

# 100 American English Idiomatic Expressions

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# Idiom	Simple ESL Definition
1. A blessing in disguise	Something that seems bad at first but turns out to be good.
2. A dime a dozen	Very common and easy to find.
3. A piece of cake	Very easy to do.
4. Add fuel to the fire	Make a bad situation worse.
5. All bark and no bite	Threatens but never takes action.
6. All ears	Listening very carefully.
7. Apple of my eye	Someone very special or loved.
8. At the drop of a hat	Immediately; without delay.
9. Back to square one	Start again from the beginning.
10. Ball is in your court	It is your decision or responsibility now.
11. Barking up the wrong tree	Accusing or blaming the wrong person.
12. Beat around the bush	Avoid saying the main point.
13. Bend over backwards	Try very hard to help someone.
14. Bite the bullet	Accept something difficult or unpleasant.
15. Break the ice	Start a conversation in a social situation.
16. Burn bridges	Damage a relationship so it cannot be fixed.
17. Burn the midnight oil	Work late into the night.
18. Call it a day	Stop working for today.
19. Caught red-handed	Caught while doing something wrong.
20. Chew the fat	Chat casually.
21. Cold feet	Suddenly become nervous about doing something.
22. Costs an arm and a leg	Very expensive.
23. Cry over spilled milk	Be upset about something that cannot be changed.
24. Curiosity killed the cat	Being too curious can cause trouble.
25. Cut corners	Do something cheaply or poorly to save time or money.
26. Dead ringer	Someone or something that looks exactly like another.
27. Devil's advocate	Argue the opposite side for discussion.
28. Do a 180	Change your opinion or direction completely.
29. Don't cry wolf	Do not give false alarms.
30. Double-edged sword	Something with both good and bad results.

31. Down to earth	Practical and realistic.
32. Driving me nuts	Making me very annoyed.
33. Drop the ball	Fail to do something important.
34. Easier said than done	More difficult than it sounds.
35. Easy does it	Slow down and be careful.
36. Elbow grease	Hard physical effort.
37. Every cloud has a silver lining	There is something good in every bad situation.
38. Face the music	Accept the consequences of your actions.
39. Fall through the cracks	Be forgotten or overlooked.
40. Fit as a fiddle	Very healthy and strong.
41. Flash in the pan	Something that becomes popular quickly but doesn't last.
42. Follow suit	Do the same thing others are doing.
43. Food for thought	Something to think about.
44. Fool's gold	Something that looks valuable but is not.
45. Get your act together	Improve your behavior or performance.
46. Give someone the cold shoulder	Ignore someone deliberately.
47. Go down in flames	Fail badly.
48. Go the extra mile	Do more than expected.
49. Grass is always greener on the other side	Other situations seem better than our own.
50. Gut feeling	An instinctive feeling without evidence.
51. Hang in there	Stay strong during a difficult time.
52. High on the hog	Living very comfortably.
53. Hit the nail on the head	Describe exactly what is causing a situation.
54. Hit the sack	Go to bed.
55. Hitting the books	Studying seriously.
56. Hold your horses	Wait a moment.
57. Icing on the cake	An extra good thing added to something good.
58. In a pickle	In a difficult situation.
59. In hot water	In trouble.
60. In the nick of time	Just in time.
61. It takes two to tango	Both people are responsible.
62. Jack of all trades	Someone who can do many things.
63. Jump on the bandwagon	Follow a trend because it is popular.
64. Jump the gun	Start something too early.
65. Keep it under wraps	Keep something secret.

66. Keep your chin up	Stay positive during difficulty.
67. Kick the bucket	Die (informal).
68. Kill two birds with one stone	Solve two problems with one action.
69. Leave no stone unturned	Try every possible option.
70. Let the cat out of the bag	Reveal a secret.
71. Like two peas in a pod	Very similar.
72. Live and learn	You learn from experience.
73. Make a mountain out of a molehill	Make a small problem seem big.
74. Mind your Ps and Qs	Be careful about your behavior.
75. Miss the boat	Miss an opportunity.
76. Mum's the word	Keep it secret.
77. No pain, no gain	Hard work is required for success.
78. Not a spark of decency	Having no kindness or morality.
79. Not playing with a full deck	Not very intelligent.
80. Off the hook	Free from responsibility or trouble.
81. On the ball	Alert and competent.
82. Once in a blue moon	Very rarely.
83. Out of the frying pan into the fire	From a bad situation to a worse one.
84. Penny for your thoughts	What are you thinking about?
85. Pulling someone's leg	Joking or teasing.
86. Put your foot in your mouth	Say something embarrassing.
87. Quick on the draw	Very fast to react.
88. Raining cats and dogs	Raining very heavily.
89. Read between the lines	Understand the hidden meaning.
90. Rome wasn't built in a day	Important work takes time.
91. Shoot for the stars	Aim for very high goals.
92. Sink or swim	Fail or succeed by your own effort.
93. Skeleton in the closet	A hidden and embarrassing secret.
94. Spill the beans	Reveal secret information.
95. Take it with a grain of salt	Do not take something too seriously.
96. The best of both worlds	Enjoy advantages of two situations.
97. Through thick and thin	Support someone in good and bad times.
98. Throw in the towel	Give up.
99. Under the weather	Feeling sick.
100. Up in the air	Not yet decided.