

365

American English

Idioms

an idiom a day

by Michael DiGiacomo



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by Michael DiGiacomo, MBA

Paperback Edition

Published in New York, USA
January 2014

To Gloria...thanks for editing

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ISBN: 978-0-9915079-0-0

A Message From Michael

Thank you for purchasing 365 American English Idioms. My name is Michael DiGiacomo, and I am a native New Yorker. I have been helping language students learn English since the early 1990's. I began my formal language-teaching career in Sendai, Japan in 1994. Since then, I have worked in the ESL field as an instructor, a teacher trainer, an academic director, and a language school director. In 2004, I earned an MBA in Global Management. Now, I am the owner of Happy English, an English tutoring company in New York City. I teach students from all over the world here in New York, and online in their country.

I believe that language study should be both enjoyable and practical. In 2010 I started a website to provide a variety of English lessons to students all over the world. I set out to create lessons that were practical, easy to understand, and useful for self-study. Many of my students have given me ideas and suggestions for lessons and this book grew out of some of those ideas.

You can find my website at **www.myhappyenglish.com**

Idioms are commonly used in everyday, conversational English. Using idioms in your conversation will make your English more colorful and interesting. I encourage you to study the lessons in this book, and begin using these idioms in your conversations today! You will sound more natural when you do so.

Please note that this book use American English idioms and American English spelling.

As always, thanks for studying with me.

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Key Points About Idioms

An idiom is a group of words that go together as a set phrase. It is usually not possible to guess the meaning of the phrase because the meaning of the phrase itself is generally quite different from the meaning of the words used in the phrase.

For example, let's look at the idiom **a pain in the neck**. Looking at the words literally, the phrase **a pain in the neck** seems to mean a kind of medical problem. Let's see this idiom in use:

Renewing my driver's license was **a pain in the neck**. I had to take time from work, because the office is not open on the weekend. Then, I needed to wait for almost three hours there!

Can you guess the meaning of **a pain in the neck** from this example? It is not a medical problem... **A pain in the neck** means "bothersome" or "inconvenient."

In this book, I am going to teach you 365 idioms. That's an idiom a day. I suggest you study and memorize one idiom every day. The best way to memorize the idioms here, or to memorize any vocabulary, is use that idiom in a sentence that is true in your life. So for example, if renewing a driver's license is **a pain in the neck** where you live, just memorize the sentence I wrote above. Otherwise, try to think of another situation (or person) that is "bothersome" or "inconvenient" for you and create your own sentence.

Good luck, and thanks for studying with me!

1: a cup of joe

How to use it:

- You can buy, drink, make, etc. a cup of joe.

Explanation:

- Joe is a slang word for coffee and so a cup of joe means a cup of coffee.

Example:

- I like to start my day with a cup of joe.

2: a dime a dozen

How to use it:

- [something] is a dime a dozen

Explanation:

- A dozen means twelve, and a dime is a ten-cent coin, so a dime a dozen literally means twelve costs ten cents. So if something costs a dime a dozen, it is inexpensive or easy to find.

Example:

- Hot dog carts are a dime a dozen on the streets of NYC.

3: a pain in the neck

How to use it:

- [something] or [someone] is a pain in the neck

Explanation:

- Something that is a pain in the neck is troublesome and inconvenient.

Example:

- Tom is a pain in the neck. He borrows my tools but never returns them on time.

4: a piece of cake

How to use it:

- [something] is a piece of cake

Explanation:

- Something that is a piece of cake is easy to do.

Example:

- Using computers is a piece of cake for me.

5: a pipe dream

How to use it:

- [something] is a pipe dream

Explanation:

- A pipe dream is something unrealistic that you wish for or wish to do.

Example:

- I know sailing a yacht in the South Pacific is a pipe dream, but someday I hope to do it!

6: a screw up

How to use it:

- [someone] is a screw up

Explanation:

- A screw up is a person who often makes careless mistakes, generally because they are not paying attention to what they are doing or because they are incompetent.

Example:

- I hear Tom was fired because he is a screw up.

7: absent-minded

How to use it:

- [someone] is absent-minded

Explanation:

- Someone who is absent-minded easily forgets things.

Example:

- Jack forgot his wife's birthday. He's so absent-minded.

8: add fuel to the fire

How to use it:

- [something] or [someone] adds fuel to the fire

Explanation:

- Someone who adds fuel to the fire makes a bad situation much worse.

Example:

- Bob added fuel to the fire by yelling at his boss.

9: all heart

How to use it:

- [someone] is all heart

Explanation:

- Someone who is all heart is a very kind person.

Example:

- Ted is all heart, so everyone likes him.

10: all over the map

How to use it:

- [something] or [someone] is all over the map

Explanation:

- Something or someone that is all over the map is very disorganized.

Example:

- The CEO's speech was all over the map.

11: all set

How to use it:

- [something] or [someone] is all set

Explanation:

- Something or someone that is all set is ready.

Example:

- We've prepared well, so I think we are all set for the meeting.

12: all thumbs

How to use it:

- [someone] is all thumbs

Explanation:

- Someone who is all thumbs is very clumsy.

Example:

- Ted said he is all thumbs when it comes to repairing something.

13: an arm and a leg

How to use it:

- [something] costs (or) [someone] pays an arm and a leg

Explanation:

- Something that costs an arm and a leg is very expensive.

Example:

- It costs an arm and a leg to buy beer at a baseball stadium.

14: as quiet as a mouse

How to use it:

- [something] or [someone] is as quiet as a mouse

Explanation:

- Something or someone who is as quiet as a mouse is very quiet.

Example:

- Jen's new boyfriend was as quite as a mouse.

15: as sick as a dog

How to use it:

- [someone] is as sick as a dog

Explanation:

- Someone who is as sick as a dog is very sick.

Example:

- Bob was as sick as a dog because he caught the flu.

16: at the drop of a hat

How to use it:

- [someone] does something at the drop of a hat

Explanation:

- When you do something at the drop of a hat, you do it immediately, without hesitation.

Example:

- I'd marry her at the drop of a hat.

17: back to square one

How to use it:

- [something] or [someone] is back to square one

Explanation:

- When you go back to square one, you start again from the beginning.

Example:

- My boss rejected my work, now it's back to square one.

18: bark is worse than one's bite

How to use it:

- [someone]'s bark is worse than their bite

Explanation:

- Someone whose bark is worse than their bite is not actually as mean or angry as they appear to be.

Example:

- The new boss seems strict, but his bark is worse than his bite.

19: bed head

How to use it:

- [someone] has bed head

Explanation:

- Someone who has bed head has strange looking hair because of the position their head contacted the pillow when they were sleeping.

Example:

- I woke up with bed head this morning.

20: bed of roses

How to use it:

- [something] is a bed of roses

Explanation:

- Something that is a bed of roses is very comfortable.

Example:

- Traveling for business seems glamorous, but is it no bed of roses.