the music	To accept the consequences of one's actions.
Fair weather friend	A person who is only a friend during good times and not during difficult times.
Falling on deaf ears	Not being listened to or paid attention to.
Fat cat	A negative description of a rich and powerful person
Feast or famine	A situation that alternates between having too much of something and having too little of it.
Feeling under the weather	Not feeling well or sick.

Few and far between	Not frequent or common.
Fiddle while Rome burns	To be indifferent or do something trivial while something important is happening.
Fifth wheel	An unnecessary or extra person in a group.
Fight like cat and dog	Continually arguing with each other
Fit as a fiddle	In good health.
Fly by the seat of your pants	To act on impulse or without a plan.
Get a leg up	To gain an advantage or opportunity.
Get cold feet	To become nervous or hesitant about something.
Get out of town	I don't believe you
Get over it	Forget about the past
Get up on the wrong side of the bed	Someone that is having a horrible day
Get your ducks in a row	To get organized or prepared.
Get your hands dirty	To do practical or hard work.
Give a cold shoulder	To ignore or be unfriendly to someone.
Give an inch, take a mile	If someone is allowed to have or do something small, they will take advantage and want more.
Go back to the drawing board	To start something again because the previous attempt was not successful.
Go out on a limb	To take a risk or do something that may be dangerous.
Go under the knife	To have an operation in surgery, often a cosmetic surgery
Gone off track	Forgot about your future goal
Good things come to those who wait	Good things will happen to those who are patient and persistent.
Goody two shoes	Someone who tries to be perfect
Grab the bull by the horns	To confront a problem or challenge directly.
Green thumb	Grow lush without trying

Green with envy	Very jealous
Hair of the dog	A drink that is supposed to cure a hangover.
Hands are tied	Unable to do anything to help or change a situation.
Hands down	For certain the right answer
Hang on a second	Wait for a moment
Happy as a clam	Very happy or content.
Harm's way	In a dangerous or risky situation.
Have a bone to pick	To have a disagreement or complaint to discuss with someone.
Have an ace up your sleeve	To have a secret advantage or plan.
Have stumbled upon	To accidentally discover something
Have your head in the clouds	To be unrealistic or not paying attention to the present.
Head over heels	Very much in love or infatuated.
Heart is set on	To really want or desire something.
Hit the hay	Go to bed
Hit the road	To leave
Hold your horses	Wait/ calm down
I have butterflies in my stomach	You're either in love or nervous
I was knocked on my heels	I was surprised
Icing on the cake	Something that makes a good situation even better.
In a nutshell	In a few words or briefly.
In a pickle	In a difficult or awkward situation.
In a rut	In a repetitive or boring situation.
In hot water	In trouble or in a difficult situation.
In the bag	Will definitely happen
In the black	To be financially successful or profitable.
In the heat of the moment	In the midst of a strong emotion or excitement.
In the know	Having insider information or being well informed.



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In the same boat	In a similar situation or experiencing the same difficulties.
Inside scoop	The details
Jumping the gun	To do something too soon or before it is appropriate.
Jumping out of your skin	To be very surprised or shocked.
Just what the doctor ordered	Exactly what is needed or wanted.
Just between you and me	Said when you want to tell someone something privately.
Just the ticket	Exactly what is needed or wanted.
Jekyll and Hyde	A person who has a dual personality, one good and one evil.
Join the club	To be in the same situation as someone else.
Jumping through hoops	Doing a lot of hard work or going through a lot of effort.
Jumping on the bandwagon	Joining in on something that is popular or fashionable.
Just a drop in the bucket	A small amount compared to the whole.
Landslide victory	A win by a large margin.
Last but not least	Used to introduce the final item in a list.
Last straw	The final problem or burden that causes someone to break or give up.
Laughing all the way to the bank	Being very successful or profitable.
Laughing on the outside, crying on the inside	Pretending to be happy but feeling sad or distressed.
Leaps and bounds	Making a lot of progress or improvement.
Let bygones be bygones	To forget about past conflicts or mistakes and move on.
Let the cat out of the bag	To reveal a secret unintentionally.

Let your hair down	To relax and have fun.
Life is just a bowl of cherries	The life is pleasant and uncomplicated
Like a dog with two tails	Extremely happy
Mad as a hatter	Mentally ill, psychotic
Mad as a hornet	Very angry.
Make a beeline for	To go straight to a specific place or person.
Make a clean breast of it	To confess or admit to something.
Make a mountain out of a molehill	To make a small problem seem much bigger than it is.
Make a splash	To attract a lot of attention or make an impact.
Make hay while the sun shines	To make the most of a good opportunity while it is available.
Make the most of	To use something to the fullest advantage.
Making ends meet	Having just enough money to pay for basic expenses.
Meeting of the minds	Strong instinctive agreement on something
Miss the boat	To miss an opportunity or not arrive in time.
Mum's the word	To keep something a secret.
Nail on the head	To be exactly right or accurate.
Name in lights	To be very famous or successful.
Nature of the beast	An inherent quality that cannot be changed.
Narrow escape	Barely avoiding a problem or danger.
Neck and neck	Tied or evenly matched.
Neck of the woods	A particular area or location.
Needle in a haystack	Something that is difficult to find or locate.
Nest egg	A sum of money saved for a specific purpose.
New blood	New people or fresh ideas.
New kid on the block	A newcomer or someone who is not experienced.
New lease on life	A new opportunity or a renewed sense of energy and purpose.
Next to nothing	Almost nothing or a very small amount.

Night owl	A person who stays up late and is active at night.
Nine lives	To have a lot of luck or be able to survive difficult situations.
Nip and tuck	Very close or evenly matched.
Nip in the bud	To stop something before it becomes a bigger problem.
No brainer	An obvious decision or choice.
No holds barred	Unrestricted or uncontrolled.
No love lost	To have no affection or respect for someone.
No room to swing a cat	Very small, not big enough
No skin off my nose	Something that does not affect or concern someone.
No stone unturned	To leave no possibility unexplored.
Nose to the grindstone	Working hard and consistently.
Not all it's cracked up to be	Not as good as it is claimed to be.
Not cut out for	Not suited or qualified for something.
Not in the same league	Not as good or competent as someone else.
Not miss a beat	To not miss an opportunity or not show any signs of slowing down.
Not my cup of tea	Not something that someone enjoys or is interested in.
Not playing with a full deck	Not being mentally capable or sane.
Not the sharpest tool in the shed	Not the most intelligent or perceptive person.
Not up to snuff	Not meeting the required standard or expectations.
Not worth the paper it's written on	Not worth considering or valuable.
Nowhere to be found	Not able to be located.
No win situation	A situation where there is no possibility of success.
Nutty as a fruit cake	Someone who is a bit crazy
Oddball	A weirdo or a strange person

Off one's rocker	Crazy, nuts, insane
Off the beaten path	In a less traveled or usual place.
Off the cuff	Without preparation or thought.
Off the hook	No longer responsible or accountable for something.
Off the record	Not meant to be shared or repeated.
Off the top of your head	Without thinking or hesitation.
On cloud nine	Blissfully happy
On the ball	Prepared, alert, competent
On the fence	Undecided between two choices
On the ropes	In a difficult or disadvantaged position.
On the same page	In agreement or understanding.
On the spot	To be required to do something immediately or to be placed in an embarrassing or difficult situation.
On the verge of	Close to achieving or experiencing something.
On thin ice	In a risky or precarious situation.
On your high horse	Superior or arrogant position
Once bitten twice shy	Said when you are frightened to do something again because you had an unpleasant experience doing it the first time
Once in a blue moon	Very rarely or almost never.
Out of left field	Unexpected or unrelated.
Out of sorts	Slightly ill, not feeling well
Out of the frying pan and into the fire	Moving from one difficult situation to another.
Over the hill/ Old as the hill	Someone who is very old
Out of pocket	Not available or unable to be reached.
Out of the woods	Out of a difficult or dangerous situation.
Over the top	Excessive or exaggerated.
Oxygen thief	A person who takes up more than their share of resources or attention.

Out of the ordinary	Unusual or unexpected.
Packed to the rafters	Very crowded or full.
Paddle one's own canoe	To be able to act independently
Paint the town red	To have a wild and fun time.
Pass the buck	To avoid responsibility or blame by shifting it to someone else.
Pass with flying colors	To succeed or do very well.
Passing fancy	A temporary interest or attraction
Peanut gallery	A group of people who criticize or offer unwanted advice.
Peas in the pod	People who are close
Penny pincher	A person who is very thrifty or cheap.
Perfect storm	Rare and powerful combination of events or factors.
Pie in the sky	Something you hope will happen, but is very likely
Piggy bank	A container used to save money.
Pile it on	To add or do more than necessary.
Pillar of the community	A respected and influential member of a community.
Play your cards close to your chest	To keep your plans or intentions secret.
Play your cards right	To do something in the most advantageous way.
Point with pride	To be proud of something.
Poke your nose into	To intrude or interfere in something.
Pop the question	To propose marriage.
Pull out all the stops	To use all available resources or do everything possible.
Pull the plug	To end or cancel something.
Pull the wool over someone's eyes	To deceive or mislead someone.
Pull your weight	To contribute equally to a group effort.
Punch above your weight	To perform or succeed beyond what is expected or typical.

Push the envelope	To challenge or test the limits.
Put the cart before the horse	To do things out of the proper order
Put two and two together	To understand or figure out something from the available information.
Put your foot in your mouth	To say something inappropriate or embarrassing.
Put your money where your mouth is	To prove your commitment or belief through action.
Put your nose to the grindstone	To work hard and consistently.
Quick on the draw	Able to react quickly or make decisions quickly.
Quit cold turkey	To stop something abruptly and completely.
Queer the pitch	To ruin or spoil something.
Question mark	A person or thing that is uncertain or unknown.
Quid pro quo	A favor or advantage given in return for something.
Rain cats and dogs	Rain very heavily
Rain check	To postpone or reschedule something for a later time.
Raise the bar	To set a higher standard or expectation.
Red herring	Something that distracts or misleads from the main issue.
Ride shotgun	To sit in the front passenger seat of a vehicle.
Right as rain	In good health or working correctly.
Ring a bell	To be familiar or remind someone of something.
Rise and shine	To wake up and start the day.
Rome wasn't built in a day	A project or task will take time to complete.
Rub the wrong way	To annoy or irritate someone.
Rule of thumb	A general guideline or principle.
Seeing is believing	You need to experience something to truly believe it
Sell like hotcakes	To sell quickly or in large quantities
Sell oneself short	To underestimate one's own abilities or worth

Shake a leg	To hurry up or move quickly
Shape up or ship out	To improve one's performance or face being fired
Shoot for the moon	To aim for an ambitious goal
Shoot the breeze	To have a casual conversation
Show one's true colors	To reveal one's true nature or character
Sitting on the fence	To remain neutral or indecisive
Skin of one's teeth	By a very narrow margin
Smart cookie	A person who is very intelligent
Smell a rat	To suspect something is wrong
Sowing one's wild oats	To engage in youthful misbehavior or recklessness
Spill the beans	To reveal a secret
Spinning one's wheels	To make no progress
Spit it out	Say what you're trying to say
Stand on ceremony	To adhere to formal etiquette or protocol
Stick in one's craw	To irritate or annoy someone
Stick one's nose in	To intrude or interfere where not wanted
Stick to one's guns	To remain firm in one's beliefs or actions
Still waters run deep	A person who is quiet and unassuming may have hidden depths
Straight from the horse's mouth	Information received directly from the source
Swing for the fences	To make a bold, all-out effort to achieve something.
Sweating bullets	To be extremely nervous or anxious
Swimming against the tide	To act in opposition to the majority or the norm
Sweeten the pot	To make an offer more attractive or enticing
Take for a ride	To cheat or deceive someone
Take it easy	Don't hurry, relax, don't get angry
Take it with a grain of salt	To not take something too seriously or to view it with skepticism
Take the bull by the horns	To face a problem or challenge head on
Take the cake	To be the best or most impressive of its kind

Take the plunge	To take a risk or make a big commitment
Take the wind out of one's sails	To dampen or discourage someone's enthusiasm or confidence
Talk the talk	To speak confidently or knowledgeably about a subject
Taste of one's own medicine	To experience something that one has inflicted on others
Tears of a clown	To hide one's true emotions behind a facade of cheerfulness
The ball is in your court	It's now the other person's turn to act or make a decision
The whole nine yards	Everything that is possible or needed
The writing is on the wall	An indication of an impending event or outcome
Third time's the charm	Success may be achieved after two previous failures
Through the grapevine	The informal spreading, gossip, or rumors
Throw in the towel	To give up or quit
Throw under the bus	To sacrifice or betray someone for one's own benefit
Tie the knot	To get married
Tip of the iceberg	Only a small portion of something much larger
To kill 2 birds with 1 stone	To solve 2 problems at once with 1 action.
Toe the line	To conform to a rule or standard
Top banana	A boss
Touch and go	Uncertain or risky
Turn over a new leaf	To reform oneself and make a fresh start
Under the impression	Believing something, perhaps mistakenly
Uncharted territory	A situation or area that is unfamiliar or not well known.
Under the gun	Under pressure or in a difficult situation.
Under wraps	Kept secret or hidden.
Up for grabs	Available to be taken or won.
Up in arms	Angry and protesting.
Up the ante	To increase the stakes or level of competition.

Up to par	Meeting the expected or required standards.
Uphill battle	A struggle that is difficult to win.
Use your head	To think before acting.
Vanquish the enemy	To defeat or overcome an opponent.
Venture into unknown territory	To try something new and uncertain.
Venture off the beaten path	To take a different and less travelled route
Vested interest	A specific stake or involvement in something.
Vexed to no end	Extremely annoyed or frustrated.
Vicious cycle	A pattern of behavior that repeats itself and causes more harm than good.
Voice of reason	Someone who is rational and provides good advice.
Vying for attention	Competing for recognition or acknowledgment.
Yarn spinning	Tell a tall tale or story that is not true.
Yearning for	Having a strong desire for something
Yellow-bellied	Refers to a coward or a person who is afraid to take action.
You can't have your cake and eat it too	You can't have it all. if you want something you have to give up something else.
You can't make an omelet without breaking eggs	You can't achieve a goal without facing some challenges or sacrifices along the way.
You scratch my back, I'll scratch yours	A reciprocal agreement to help or benefit each other.
Young at heart	Having a youthful outlook, regardless of age
Your heart sinks	Feel very unhappy and despondent
You're in hot water	You're in trouble or in a difficult situation
You're on thin ice	You are in a dangerous or risky situation
You've met your match	You've come across someone who is your equal in terms of skill, ability, or determination.