

## IDIOMS AND PHRASES/PROVERBS

The term refers to a set expression or a phrase comprising two or more words. An interesting fact regarding the device is that the expression is not interpreted literally. The phrase is understood as to mean something quite different from what individual words of the phrase would imply. Alternatively, it can be said that the phrase is interpreted in a figurative sense.

We can say that idiom is a word or phrase which means different from its literal meaning. These are common phrases or terms whose meaning are not real, but can be understood by their popular use.

It is very necessary to use idioms properly; otherwise it will bring no sense. Some idioms are only used by some groups of people or at certain times. The idiom shape up or ship out, which is like saying improve your behaviour or leave if you don't, might be said by an employer or supervisor to an employee, but not to other people.

Idioms are made of normal words that have a special meaning known by almost everyone. To learn a language a person needs to learn the words in that language, and how and when to use them. But people also need to learn idioms separately because certain words together or at certain times can have different meanings.

To know the history of an idiom can be useful and interesting, but is not necessary to be able to use the idiom properly. For example most native British English speakers know that "No room to swing a cat" means "there was not a lot of space" and can use the idiom properly, but few know it.

A better understanding of an idiom is that it is a phrase whose meaning cannot be understood from the dictionary definitions of each word taken separately.

### Example

"Every cloud has its silver lining but it is sometimes a little difficult to get it to the mint."

The statement quoted above uses "silver lining" as an idiom which means some auspicious moment is lurking behind the cloud or the difficult time.

### FUNCTIONS OF IDIOM

The purpose behind this vast use of idioms is to ornate their language, make it richer and spicier and help them in conveying subtle meanings to their intended audience.

Not only do idioms help in making the language beautiful, they also make things better or worse through making the expression good or bad. They are at times work exact and more correct than the literal words and sometimes a few words are enough to replace a full sentence. They help the writer make his sense clearer than it is, so that he could convey maximum meanings through minimum words and also keep the multiplicity of the meanings in the text intact. It has also been seen that idioms not only convey subtle meanings but also convey a phenomenon that is not being conveyed through normal and everyday language and also they keep the balance in the communication.

Furthermore, they provide textual coherence, so that the reader could be able to piece together a text that he has gone through and extract meanings the writer has conveyed.

### FOR EXAMPLE:

He cried crocodile tears because he wanted his dad to buy him something.

Just as a crocodile cannot cry, the boy was not crying at all! He was just acting!

People use idioms to make their language richer and more colourful. Idioms and idiomatic expressions can be more precise than the literal words, often using fewer words but saying more.

Some commonly used Idioms:

- Beat back (to compel to retire): The firemen were beaten back by angry flames and the building was reduced to ashes.
- Boil down to (to amount to): His entire argument boiled down to this that he would not join the movement unless he saw some monetary gain in it.
- Cast aside (to reject, to throw aside): Men will cast aside truth and honesty for immediate gains.
- Cry down (to deprecate): Some of the Western powers did their best to cry down India's success in the war.
- To cut off with a shilling (to give someone a mere trifle in the will): The father was so angry with the son over his marriage that he cut him off with a shilling.
- Egg on (to urge on): Who egged you on to fight a professional boxer and get your nose knocked off?
- Gloss over (explain away): Even if you are an important person your faults cannot be glossed over.

- To laugh in one's sleeves (to be secretly amused): While I was solemnly reading my research paper to the audience, my friends were laughing in their sleeves for they knew what it was worth.
- Play off (to set one party against another for one's own advantage): It best serves the interests of the super powers to play off one poor nation against another.
- Pull one through (to recover, to help one recover): Armed with the latest medicines, the doctor will pull him through.
- Cost a slur upon (by word or act to cast a slight reproach on someone): Many a man casts a slur on his own good name with some mean act.
- To catch a Tartar (to encounter a strong adversary): When Hitler marched in to Russia he little knew that he would catch a Tartar in the tough people of that country.
- To come off with flying colours (to come out of a conflict with brilliant success): The 1971 election outcome was uncertain but finally the congress came off with flying colours.
- To come off second best (to be defeated in every contest): Be it an election or a tambola, I have always come off the second best.
- To cut the Gordian knot (to remove a difficulty by bold or unusual measures): The Parliament threw out the Bill for Abolition of Privy Purses. The Government cut the Gordian knot by abolishing the privy purses through an ordinance.
- To fall to one's lot (to become one's fate): It fell to the lot of Mujib and his colleagues to reconstruct the shattered economy of their nation.
- To get into hot water (to get into difficulty): The businessman got into hot water with the Income-tax authorities for concealing his income from ancestral property.
- To give someone the slip (to dodge someone who is looking for you): The police had nearly got the dacoits when the latter gave them the slip in the Chambal ravines.
- To go on a fool's errand (to go on an expedition which leads to a foolish end): Many people earlier believed that going to the moon was like going on a fool's errand.
- To go to the wall (to get the worst in a competition): In the struggle of life, the weakest goes to the wall.
- To go to rack and ruin, to go to the dogs (to be ruined): If a big war comes, our economy will go to the dogs.
- To have one's hands full (to be very busy): Pakistan could hardly expect active help from the U.S.A. as her hands were already full with Vietnam, Laos and West Asia problems.
- To have a bone to pick with one (to have a difference with a person which has not yet been fully expressed): The extreme leftists have a bone to pick with the police and if ever they come to power there may be unpleasantness between the two.
- To have the whip hand of (to have mastery over): After the split in the party Mrs. Gandhi has the whip hand of the Congress.
- To have too many irons in the fire (to have so much work in hand that some part of it is left undone or is done very badly): Let the Government not go in for nationalisation so fast. If they have too many irons in the fire they are bound to fare badly.
- To have the tree or right ring (To be genuine): Nixon's pronouncements on world peace do not have the right ring.
- To have two strings to one's bow (to have an alternative means of achieving one's purpose): A wife always has two strings to her bow if coaxing fails to achieve the desired end; tears succeed.
- To have an axe to grind (have personal interests to serve): Bigger nations supply arms to the smaller ones primarily because they (the bigger nations) have their own axe to grind.
- To keep the wolf from the door (to keep away extreme poverty and hunger): Lakhs in India have to struggle every day to keep the wolf from the door.
- To make short work of (to bring to sudden end): The locusts made short work of the ripe standing corn.
- To make amends for (to compensate for damage): By his kindness today he has made amends for his past insolence.
- To make common cause with (to unite, to co-operate with): During the last elections the princes made a common cause with the rightist parties. Both went down.
- To make a virtue of necessity (to do a very disagreeable thing as though from duty but really because you must do it): When a minister knows that he is going to be booted out of the cabinet he makes a virtue of necessity and resigns on health grounds.
- To make much ado about nothing (make a great fuss about a trifle): Demonstrations and protests over the change in the timing of news bulletins over AIR was making much ado about nothing.
- To make a cat's paw or a tool of someone (to use someone as a means of attaining your object): The super-powers have made a cat's paw of the smaller nations of Asia in their game of power politics.

- To play into the hands of someone (to act as to be of advantage to another) by raising the slogan 'Indira Hatao' the opposition played into her hands and Mrs. Gandhi won the elections hands down (easily).
- To play second fiddle'(to take a subordinate part): With Mrs. Gandhi as the undisputed leader of the Congress and the nation, everyone else was content to play second fiddle to her.
- To put the cart before the horse (to begin at the wrong end to do a thing): Preparing the blue print of a project without the provision of funds is like putting the cart before the horse.
- To put one's shoulder to the wheel (to make great efforts): No amount of foreign aid will pull us out of the economic morass; we have to put our own shoulders to the wheel.
- To set store by (to value highly): India, surely sets much store by the Indo Soviet Treaty of Friendship.
- To set the Thames on fire (to do something extraordinary): He is a steady worker but never likely to set the Thames on fire.
- To set one's house in order (to arrange one's affairs): Let Pakistan set her own house in order before talking of the welfare of the Kashmiris.
- To take into one's head (to occur to someone): The Manager look it into his head that by shutting off the electricity for a few hours daily he could save on refrigeration costs.
- To take the bull by the horns (to grapple with a problem courageously instead of avoiding it): There is no short cut to prosperity. We have to take the bull by the horns and make people work like slaves.
- To take a leap in the dark (to do a hazardous thing without any idea of what it may result in): You took a leap in the dark in going into partnership with that man.
- To throw cold water upon (to discourage something): The doctor threw cold water upon my plans for a world tour by declaring that I could never stand the strain of it.
- To throw up the sponge (to give up a contest): Faced with stiff competition from big companies, many a small company will throw up the sponge.
- To turn over a new leaf (to change one's course of action completely): After a long career of crime the convict suddenly turned over a new leaf and became a model citizen.
- To turn tail (to retreat ignominiously): The enemy turned tail in the face of heavy onslaughts on its key positions.
- To turn the tables (to reverse someone's success or superiority): Pakistan started war with a blitz on our positions but the superior tactics of our Armed Forces soon turned the tables on them.
- To cook or doctor an account (to tamper with or falsify the account): From the balance sheet presented to the shareholders, the company seemed to be flourishing, but it afterwards turned out that the Secretary had cooked the accounts.
- To bear the brunt of (to endure the main force or shock of): The infantry has to bear the brunt of a battle.
- To beard the lion in his den (to oppose someone, in his stronghold): The Indian Army broke through strong Pakistani fortifications, and in the Shakargarh area bearded the lion in his own den.
- To bid fair to (to give fair prospect of): His health is so good that he bids fair to live till he is sixty.
- To blow one's own trumpet (to parade one's own good deeds): Modesty does not pay. Only if you blow your own trumpet, you can succeed.
- To blunt the edge of (to make something less effective): Time blunts the edge of grief.
- To build castles in the air (to indulge in reveries or visionary schemes): There is nothing wrong if you build castles in the air; now put foundations under them.
- To burn the candle at both ends (to use too much energy): Our resources are limited. Let us use them judiciously and not burn the candle at both ends.
- To buy a pig in a poke (to purchase a thing without previously examining it): Buying shares in a new Company started by unknown entrepreneurs is like buying a pig in a poke.
- To cross or pass the Rubicon (to take a decisive step forward): The Government will have to think of many things before nationalising the textile industry for once they cross the Rubicon there will be no going back.
- To cry over spilt milk (to nurse unnecessary regrets): We have failed to build up a sizeable total against England's meagre first innings total. It is no use crying over spilt milk now.
- To err on the safe side (to choose a course which may in fact be inaccurate, but which will keep you safe from risk or harm): In going in for mixed economy rather than wholesale nationalisation the Government were erring on the safe side.
- To flog a dead horse (waste one's energies): We are flogging a dead horse if we are trying to make Sanskrit the national language of India.
- To feather one's nest (to provide for oneself through dishonest means): Many tax collectors make a point of feathering their own nests well while they have opportunity.

- To Eat one's heart out (to brood over one's sorrows or disappointments): Don't eat your heart out over failure in this competition.
- To eat humble pie (to have to humiliate oneself): Since none came to his support he had to eat humble pie and give in to their demands.
- To eat one's words (to retract one's assertions under compulsion): It is hard for a haughty man to have to eat his words.
- To throw down the gauntlet, to take up the gauntlet (to offer or give a challenge, to accept a challenge): It is not for a small country to throw down the gauntlet to the right and the left.
- To run the gauntlet (to undergo severe criticism or ill treatment): Most trend-setting books have to run the gauntlet of the literary critics.
- To burn one's fingers (to get oneself into unexpected trouble): They were happily placed in the woollen industry. But they went in for cosmetics and burnt their fingers.
- To force one's hands (to compel one to do something unwillingly or earlier than he wished to do it): The Government wanted to do all that they could to meet the workers' demands. But the violence by the strikers forced their hands to declare a lockout.
- To haul over the coals (to scold a man, reprove him): If your bad habits become known, you will get hauled over the coals and richly deserve it.
- To let the grass grow under your feet (to be inert and passive to things around): The authorities should listen to students' grievances. By being indifferent they would only let the grass grow under their feet till it will be too late to turn these young people away from the path of violence.
- To put in a nutshell (this is said of a thing which is capable, of, or presented in, brief expression): His conduct is weird. To put in a nutshell he is insane. The explanation of his conduct can be put in a nutshell - he is insane.
- To let loose the dogs of war (to set in motion the destructive forces of war): Pakistan has let loose the dogs of war in Kashmir, through organized terrorism.
- To lord it over someone (to domineer over someone, to act as a lord): The love of power is so strong in human nature, that when a man becomes popular he seeks to lord it over his fellows.
- To mind one's Ps and Qs (to be punctilious): The manager suspects his chief clerk of dishonesty, and if the clerk does not mind his Ps and Qs, he will soon find himself without a job.
- To muster in force (to assemble in large numbers): The citizens mustered in force to welcome their beloved leader.
- To pay one back in one's own coin (to give tit for tat, to retaliate): Howsoever revengeful you may be, unless you are strong enough you cannot pay him back in his own coin.
- To plough a lonely furrow (to work without help or support): In the organised society of today no individual or nation can plough a lonely furrow.
- To poison the ears or mind (to prejudice another person): A judge must not allow anyone to poison his mind against either the plaintiff or the defendant.
- To rest on one's laurels (to rest satisfied with honours already won, and to make no attempt to gain further distinction): Even if he wins the biggest award, a film star will never rest on his laurels. He will try to rise higher and higher.
- To rest on one's oars (to suspend efforts after something has been attained): The agitators have been vigorously at work during the winter, but at present they seem to be resting on their oars.
- To harp on the same string (to keep repeating the same sentiment over and again): This gentleman keeps harping on the same string: he is from Oxford and deserves this and deserves that etc.
- To rise like phoenix from its ashes (the phoenix was a fabulous Arabian bird. It had no mate but when about to die, made a funeral pile of wood and aromatic gums and on it burned itself to ashes. From the ashes a young phoenix was believed to rise): Germany was completely decimated in the Second World War. But she has risen like a phoenix from its ashes.
- To rule the roast or roost (to lord it over others in a party or group): In almost every party there is some overbearing person who tries to rule the roost.
- To run in the same groove (to move forward on the same path, to advance in harmony): It is clear that the ideas of both reformers run in the same groove.
- To run in the blood (a peculiarity which clings to certain families): Snobbery runs in the blood of the Englishmen.
- To scatter to the winds (to waste, to scatter abroad): We have scattered to the winds what we had gained by our independence.
- To be on the right scent (to be on the right track): The customs have decided to patrol the Kerala seas to nab smugglers from Dubai. They are on the right scent (Its opposite is to be on the wrong scent or wrong track)

- To see how the wind blows (to observe what influence, favourable or adverse, is likely to affect the existing state of things): In party-politics people sitting on the fence keep on watching how the wind is blowing before deciding on their options.
- To see a thing through coloured glasses (to regard something favourably because of one's prejudice): Pakistan has for long looked at India through coloured glasses and never trusted even the most genuine gestures for peace. (The world is a place of strife and one should not see it through coloured glasses.)
- To show the white feather (to show signs of cowardice): The agitators shouted and gesticulated but the moment the police appeared on the scene they seemed to show the white feather.
- To sow broadcast (to scatter widely or without stint): The emissaries of the banished king were sowing sedition broadcast.
- To split hairs (to make subtle and useless distinctions): As the drought played havoc in Bihar, the authorities were busy splitting hairs trying to decide whether it was 'scarcity conditions' or famine.
- To steal a march (to gain an advantage over another stealthily): While we were still debating the desirability of joint ventures with foreign concerns, Singapore and Malaysia stole a march over us and opened their gates to foreign investment in a big way.
- To steer clear of (to avoid): India decided on non-alignment to steer clear of the hazards of alignment with one block or the other.
- To stick at nothing (the phrase implies readiness to stoop to baseness or deception to reach one's end): An ambitious politician will stick at nothing if he can only serve himself.
- To strain every nerve (to use one's utmost efforts): We have to strain every nerve to get over the poverty line.
- To strike while the iron is hot (to take advantage of the opportunity when it arises): If you want to succeed in life, you must strike the iron while it is hot. In going in for general elections immediately after the war, the Congress struck while the iron was hot.
- To swallow the bait (to catch others by guile, by offering them large promises): The candidate offered the people everything on earth and in the heavens if selected. The people swallowed the bait and elected him.
- To talk shop (to use the phrases peculiar to one's circumstances): Except for the undertakers, people of the same professions always talk shop at parties.
- To tie one's hands (to restrain one from action): The Government's hands are already tied with problem plants. It would not like to go in for nationalisation in a big way.
- To tread on the heels of (follow close behind): Famine treads on the heels of drought.
- To fish in troubled waters (to make personal profit out of a disturbance): The super powers are there in West Asia to fish in troubled waters.
- To pour oil on troubled waters (to say or do anything which soothes and calms angry passions): The government poured oil on troubled waters by announcing a judicial enquiry into the firing.
- To win or gain laurels or to bear away palm (to achieve success in a contest): The Indian Cricket Team won laurels on two successive occasions once in West Indies and then in England.
- To worship the rising sun (to pay respect to the man who is rising in power the influence): The newly appointed manager has taken over and his clerks worship the rising sun.
- Argus-eyed (jealously watchful): The husband of a pretty wife has got to be Argus-eyed.
- Aegean stables: (to clean Aegean stables, To correct a great abuse, from the stables of king Agues of Greece, whose stables had not been cleaned for thirty years): The law against prostitution has cleaned no Aegean stables; it has merely pushed it underground.
- Backstairs influence (influence exerted secretly and in a fashion not legitimate): The moneyed people do exercise backstairs influence on Parliament.
- Bad blood: (active enmity): There has been bad blood between India and Pakistan since 1947.
- A bone of contention: (subject of dispute): Kashmir continues to be a bone of contention between India and Pakistan since 1947.
- A bosom friend (A very intimate and trusted friend): Bosom friends never betray one another.
- A bull in a China shop: (Someone who destroys everything at the same time he happens to be in): The plainsmen proved to be a bull in a China shop in the hills, ruining the hill people in all ways.
- A close shave: (a narrow escape from collision accident): The bus had a close shave as its driver swerved to the right a split second before the oncoming truck could run into it.
- A cold comfort: (something calculated to cause pain or irritation): The promise of a better future is only cold comfort to the frustrated youth of today.

- A dog in the manger policy: (said of a person who cannot himself use what another wants, and yet will not let that other have it): The affluent nations are a dog-in-the manger, destroying what they can't use themselves than giving it to the poor nations of Asia and Africa.
- Elbow room: (opportunity for freedom of action): Only give him elbowroom and he will succeed.
- A fair-weather Friend: (one who deserts you in difficulties): A fair-weather friend disappears the moment your money disappears.
- French leave: (absence without permission.) He went on French leave and was summoned by the direction the next day he went to office.
- Good offices: (recommendation): One can get a good job only through the good offices of someone in power.
- A Good Samaritan: (one who befriends a stranger or a friendless person): Centuries ago, India played a Good Samaritan to the hapless Parsees fleeing their native land.
- The green-eyed monster: (jealousy): The green-eyed monster strikes a woman the moment she sees her husband talking to a pretty woman.
- A Herculean task (a job requiring great efforts): Eradication of poverty is a Herculean task requiring the collective efforts of the entire country.
- Lynch Law: (the practice of punishing people where the punishment is inflicted by unauthorised persons and without judicial trial): Mob law denotes the same thing when carried out by a mob. In African countries they often resort to lynch laws.
- A maiden speech (the first speech of a new member in a public body as in Town Hall or in Parliament): Amitabh's maiden speech was very impressive.
- A nine day's wonder (a fascinating but temporary phenomenon): Beauty is, proverbially, a nine day's wonder.
- An open question: (a matter for discussion and not yet decided): As far as India is concerned, Kashmir is no longer an open question.
- A red-letter day: (an auspicious, fortunate or important day): The 26th January, 1950 is a red-letter day in India's history.
- Scot-free: (exempt from payment, unhurt, safe): Because he had influential connections, the culprit went scot-free.
- A sheet anchor: (the chief safety, the last refuge for safety): One's faith in God is one's sheet anchor in times of stress and strain.
- Tall Talk: (boastful language): If we have no real accomplishments, we indulge in tall talk to delude ourselves and others too.
- A white elephant (an unprofitable possession): The upper Houses are white elephants and should be abolished.
- A white lie: (an evasion, a harmless and non-malicious untruth): Professional members often indulge in white lies.
- A wild goose chase (a foolish, wild, unprofitable adventure): Attempts towards stabilisation of prices in a developing economy, is a wild goose chase.
- An apple of discord: (a subject of envy and strife): Kashmir continues to be the apple of discord between India and Pakistan.
- Cock and bull story (a silly improbable story): That India wanted to break up West Pakistan was a cock and bull story published by the U.S.A.
- A fish out of water: (a person in uncomfortable surroundings): An Indian may earn tons of money in the Western countries, but he will always feel like a fish out of water there.
- The gift of the gab: (fluency of speech): The gift of the gab combined with a slight cunning makes for a successful politician.
- Lion's share: (an unfairly large share): The big nations continue to have the lion's share of world trade.
- A mare's nest: (a discovery that turns out to be false or worthless): There was much fanfare about the solar cooker. Later it turned out to be a mare's nest.
- The milk of human kindness: (kindly feelings a phrase used by Shakespeare.): With all their poverty, Indians do not lack the milk of human kindness.
- Penelope's web: (a work which seems to be going on and yet never comes to an end.): A housewife's chores are a Penelope's web.
- The pros and cons of a question: (arguments for and against a thing) they discussed the pros and cons of the matter before taking a decision.
- The skin of one's teeth: (a phrase used when one escapes losing everything except life.): The storm broke up the ship but the. Sailors escaped by the skin of their teeth.
- A snake in the grass: (a secret foe.): China has certainly been a snake in the grass for India. Even in the heyday of Hindi Chini bhai-bhai, she was quietly devouring bits of our territory.

- A stone's throw: (very near.): The Taj Hotel is at a stone's throw from the Gateway of India.
- All moonshine: (foolish, idle, untrue statement.): The talk about welfare of the poor is all moonshine.
- Behind the scenes: (of a person having secret or private information and influence): The dismissed Secretary, having been behind the scenes, has made some strange revelations as to the way in which the business is managed.
- Between two fires: (assailed or shot at from two sides): A man, arbitrating between the mother and wife, is to be between the two fires, for his decisions can rarely please both.
- In a body: (together) the striking workers went in a body to the Manager to present their demands.
- Wide off the mark or beside the mark: (irrelevant): 'Beside the mark reasoning or argument'.
- Cheek by jowl: (in the same position): There was a lawyer who never had a client cheek by jowl with a doctor who never had a patient.
- Out at elbows: (destitute): The rising prices and the new taxes may soon see most of us out at elbow Part and Parcel: (integral part of a society, community etc.) Some customs and traditions are a part and parcel of Indian culture.
- A storm in a tea cup: (a great fuss about a trifle): The crackers fired by Diwali revellers caused a storm in the tea cup when minority communities thought it to be a bomb attack by the other community.
- A fly in the ointment: (a trifling circumstance which mars enjoyment): It was a wonderful picnic, the only fly in the ointment being the absence of shady trees at the picnic spot.
- Not worth his salt: (good for nothing): A soldier who shivers at the boom of guns is not worth his salt.
- With a pinch of salt: (to take a statement with a grain of salt is to feel some doubt whether it is altogether true): Shaw's claim of having remained a celibate even after marriage has to be taken with a pinch of salt.
- Null and void: (Invalid, valueless, no longer in force): The court declared the appointment to be null and void.
- To keep posted: (to make someone well acquainted with): Please keep me posted on the matter.
- To be worth its weight in gold: (extremely valuable): In the desert a bottle of water is often worth its weight in gold.
- To be Greek or double Dutch to one: (unintelligible): He spoke so fast that all he said was double Dutch to the audience.
- To be within an ace of (to be very nearly): He was within an ace of being shot.
- To be at the beck and call: (to be always ready to serve): You must not expect me to be at your beck and call, I have my own business to attend to.
- To be at daggers drawn: (in bitter enmity): With every passing year the hostility between the Arabs and the Israelis has grown more bitter. They have always been at daggers drawn.
- To be at sea: (confused, uncertain of mind): I am quite at sea in Mathematics.
- To be at one's wits end: (perplexed): With the master shouting from the bathroom and the mistress from the kitchen the servant was at his wits end as to whom to attend first.
- To be in one's element: (to be in agreeable company or work): Shaw is in his element when he is writing about the social ills of his time.
- To be on wane: (to be on the decline): After the Second World War, the British Empire was on the wane.
- To be on the carpet: (to be summoned to one's employer's room for reprimand): The unpunctual clerk was repeatedly on the carpet.
- To be on the last legs: (about to collapse): With science dominating life more and more, religion seems to be on its last legs.
- Chip of the old block (a son who is very like his father): The younger Nawab of Pataudi has proved to be a chip of the old block. He is as good a batsman as his father.
- To bring under the hammer: to sell it by auction. If a person goes insolvent, his creditors will bring everything that he owns under the hammer to recover their money.
- To pay one's way: (not get into debt): While at college, he paid his way by working as a newspaper vendor.
- To strike one's flag or colours or to show the white flag: to surrender.
- To weather the storm: (to come out of a crisis successfully): In a crisis it is unity which helps a nation to weather the storm.
- To sail before the -wind: (to go in the direction towards in which the wind is blowing): An opportunist is he who sails before the wind (Its opposite is to sail close to the wind i.e. to break a law or principle).
- To be in the same boat (To be equally exposed with a person to risk or misfortune): In a nuclear war, the rich and the poor nations will be in the same boat. None will be able to protect themselves.
- To sail under false colours: (To pretend to be what one is not, to try to deceive): In our blessed country, a smuggler sailing under the false colours of a socialist will never be exposed.

- To take the wind out of one's sails: (Frustrating him by anticipating his arguments, take away his advantage suddenly): Before the U.S. could spread the canard about India's intention to destroy West Pakistan after "capturing" Bangladesh, India took the wind out of their sails by declaring a unilateral cease-fire.
- Game is not worth the candle: (The advantage or enjoyment to be gained is not worth the time spent in gaining it) Journey to the moon is an elaborate and costly affair and some people with a pragmatic approach feel the game is not worth the candle.
- Not fit to hold a candle to: (One is inferior): For all his pious platitudes and political stunts, Mr. Nixon is not fit to hold a candle to Lincoln or Roosevelt.
- Hope springs eternal in the human breast: one never loses hope.
- Fools rush in where angels fear to tread: said of reckless persons.
- He who pays the piper calls the tune: One has to act according to the wishes of one's master
- You cannot make a silk purse out of a sow's ear: said of something impossible.
- A bird in hand is worth two in the bush: right use of the present opportunity.
- One man's meat is another man's poison: what is good for one may be harmful for another person.
- Out of the frying pan into the fire: From one trouble to another.
- The last straw breaks the camel's back: The smallest addition to an already heavy task makes it intolerable.
- Distance lends enchantment to the old. Things look nice and beautiful when they are not within reach.
- Render unto Caesar what is Caesar's. To be wise.
- Look before you leap: Don't be reckless and impulsive.
- Make hay while the sun shines: To make/ill use of the given opportunity.
- Never look a gift horse in the mouth: There can be no choice about things given in charity.
- Beggars can't be choosers. No choice in scarcity.
- Nearer the Church, farther from heaven: The more opportunity you have, the less you benefit from it.
- Every cockfights best on his own dunghill: One is very brave and confident in one's own place.
- A rolling stone gathers no moss. An aimless person cannot succeed Rome was not built in a day: things take time to complete and to mature. One swallow does not make a summer. One person can't do everything.
- Apparel proclaims the man: You judge a man's worth by his clothes.
- To run with the hare, to hunt with the hound. To be insincere to someone.
- Sweet are the uses of adversity. Sufferings are to be welcomed
- Uneasy lies the head that wears the crown: With power and authority come worries and responsibilities.

## PHRASES

A phrase is a small group of words that forms a meaningful unit within a clause. There are several different types, as follows:

### NOUN PHRASE

A noun phrase is built around a single noun, for example:

A vase **of roses** stood on the table.

She was reading a book **about the** emancipation **of women**.

### VERB PHRASE

A verb phrase is the verbal part of a clause, for example:

She **had been** living in London.

I **will be** going to college next year.

### ADJECTIVE PHRASE

An adjective phrase is built around an adjective, for example:

He's led a **very** interesting life.

A lot of the kids are **really** keen **on** football.

### ADVERBIAL PHRASE

An adverbial phrase is built round an adverb by adding words before and/or after it, for example:

The economy recovered very slowly.

They wanted to leave the country **as** fast **as possible**.



## PREPOSITIONAL PHRASE

In a prepositional phrase the preposition always comes at the beginning, for example:

I longed to live near **the sea**.

The dog was hiding under **the kitchen table**.

Of course, we also use the word phrase to refer to a short group of words that have a particular meaning when they are used together, such as rain cats and dogs, play for time, or a square meal. This type of phrase is often referred to as an idiom that we already discussed.

## PROVERBS

### WHAT ARE PROVERBS?

Every culture has a collection of wise sayings that offer advice about how to live your life. These sayings are called "proverbs".

It's good to know the really common English proverbs because you hear them come up in conversation all the time. Sometimes people say the entire proverb to give advice to a friend. More often, someone will say just part of a proverb like this:

You know what they say: when the going gets tough...

Proverbs can also give you good example sentences which you can memorise and use as models for building your own sentences.

## GRAMMATICAL STRUCTURES OF PROVERBS

Proverbs in various languages are found with a wide variety of grammatical structures. In English, for example, we find the following structures (in addition to others):

Imperative, negative - Don't beat a dead horse.

- Imperative, positive - Look before you leap.
- Parallel phrases - Garbage in, garbage out.
- Rhetorical question - Is the Pope Catholic?
- Declarative sentence - Birds of a feather flock together.

However, people will often quote only a fraction of a proverb to invoke an entire proverb, e.g., "All is fair" instead of "All is fair in love and war", and "A rolling stone" for "A rolling stone gathers no moss." The grammar of proverbs is not always the typical grammar of the spoken language, often elements are moved around, to achieve rhyme or focus.

## USE IN CONVERSATION

Proverbs are used in conversation by adults more than children, partially because adults have learned more proverbs than children. Also, using proverbs well is a skill that is developed over years. Additionally, children have not mastered the patterns of metaphorical expression that are invoked in proverb use. Proverbs, because they are indirect, allow a speaker to disagree or give advice in a way that may be less offensive.

### Examples

**A bad tree does not yield good apples.**

A bad parent does not raise good children.

**A bad workman blames his tools.**

Blaming the tools for bad workmanship is an excuse for lack of skill.

**A bird in hand is worth two in a bush.**

It is better to keep what you have rather than to risk losing it by searching for something better.

**A broken friendship may be soldered**

Friendships can be rebuilt after a dispute but will never be as but will never be sound, strong as before.

**A burden of one's own choice is not felt.**

Something difficult seems easier when it is done voluntarily.

**A burnt child dreads the fire.**

A bad experience will make people stay away from certain things.

**A cat has nine lives.**

- (1) Cats can survive many accidents because they land on their feet without injury.
- (2) Nine lives = 3 years to play, 3 years to stray, 3 years to stay.

**A chain is no stronger than its weakest link.**

The strength of group depends on each individual member.

**A change is as good as a rest.**

A change in routine is often as refreshing as break or holiday.

**A dry March, a wet April and a cool May fill barn and cellar and bring much hay.**

Harvest predictions are made according to the weather.

**A fault confessed is half redressed.**

Confession is the beginning of forgiveness.

**A flower blooms more than once.**

If you miss an occasion, you can avail yourself of it another time.

**A fool and his money are (soon) easily parted.**

A foolish person usually spends money carelessly.

**A fool at forty is a fool forever.**

If a person hasn't matured by the age of 40, they never will.

**A friend in need is a friend indeed.**

Someone who helps you when you are in trouble is real friend.

**A friend to all is a friend to none.**

Someone who is friend to everyone makes none of them feel special.

**A friend's eye is a good mirror.**

A real friend will tell you the truth.

**A good example is the best sermon.**

Giving a good example is better than giving advice.

**A good beginning makes a good end.**

If a task is carefully planned, there's a better chance that it will be well done.

**A good conscience is a soft pillow.**

You sleep well when you have nothing to be guilty about.

**A guilty conscience needs no accuser.**

If you know that you have done something wrong, you don't need anyone to tell you that you're guilty.

**A hungry belly has no ears.**

A hungry person is totally concentrated on their need for food and nothing else interests them.

**A hungry wolf is fixed to no place**

A desperate person will go from place to place in order to satisfy their needs.

**Early to bed, and early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise.**

It is much better for you to go to bed early and to get up early in the morning;

**(The) early bird catches the worm.**

Act clearly, or before anyone else, if you want to have an advantage or be successful.

**Easier said than done.**

What is suggested sound easy, but it is more difficult to actually do it.

**Facts speak louder than words**

People show what they are really like by what they do, rather than by what they say.

**Failure teaches success.**

People can learn from their failure and be successful later on.

**Fair exchange is no robbery**

Swapping two items of equal value is an honest deal.

**False friends are worse than open enemies.**

It's better to know who your real enemies are rather than trust someone who pretends to be a friend but is capable of stabbing you in the back.

**Half a loaf is better than none**

You should be grateful for something, even if it is not as much as you wanted.

**(A) handful of patience is worth more than a bushel of brains.**

Patience is more precious than intelligence.

**Handsome is what handsome does.**

Behaviour is more important than appearance.

**(A) happy heart is better than a full purse.**

Happiness is better than wealth.

**Hard words break no bones.**

Criticism or verbal attacks may be unpleasant but will not kill anyone.