

# 117 Most Common English Idioms and Phrasal Verbs

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Smashwords Edition

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### 1. **English Idiom:** A Steal

**Meaning:** Costing much less than the actual value

**Examples:**

Jane couldn't wait for Black Friday. She just knew the LCD TV she saw last week would soon be **a steal**.

Adam was on the market for an engagement ring and hoped he would find **a steal**.

Even though the car was **a steal**, Ashley didn't buy it because she didn't know how to drive a manual vehicle.

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## 2. **English Idiom:** Across the Board

**Meaning:** Applying to all members or categories

### **Examples:**

Every employee was nervous after hearing about the **across-the-board** lay-offs. However, they could not say they did not expect it since the company was doing poorly for years now.

Allison wanted to make sure the consensus to change the company's location was **across the board** for all stakeholders.

The **across-the-board** economic stimulus boosted the politician's approval ratings, but only deepened the debt crisis nationwide.

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## 3. **English Idiom:** Address an Issue

**Meaning:** Analyze and start to deal with an issue

### **Examples:**

When politicians make speeches, they are supposed to **address the issues** that people care about most.

If Jack was going to heal from the pain of his past, he needed to **address the issues** that really bothered him.

**Addressing** important **issues** such as foreign policy is a part of any president's job.

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## 4. **English Idiom:** Against the Clock

**Meaning:** Work very fast because of a deadline

### **Examples:**

Jim and Samantha needed to work **against the clock** in order to finish their marketing research project in time.

For Allen to make the deadline of his final paper, he drank five cups of coffee and worked **against the clock**.

Sally didn't want to work through the holidays, so she worked **against the clock** and completed her report before the deadline.

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### 5. **English Idiom:** All Ears

**Meaning:** Giving someone your full attention

### **Examples:**

Amanda was **all ears** when her parents were talking about raising her allowance.

When Conner's friend asked to talk, he was **all ears**. Conner knew something was bothering his buddy.

"Mom, can we talk?" asked Cindy. "I'm **all ears**." said her mom.

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### 6. **English Idiom:** Average Joe

**Meaning:** Ordinary man

### **Examples:**

Steve was your **average joe**, with a nine to five job, a wife and two kids. He, however, considered himself the luckiest man in the world.

The CEO position was not going to your **average joe** - it was going to an extraordinary executive who had tirelessly worked seven days a week to progress the company.

The world is filled with **average joes**. Every single one of them has a story to tell and a lesson to teach.

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7. **English Idiom:** Back Burner

**Meaning:** Giving something low priority

**Examples:**

Jane's plans for her sister's surprise birthday party were put on the **back burner** after her house was robbed.

Frank had to put his vacation plans on the **back burner** after he got laid off from his job.

Arnold wanted to take his kids to the amusement park, but had to put that idea on the **back burner**. The weather was poor and his kids caught a cold.

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8. **English Idiom:** Back to Back

**Meaning:** Directly after one another

**Examples:**

Jane liked watching her favorite show **back to back**.

Lisa read all of her favorite author's books **back to back**.

Adam bought the DVD of the sitcom Friends so that he could watch the episodes **back to back**.

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9. **English Idiom:** Ballpark Figure

**Meaning:** An estimate

**Examples:**

The potential client asked Jamie for a **ballpark figure** on remodeling the entire house.

Before Amanda invested in the company, she requested **ballpark figures** of their income projections for next year.

Joe gave Kyle a **ballpark figure** when Kyle asked how much his wedding was going to cost.

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10. **English Idiom:** Bite Off More Than You Can Chew

**Meaning:** Take on something that is too much to handle

**Examples:**

Mandy realized she **bit off more than she could chew** at the last minute. Now, she was cast in three plays and needed to learn three different roles.

Bill worked two jobs and was always tired. He did not want to admit that he **bit off more than he could chew** because he enjoyed the extra income.

Patty adopted three puppies. As they grew, she realized she **bit off more than she could chew**. The puppies were expensive and required much of her attention.

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11. **English Idiom:** Blink of an Eye

**Meaning:** A very short time

**Examples:**

The tiger pounced on his prey and killed it in the **blink of an eye**.

To Amy, it seemed her children had grown in the **blink of an eye**. Her first born was now getting married and starting her own family.

Will looked back on his college years and realized they had gone by in the **blink of an eye**. He could not believe his old classmates were already planning a reunion.

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12. **English Idiom:** Break the Ice

**Meaning:** Get a conversation started / Getting strangers to start communicating comfortably with one another

**Examples:**

Susan has not seen her siblings in over twenty years. She is wondering how she is going to **break the ice** when they finally sit down together for dinner.

In order to **break the ice**, the professor went around the room full of students and had them introduce themselves to the class.

It never took Ryan long to **break the ice** with strangers since he enjoyed talking to new people.

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### 13. **English Idiom:** Broken Record

**Meaning:** Repeating the same information

**Examples:**

Nelson sounded like a **broken record** when he kept apologizing to his friend for not inviting him to the reunion.

After repeatedly reciting her vocabulary list for the upcoming English test, Anna sounded like a **broken record** to herself.

Peter's parents began to sound like **broken records** whenever he forgot to do his chores. They repeatedly told him not to make a habit out of being lazy because it will hurt him later in life.

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### 14. **English Idiom:** Brush Up On (Something)

**Meaning:** Study something again

**Examples:**

Angela needed to **brush up on** her French before visiting France. She has taken many French courses before, but has not used the language for many years.

After enrolling in an advanced math course, Chad realized he needed to **brush up on** his math skills.

Harry spent one hour a day **brushing up on** his guitar skills. He hadn't played in a while, but had agreed to perform at his friend's birthday party in five months.

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### 15. **English Idiom:** Case by Case

**Meaning:** Each situation is handled uniquely

**Examples:**

Homicides are handled on a **case by case** basis. Each murder is investigated thoroughly and with its own specific suspects.

We handle each report **case by case** - there is no one solution to all of them.

Sally handles all extra expenses for her house on a **case by case** basis. She researches which new additions will boost the value of her home, and then makes a decision for each individual expense.

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16. **English Idiom:** Catch a Cold

**Meaning:** To contract a cold / to get sick

**Examples:**

Lucy **caught a cold** during her visit to Alaska. Her body was not accustomed to such cold weather.

Allen didn't want to **catch a cold** this winter, so he disinfected his whole house.

After Sally **caught a cold**, she didn't get out of bed for 24 hours.

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17. **English Idiom:** Catch Fire

**Meaning:** Ignite

**Examples:**

After a cigarette fell on a jacket, the jacket **caught fire**.

The house **caught fire** when a lit match landed in some lighter fluid.

Firefighters wear special informs to protect them from **catching fire**.

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18. **English Idiom:** Cold Turkey

**Meaning:** To quit something instantly

**Examples:**

Bob quit smoking **cold turkey** five years ago and hasn't picked up a cigarette since.

Amy has a drug addiction. Since she knows she will not be able to quit drugs **cold turkey**, she is

enrolling herself into rehab.

Sally decided to go **cold turkey** with fast food after finding out the actual ingredients in a McDonald's burger.

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19. **English Idiom:** Come in Handy

**Meaning:** Something might be useful

**Examples:**

Mandy figured her old computer would **come in handy** one day, so she never threw it away.

Knowing English **comes in handy** when you are traveling.

Josh never thought his broken chair would ever **come in handy** until he needed its wooden parts to fix a different piece of furniture.

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20. **English Idiom:** Dead Wrong

**Meaning:** Completely incorrect

**Examples:**

Megan thought her final exam was on the 22nd of December. It turns out, she was **dead wrong**. Not only was her final today, but it was also on many topics that Megan had not yet studied.

Joe thought it would be a good idea to stay up all night before Monday. He was obviously **dead wrong**, since on Monday he slept through his alarm and was three hours late for work.

Many ancient cultures believed that the earth was flat. Later in history, scholars realized this assumption was **dead wrong**.

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21. **English Idiom:** Face the Music

**Meaning:** Experience the consequences for something one has done

**Examples:**

Five-year-old Jennifer knew she would have to **face the music** after her mother found out she

had ripped her new cashmere sweater.

Companies that got bailed out by the government during the recession finally **faced the music** when the public demonized their corporations.

Rick knew he was being charged with reckless endangerment after drinking and driving, but he did not want to **face the music**. This gross misdemeanor was an embarrassment to him.

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22. **English Idiom:** Far-fetched

**Meaning:** Not believable

**Examples:**

Dawn's daughter was giving **far-fetched** reasons about why she didn't do her homework last night. One of her reasons was that a dragon flew from the sky and ate her notebook.

When Simon's grandchildren sleep over, he always tells them **far-fetched** stories. They seem to pay attention to those the most.

The idea of being able to befriend a tiger seemed **far-fetched** to Emma until she saw a trained professional do it.

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23. **English Idiom:** Fed Up

**Meaning:** Not willing to deal with a situation any longer out of frustration

**Examples:**

James was **fed up** with the politicians during the debate on TV. He felt most of them were not telling the truth on many important issues.

Sam was tired of his morning commute to work. He was **fed up** with the traffic and was ready to move out of the city.

When Alice shops at the mall during the holiday season, she always gets **fed up** with the long lines at check out.

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24. **English Idiom:** Fish for Compliments

**Meaning:** Attempting to make someone praise you

**Examples:**

Cindy kept complaining about how much weight she put on since her last pregnancy. Since she only gained 5 pounds, her friends thought she was just **fishing for compliments**.

Adam told Nancy that he thought he wasn't an attractive man. Secretly, he was **fishing for compliments**. In the back of his mind he knew Nancy liked him.

Alice always knew when Jennifer was **fishing for compliments** about her hair. Jen would play with her hair in the mirror and complain that her long locks her too much for her to handle.

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25. **English Idiom:** Five O'clock Shadow

**Meaning:** A man's short beard stubble

**Examples:**

Edward's **five o'clock shadow** shows towards the end of the day.

When Will is on vacation, he usually sports a **five o'clock shadow**. Shaving every day is an annoyance to him.

The interviewer did not like the **five o'clock shadow** on the interviewee. He found it lazy and unprofessional.

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26. **English Idiom:** Follow One's Heart

**Meaning:** Act according to one's feelings

**Examples:**

When it came to her career, Nicole **followed her heart** and became an artist.

John was not **following his heart** when he took a job as a waiter. He really desired to be an architect, but lacked the education for this career path.

When it came to love, Susan always **followed her heart**.

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27. **English Idiom:** Freudian Slip

**Meaning:** A mistake made in speech that might have revealed what the person was actually thinking

**Examples:**

Madeline made a **Freudian slip** when she told her husband she wanted the party to be about her. She was trying to tell him that she wanted the party to be about the both of them.

“How’s Anna? Not Anna - I mean, how’s Teresa?” stumbled Ricky. He did not mean to ask Will about his ex-girlfriend. “Looks like you made a **Freudian slip**.” joked Will.

“We should leave - I mean - we should see what everyone else is doing tonight.” said Sam. “Nice **Freudian slip**. You just don’t want to be at your mother’s house.” answered his wife.

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28. **English Idiom:** Go Out of Your Way

**Meaning:** Giving extra effort to do something beyond the requirements

**Examples:**

Jill **went out of her way** to make sure her guests felt comfortable. She bought new bed sheets for their beds, cleaned the entire house, and took a week off from work so she could drive them to their desired destinations.

For their anniversary, Allen really **went out of his way** for his wife. He booked a romantic cruise and found the kids a great babysitter.

“Please don’t **go out of your way** to accommodate us, we are only staying a few hours.” said the guest to her friend, who offered to make her dinner.

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29. **English Idiom:** Go the Extra Mile

**Meaning:** Do more than expected

**Examples:**

Cheryl always **went the extra mile** at work by coming in early and staying late.

For his science project, Sam **went the extra mile** to make sure he got a good grade by paying attention to every detail.

On Valentine's Day, Lisa **went the extra mile** for her boyfriend. She got him tickets to go see his favorite baseball team.

--

30. **English Idiom:** Grab a Bite to Eat

**Meaning:** Get something to eat quickly

**Examples:**

Sam left the building to **grab a bite to eat** before his client came to visit.

"What do you want to do before the movies?" asked Amanda. "Let's **grab a bite to eat.**" responded Ashley.

Before Lucy boarded the plane, she **grabbed a bite to eat**. She hated the food served on airplanes.

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31. **English Idiom:** Have Butterflies in Your Stomach

**Meaning:** A nervousness felt in the stomach; a nervous feeling

**Examples:**

Before Angie goes on stage to perform live, she always **gets butterflies in her stomach**. She feels much better when she finally gets on stage and enjoys performing for the audience.

Ryan **got butterflies in his stomach** when he thought about whether or not he would be accepted to Harvard University. His two sisters had already been accepted, so he felt extra pressure.

Drake wanted to ask Allison on a date, but hated the feeling of **butterflies in his stomach** each time he tried to ask her. He wished she didn't make him so nervous.

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32. **English Idiom:** Have the Upper Hand

**Meaning:** Have control over a situation

**Examples:**

The politician knew he **had the upper hand** when his opponent's marital affair went public.

In poker, every player **wants the upper hand**.

Since Joe's baseball team had the best players this season, he knew they **had the upper hand**.

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33. **English Idiom:** Have Your Head in the Clouds

**Meaning:** Daydreaming

**Examples:**

When Peter noticed Jack staring at the ground instead of raking the leaves, he told him to get his **head out of the clouds** and to start doing some lawn work.

When Megan fell in love, her **head was always in the clouds**. She was constantly thinking about the new person in her life.

The professor never liked when Adam's **head was in the clouds**. He would rather have him working diligently on his assignment.

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34. **English Idiom:** Hooked on Something

**Meaning:** Obsessed with something

**Examples:**

After going to her first rock concert, Emily was **hooked on** rock music.

Joanne was **hooked on** sewing after discovering how fun it was to create her own clothing.

Sam was **hooked on** the cooking channel. He was always learning new recipes from his favorite chefs on TV.

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35. **English Idiom:** If Worst Comes to Worst

**Meaning:** If a bad situation gets worse

**Examples:**

“**If worst comes to worst**, we’ll just swim to shore when the boat starts sinking.” said Ricky after their boat began to tip over.

Cindy and Lisa weren’t sure how they were going to pay back their business loan, but they figured **if worst came to worst**, they could sell their cars and all of their jewelry to pay it back.

James let his debt accumulate so much that he could no longer afford his monthly minimum payments. He feared that **if worst came to worst**, he would be forced to sell his home and all of his belongings to pay it all back.

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### 36. **English Idiom:** In the Long Run

**Meaning:** In a long time

**Examples:**

Sarah knew that **in the long run** she would benefit from a college degree, so she went back to school.

Jake knew working two jobs would be worth it **in the long run** when he finally would be able to pay off his mortgage.

**In the long run**, everyone ends up in the same place - so enjoy your time here!

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### 37. **English Idiom:** In the Same Boat

**Meaning:** To be in a troubling situation with others

**Examples:**

The neighbors did not normally speak to each other, but after the earthquake they realized they were **in the same boat** and needed to help one another.

They are all **in the same boat** - if their company fails, they all lose their jobs.

Matthew and James were both running from the police and knew they were **in the same boat**.

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### 38. **English Idiom:** Learn Something by Heart

**Meaning:** Memorize something

### **Examples:**

Scott **learned** his role for the school play **by heart** and rehearsed every day. He was hoping to get the attention of an acting scout he knew would be in the audience.

Emily had an abnormally good memory. She could **learn** any manual **by heart** and recite each page verbatim.

Adam hated **learning** vocabulary lists **by heart** for school. He never remembered any words after his exams.

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### 39. **English Idiom:** Lend Someone a Hand

**Meaning:** Help someone

### **Examples:**

Ashley **lent** her new neighbor **a hand**. She was just moving in and had a dozen boxes left to carry inside.

Will you **lend** me **a hand** on Sunday? I'm switching apartments and I need someone to help me move.

Susan asked Bill to **lend** her **a hand** with their taxes. They were attempting to do them without an accountant this year.

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### 40. **English Idiom:** Look Forward to Something

**Meaning:** Be excited about something in the future

### **Examples:**

Peter was **looking forward to** the weekend. He had made plans to go camping with his friends and was excited to get away from the city for a while.

Sam was not **looking forward to** the final exam in English class tomorrow. He did not study all semester and had no idea how he was going to review so much material in one day.

Every day, I **look forward to** meeting with my students. They always remind me of why I love teaching English.

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41. **English Idiom:** Lose Touch

**Meaning:** Fail to keep communicating with someone

**Examples:**

Lisa and Patty promised to stay connected after high school, but **lost touch** during college.

Sam **lost touch** with his college buddies after getting married.

Lucy never meant to **lose touch** with her childhood friends, but moving out of her hometown made it harder to stay connected to them.

--

42. **English Idiom:** Lose Your Train of Thought

**Meaning:** Forget what you were talking about

**Examples:**

Linda **lost** her **train of thought** in the middle of her speech. She decided to start a new topic since she could not remember what she was talking about.

During the lecture, the professor **lost** his **train of thought** several times. The students had to remind him of the topic being discussed.

“I just **lost** my **train of thought**.” said Cindy as she struggled to remember the topic of conversation.

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43. **English Idiom:** Make the Bed

**Meaning:** Neatly arrange and smooth out the blanket and bed sheets on a bed

**Examples:**

Every morning, Jane **makes the bed** right after she eats breakfast.

Eight-year-old Johnny could not play video games on Saturday morning until he **made his bed**.

Rick never liked **making the bed** because he thought it was a waste of time - but his wife thought otherwise.

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44. **English Idiom:** Make the Cut

**Meaning:** Meet a certain standard or requirement

**Examples:**

Ronald wasn't sure if he was going to **make the cut** for the basketball team. He was not the best player and the coach didn't seem to like him.

Sam promised himself if he **made the cut** for the school play, he would practice every day for at least three hours outside of official rehearsals.

Amanda was trying to get into an advanced physics class. She didn't know if she **made the cut** yet, but she had a good feeling about it.

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45. **English Idiom:** Mind One's Own Business

**Meaning:** Not be so interested in people's affairs

**Examples:**

Lisa liked to **mind her own business**. She didn't even know her neighbor's name.

In a big city, it is common for everyone to **mind their own business** and have limited conversations with strangers.

Jane was never able to **mind her own business**. She enjoyed gossiping over tea with her girlfriends every Sunday.

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46. **English Idiom:** On Cloud Nine

**Meaning:** Feel extreme happiness

**Examples:**

Robert and Cindy were **on cloud nine** after welcoming their first child into the world.

When Joe found out he had won an award for his theatrical performance, he was **on cloud nine** for days.

Ricky felt as though he was **on cloud nine** during his college graduation ceremony. He was extremely happy to finally be awarded his degree.

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47. **English Idiom:** On the Go

**Meaning:** Regularly busy

**Examples:**

Right before the holidays, people tend to be **on the go** a lot more.

Sally felt as though she was constantly **on the go** in December. She had to buy her siblings gifts on her lunch break all week. She also drove five hours to see her family over the holidays.

Since Charles is always **on the go**, he had to hire someone to cook dinner for his guests that were staying over his house.

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48. **English Idiom:** Once in a Blue Moon

**Meaning:** Happens very rarely

**Examples:**

He only goes out **once in a blue moon**.

I live so far from my family that I only get to see them **once in a blue moon**.

I am surprised to see her at the coffee shop so frequently since she drinks coffee only **once in a blue moon**.

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49. **English Idiom:** People Person

**Meaning:** Someone who enjoys interacting with others

**Examples:**

Amanda considered taking a customer service job. Since she has always been a **people person**, she figured she'd enjoy helping customers.

Peter has never been a **people person**. Whenever guests came to visit his roommate, he would always find an excuse to leave the house.

Since John was such a great **people person**, he had no problem entering the sales department at the local car dealership. He enjoyed helping his clients select the best deal possible.

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50. **English Idiom:** Play it Safe

**Meaning:** Not to take any risk

**Examples:**

No one wins big in Las Vegas by **playing it safe**.

Joe received a job offer from a small and budding company, but he decided to **play it safe** and stayed at his current organization.

Peter's strategy in life was to always **play it safe**. This way, he figured, he would lead a stress-free existence.

--

51. **English Idiom:** Run Out of Something

**Meaning:** Not have any left

**Examples:**

Jane **ran out of** fuel before she could reach the next gas station.

Tina was preparing to bake cookies when she realized she completely **ran out of** sugar a few days ago.

Kevin **ran out of** patience with his five-year-old when he found the broken television and the crayon doodles on the wall.

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52. **English Idiom:** Second Thoughts

**Meaning:** Reconsidering an idea because it does not sound as good any more

**Examples:**

Mary was having **second thoughts** about quitting her job after the recession hit her hometown. How would she find another place to work?

William thought he wanted to move to Florida, but he began having **second thoughts** after the hurricane uprooted the neighboring house.

Sally considered sending her child to a public school down the street, but had **second thoughts** when examining the quality of education her child would receive there.

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### 53. **English Idiom:** Sleep on It

**Meaning:** Wait until the next day to make a decision

#### **Examples:**

Leah was asked to give a speech on her experience as a hurricane victim. She wasn't sure if she was ready to give one, so she decided to **sleep on it**.

When asked whether John had made his decision about taking a job in Alaska, he said he needed more time and would **sleep on it**.

"Are you going to switch apartments this year?" asked Jane. "I haven't decided yet. I need to **sleep on it**." replied Alice.

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### 54. **English Idiom:** Sweep Something under the Rug

**Meaning:** To hide an embarrassing circumstance

#### **Examples:**

When the co-founder of EDE found out his partner was using the organization's donations for personal use, he tried to **sweep it under the rug** in order to save the business's reputation.

Jake tried to **sweep** his criminal record **under the rug** in hopes of landing the CEO position.

The politician tried to **sweep** his lobbyist's money **under the rug**, hoping no one would catch on to his illegal funding.

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### 55. **English Idiom:** Take One's Breath Away

**Meaning:** Overwhelm someone with greatness

**Examples:**

When Adam saw his wife in her new dress, she **took his breath away**. She looked more stunning than she did when he first married her.

The Grand Canyon always **took Maya's breath away**. She loved the view so much that she took a job in Arizona just to be closer to such a grand scenery.

Roger's **breath** was **taken away** when he saw his first show about the universe at a planetarium. He found that outer space really came to life with such a view.

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56. **English Idiom:** Twenty-Four Seven

**Meaning:** Every hour of every day (figuratively or literally)

**Examples:**

When Lucy is traveling for work, she makes sure she is available via phone and email to her daughter **24/7**.

Josh feels like he works **twenty-four seven**. He barely has enough time to do basic things such as eat and sleep.

My website is available to you **twenty-four seven**.

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57. **English Idiom:** Up in the Air

**Meaning:** Uncertain

**Examples:**

The decision about moving to a new house was still **up in the air** for the Jones family.

The winner for best actress was still **up in the air**.

Sally knew she was going to the company party, but it was still **up in the air** as to whether her husband could accompany her.

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58. **English Idiom:** Walk on Eggshells

**Meaning:** Being careful not to offend someone

**Examples:**

Whenever Sally was around Patty, she always **walked on eggshells**. Patty had a bad temper and got angry at seemingly normal remarks.

Josh **walked on eggshells** the day after his anniversary. He had forgotten to get his wife a present and knew she was angry with him.

Tiffany didn't like **walking on eggshells** for anyone.

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59. **English Idiom:** Wear Many Hats

**Meaning:** Having many roles

**Examples:**

Alice was not only the head of the accounting department, she also ran the conference committee and helped HR with headhunting. Needless to say, she **wore many hats**.

When Ryan volunteers at the local theater, he **wears many hats**. He handles all of the tickets, ushering, and cleaning. Because he multitasks so well, the manager has considered hiring him for full-time employment.

Cindy **wore many hats** whenever she came to visit her grandparents. She was their nurse, maid, and driver.

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60. **English Idiom:** Wrap One's Head around Something

**Meaning:** Understand a difficult concept

**Examples:**

Maria couldn't **wrap her head around** the idea of infinity. She could not imagine that something could go on forever.

At first, Joe could not **wrap his head around** the formulas in his physics class. After studying every night with a tutor, he finally understood them.

Jane never really **wrapped her head around** quantum mechanics and general relativity.

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61. **English Idiom:** Your Call

**Meaning:** Your decision

**Examples:**

When Susan pulled up to the fork in the road, she knew it was **her call** as to which path she would take. She had never been to that part of the neighborhood before, so the decision was difficult for her.

Ultimately, it was the **owner's call** as to whether or not the business would close down.

“It’s **your call** whether you want to work the late shift or the early one tomorrow.” said the manager to the employee.

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62. **English Phrasal Verb:** Add Up

**Meaning:** Make sense

**Examples:**

The detective had to make sure all of the facts **added up**.

Cindy wanted to review her tax returns again. The numbers just didn’t **add up**.

The police realized the witness’s story didn’t **add up**.

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63. **English Phrasal Verb:** Ask Around

**Meaning:** Get information from various sources

**Examples:**

Jamie thought she would **ask around** to find out whether people preferred to have the annual Christmas party at the usual location or at the recently opened venue.

The police were **asking around** about the missing girl. They were sure someone in the town had seen her recently.

Miranda couldn't find her cell phone anywhere. She **asked around** the bar right before closing, but no one knew where it was.

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64. **English Phrasal Verb:** Back Out

**Meaning:** Fail to keep an arrangement

**Examples:**

Joe was supposed to go on the fishing trip with his friends, but he **backed out** at the last minute.

Emily didn't like to **back out** of her plans.

Peter made a promise to himself not to **back out** of his plan to attend graduate school.

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65. **English Phrasal Verb:** Be Out Of

**Meaning:** Not having any left

**Examples:**

James **was out of** milk, so he could not have cereal for breakfast.

Kevin needed to send a letter, but he **was out of** envelopes.

Cindy was planning to make a handmade necklace until she realized she **was all out of** beads.

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67. **English Phrasal Verb:** Blow Off

**Meaning:** Consider something not important

**Examples:**

Carrie **blew off** her final exam after she found out it was an open book test.

Allison never **blew off** rehearsals. She knew the more practice she got before the actual play, the better.

Maddox knew it wasn't a good idea to **blow off** his teacher's constructive criticism.

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#### 68. English Phrasal Verb: Bog Down

**Meaning:** Slow to make progress

**Examples:**

Jim was so **bogged down** with his homework that he forgot to make dinner.

Lisa didn't want to get **bogged down** with wedding planning, so she hired a wedding planner.

John wanted to go home early, but he got **bogged down** with a last minute assignment at work and came home much later than he expected.

--

#### 69. English Phrasal Verb: Break Down

**Meaning:** To stop working / be overcome with emotions / lose determination

**Examples:**

After Sally's car **broke down**, she had to call a tow truck.

Right before his grandfather's funeral, Adam **broke down** crying and needed a moment by himself.

Joe initially said no to going on a cruise with his girlfriend, but he eventually **broke down** and agreed after she nagged him about it for days.

--

#### 70. English Phrasal Verb: Bring Up

**Meaning:** Mention

**Examples:**

The celebrity did not allow the interviewer to **bring up** certain subjects.

Lisa **brought up** politics during dinner.

Harry didn't like when his boss **brought up** the subject of downsizing the company.

--

71. **English Phrasal Verb:** Bump Into

**Meaning:** Meet by chance

**Examples:**

“Guess who I **bumped into** today?” asked Edna.

“Who?” replied Joseph.

“I **bumped into** my old boss at the grocery store!” said Edna, not very pleased with the encounter.

While in line to buy his morning cup of coffee, Kevin **bumped into** a coworker he secretly liked. He offered to buy her coffee also.

Allen always **bumped into** his neighbor at the library. They were both students and always did a lot of research there.

--

72. **English Phrasal Verb:** Call Back

**Meaning:** Return a phone call

**Examples:**

After his lunch break, the employee **called back** the client who was trying to reach him.

Jim didn't want to **call** his sister **back** because he knew she wanted to borrow his television.

Ashley couldn't reach her brother, so she decided to **call back** a little later. She was having guests over and needed to borrow his television.

--

73. **English Phrasal Verb:** Carried Away

**Meaning:** Get very emotional and lose control

**Examples:**

Ryan always got **carried away** when he played video games. He liked to yell at the screen and jump on the couch whenever he did well.

Whenever Peter gambles, he tends to get **carried away**. Last time, he spent all of his money at the slot machines.

At the baseball game, Adam got **carried away** and ran out into the field to say hello to his favorite player.

--

#### 74. **English Phrasal Verb:** Catch On

**Meaning:** Come to understand

**Examples:**

When learning how to ski, it took John a few attempts before he finally **caught on**.

Ashley **caught on** before her friends could play a prank on her.

“Make sure he doesn’t **catch on**.” said Rachel, not wanting Ricky to find out about the surprise party.

--

#### 75. **English Phrasal Verb:** Catch Up

**Meaning:** Obtain information later rather than sooner

**Examples:**

Allison has not read the newspaper in over a week. She needed to **catch up** on what was going on in the world.

Yolanda and Cynthia had not spoken in over five years. When they bumped into each other at the restaurant, they decided to eat dinner together and **catch up** on one another’s lives.

James did not talk to his brother often. When he finally gave him a call, they had a lot of **catching up** to do.

--

#### 76. **English Phrasal Verb:** Check In

**Meaning:** Register

**Examples:**

Susan **checked in** at the hotel early in the morning.

After Adam was all **checked in** at the hostel, he went for a walk around the neighborhood.

Lisa **checked in** at the cabin by the mountains. She was planning to go mountain climbing during her stay.

--

#### 77. **English Phrasal Verb:** Close Down

**Meaning:** Stop operating

**Examples:**

Andy didn't want to **close down** his factory when he went into bankruptcy, so he sold it to his best friend.

After thirty years, Joe finally decided to **close down** his barber shop.

The shopping mall **closed down** due to a dwindling population.

--

#### 78. **English Phrasal Verb:** Cut Back

**Meaning:** Reduce

**Examples:**

James had to **cut back** on candy if he wanted to lose weight.

Kyle needed to save for a new car, so he **cut back** on spending.

Jane's credit card payments were becoming too expensive. She decided she should drastically **cut back** on shopping.

--

#### 79. **English Phrasal Verb:** Dress Up

**Meaning:** Wear your best clothes

**Examples:**

Even when Pam went out on Friday nights, she never **dressed up**.

Susan thought **dressing up** was pointless. She would rather be casual and comfortable than fancy

and uncomfortable.

People usually **dress up** for special occasions.

--

#### 80. **English Phrasal Verb:** Drop In

**Meaning:** Visit (sometimes, while on your way to a different place)

**Examples:**

Before Amanda goes to work every day, she **drops in** on her parents to make sure they don't need anything.

When Susie heard there was a rock star coming to her college, she **dropped in** even though she did not have class that day.

Ray **dropped in** to give his girlfriend some soup. He was on his way to class, but she was sick and had requested some food.

--

#### 81. **English Phrasal Verb:** End Up

**Meaning:** Eventually become

**Examples:**

Jim always assumed he would become a psychologist, but he **ended up** working in Human Resources.

Allison **ended up** getting sick before her birthday and canceled her party.

Susan was on her way to work, but **ended up** going back home after receiving a call from the babysitter.

--

#### 82. **English Phrasal Verb:** Fill In

**Meaning:** Substitute for someone

**Examples:**

Kevin **filled in** for Mary at work after she caught the flu.

Everyone always asked Josh to **fill in** for them since he wanted as many hours as possible.

Lisa asked Bruce to **fill in** for her at work after her babysitter canceled.

--

### 83. English Phrasal Verb: Find Out

**Meaning:** Determine

**Examples:**

Mandy **found out** that her dog was a mixed breed.

In order to make plans with her friend, Julie had to first **find out** her work schedule for the week.

It's possible that humans will one day **find out** what is beyond the observable universe.

--

### 84. English Phrasal Verb: Freshen Up

**Meaning:** Quickly improve appearance

**Examples:**

Although Sally was late to work, she still **freshened up** before leaving the house.

Jane **freshened up** before her date arrived.

While waiting to be interviewed, Kevin **freshened up** by combing his hair back and splashing water on his face.

--

### 85. English Phrasal Verb: Get Along

**Meaning:** To be friendly with one another

**Examples:**

Angela **got along** with her new colleague very well. They had a lot of things in common with each other.

Kevin and James didn't **get along** well when they first met. But, once they got to know one

another, they became best friends.

Lisa and her sister **got along** so well that they decided to go to the same college together.

--

#### 86. English Phrasal Verb: Get Over

**Meaning:** Getting beyond something that bothers you

**Examples:**

Sam was initially jealous when he found out his colleague had received an award instead of him, but he **got over** it in a few days.

Patty couldn't **get over** the loss of her pet. She didn't think she could ever adopt another animal again.

Sally tried everything to **get over** her ex-boyfriend, but nothing seemed to work. She eventually gave him a second chance.

--

#### 87. English Phrasal Verb: Get Rid Of

**Meaning:** Dispose of

**Examples:**

Mary decided to **get rid of** her old running shoes as soon as she bought new ones.

Leah never wanted to **get rid of** anything in the house.

Joe had to **get rid of** the eggs he bought recently after accidentally dropping them on the floor.

--

#### 88. English Phrasal Verb: Give Up

**Meaning:** Lose hope

**Examples:**

Even after failing two college courses, Lisa didn't **give up** on a college degree.

Studying English is hard, but you should never **give up**!

Peter promised himself he would never **give up** on learning another language.

--

#### 89. English Phrasal Verb: Go Over

**Meaning:** Review

**Examples:**

Cindy **went over** her notes for the final exam.

Joe and Mary knew they had to **go over** every detail of their school project before it was due.

Ashley **went over** her homework to make sure she understood it.

--

#### 90. English Phrasal Verb: Hang Out

**Meaning:** Spend time somewhere

**Examples:**

“After you’re done with work, let’s go **hang out** at the park.” said Jane to her friend.

Cindy and Josh always **hang out** together on Fridays. They usually go see a new movie.

Kevin liked **hanging out** at the local coffee shop. He enjoyed their beverages and their quiet atmosphere.

--

#### 91. English Phrasal Verb: Hang Up

**Meaning:** End a call over the phone

**Examples:**

Josh never liked **hanging up** first when he was on the phone with Jodie.

After Kelly **hung up**, she realized she forgot to say something.

When Adam called Lucy to tell her about the car accident, Lucy **hung up** the phone immediately and went to the scene of the accident.

--

92. **English Phrasal Verb:** Joke Around

**Meaning:** Being funny or silly

**Examples:**

Sam was always **joking around** during math class.

Lisa hated when Peter **joked around** during funerals. She never knew who he would offend.

Whenever Ryan and Kevin got together, they would **joke around** nonstop.

--

93. **English Phrasal Verb:** Jot Down

**Meaning:** Write quickly and briefly

**Examples:**

Jane **jotted down** the phone number to the furniture company advertised on the truck.

While listening to the witness describe what she saw during the murder, Detective Adams **jotted down** her story. He would later ask her to come to the police station and retell what she saw.

The journalist **jotted down** notes about the carnival. She was in charge of writing the article about this event.

--

94. **English Phrasal Verb:** Keep Up With

**Meaning:** Stay at the same pace/level as someone or something

**Examples:**

Jerry was having a hard time **keeping up with** his grandchildren. They seemed to have an infinite amount of energy.

Kevin felt he could not **keep up with** his classmates in his calculus course. The assignments were very difficult for him.

Joe and Anna never had difficulty **keeping up with** each other during their morning runs. They

had been working out together every morning for the past three years.

--

#### 95. **English Phrasal Verb:** Lash Out

**Meaning:** Reacting with anger

**Examples:**

Josh **lashed out** at Amanda when she asked him about his job loss for the fifth time.

Susan tries to never **lash out** at her children even though they can be difficult to handle.

The feral dog **lashed out** at the stranger after he tried to pet it.

--

#### 96. **English Phrasal Verb:** Leave Out

**Meaning:** Not include / Omit

**Examples:**

When Jane told Ashley about the amusement park, she **left out** details about the recent accident that occurred there. She knew if she mentioned it, Ashley would not want to visit the park with her.

While making the grocery list, Bob **left out** the usual chocolate he gets every week since he was trying to lose weight.

Since Molly's essay had a page limit, she had to **leave out** some detailed examples about her thesis.

--

#### 97. **English Phrasal Verb:** Look After

**Meaning:** Take care of

**Examples:**

Emily's new summer job consisted of **looking after** two toddlers during the day.

Whenever Jim's mother went to the grocery store, Jim had to **look after** his younger brother.

Lisa's grandfather moved in with her so that she could **look after** him.

--

#### 98. **English Phrasal Verb:** Look Around

**Meaning:** Search or browse

**Examples:**

George **looked around** for his car keys. He found them on his dresser.

“**Look around** and see if there is anything you like.” said the salesclerk to the customer.

The detective **looked around** the entire house before questioning the suspect.

--

#### 99. **English Phrasal Verb:** Look Up

**Meaning:** Search

**Examples:**

Whenever Mary didn't know a word, she always **looked it up**.

When reading a novel, Jason would **look up** every unfamiliar word in order to build his vocabulary.

The journalist had to **look up** the phone number of her subject so that she could schedule an interview.

--

#### 100. **English Phrasal Verb:** Loosen Up

**Meaning:** Becoming less formal

**Examples:**

Sara always had a difficult time **loosening up** at the company's holiday parties.

On Friday night, Josh and Mary wanted to **loosen up** and have some fun.

When Larry saw his roommate at home over the weekend, he told him to **loosen up** and go out more.

--

101. **English Phrasal Verb:** Make Out

**Meaning:** Distinguish

**Examples:**

Peter couldn't **make out** the words on the letter from his wife after he accidentally dropped it in water.

Nina was looking for her brother at the airport, but she forgot her glasses at home and could not **make out** anyone's face.

Sam tried to **make out** the numbers on the calling card, but they were very faded and difficult to read.

--

102. **English Phrasal Verb:** Make Up

**Meaning:** Invent a story

**Examples:**

Julie didn't want to confess the real reason she came home late, so she **made up** a story.

Kevin knew Julie was **making** her story **up**, but he didn't know how to prove it.

It was fun for the children to **make up** stories about the paintings at the museum.

--

103. **English Phrasal Verb:** Operate On

**Meaning:** Perform surgery

**Examples:**

The doctor needed to **operate on** five patients today.

Al knew he needed heart surgery, but he couldn't stand the idea of someone **operating on** him.

The nurses made sure the patient was asleep and ready for the doctor. In a few minutes, she would be **operating on** him.

--

104. **English Phrasal Verb:** Pay Off

**Meaning:** Pay the full amount

**Examples:**

Ashley didn't know when she would be able to **pay off** her debt.

It took a long time to **pay off** Lisa's mortgage, but she finally managed to become debt-free.

Many banks allow for a six month deferment before obligating graduates to start **paying off** their loans.

--

105. **English Phrasal Verb:** Put Back

**Meaning:** Place something in its proper location

**Examples:**

After Sally finished playing with her toys, she **put them back** in their bins.

Ryan's mother is always frustrated with his room. He never **puts anything back** where it belongs after she cleans it for him.

Susie is very particular about where she likes certain utensils in the kitchen. After dinner, all utensils must be washed and **put back** in their respective places.

--

106. **English Phrasal Verb:** Put Off

**Meaning:** Postpone

**Examples:**

Kevin **put off** telling his boss about the unfinished project.

Peter needed to tell his sister the bad news, but he decided to **put it off** until after dinner.

Mary never **put off** her assignments. She started working on them the minute they were assigned.

--

107. **English Phrasal Verb:** Rub Off On

**Meaning:** Pass a trait to others

**Examples:**

The more time John spent with his brother, the more his brother **rubbed off on** him.

Mary was **rubbing off on** Lisa. Lisa started reading the same books as Mary.

Spending so much time with scientists had them **rubbing off on** James. He began to think and analyze like them.

--

108. **English Phrasal Verb:** Run After

**Meaning:** Chase

**Examples:**

Rick **ran after** his dog after he escaped through the front door.

Ashley always had to **run after** her trouble-making toddler in the park.

Five-year-old Jimmy liked to **run after** birds whenever he saw them.

--

109. **English Phrasal Verb:** Show Up

**Meaning:** Arrive

**Examples:**

Nelson **showed up** to work on time every day for five years.

Lucy waited for Brian at the coffee shop for over an hour, but he never **showed up**.

Most of the volunteers **showed up** early for the event. They were eager to help in any way they could.

--

110. **English Phrasal Verb:** Steer Clear Of

**Meaning:** Avoid

**Examples:**

Since John needed to lose weight, he had to **steer clear of** junk food.

Lisa **steered clear of** her boss at the grocery store. She did not want to talk about work on her day off.

Peter tried to **steer clear of** his ex-girlfriend, but she managed to find him every weekend.

--

111. **English Phrasal Verb:** Take After Someone

**Meaning:** Resemble / be like someone

**Examples:**

Whenever she went to visit her grandparents, Allison was told how much she **took after** her mother.

Joe really **took after** his older brother, Jack. He also went into construction and did very well, just like Jack.

Cindy never thought she **took after** either of her parents. She had a hard time relating to anyone in her family.

--

112. **English Phrasal Verb:** Take Apart

**Meaning:** Disassemble or divide into pieces

**Examples:**

Sally **took apart** her radio to see why it was not working.

Karen didn't want to **take apart** her broken computer because she was not skilled at fixing hardware.

Ever since Lucy was a little girl, she had always loved **taking** electronics **apart** and putting them back together.

--

113. **English Phrasal Verb:** Take On

**Meaning:** Undertake

**Examples:**

Jane **took on** extra responsibilities at work after her colleague quit.

Kelly didn't want to **take on** the project at work by herself, so she chose a partner.

Lucy was planning to **take on** medical school in the near future.

--

114. **English Phrasal Verb:** Try Something On

**Meaning:** Sample clothes

**Examples:**

Before Kelly bought the clothes, she **tried** everything **on**.

Peter **tried** the tuxedo **on** to make sure it still fit.

Yolanda liked to visit fashion boutiques and **try** random clothing **on**.

--

115. **English Phrasal Verb:** Use Up

**Meaning:** Use completely

**Examples:**

The politician **used up** all of his air time on television to talk about how he would make the town better if he were elected.

The couple **used up** all of their money during their honeymoon. They wanted a very lavish vacation after their wedding.

Josh **used up** all of his flour trying to make a new recipe.

--

### 116. **English Phrasal Verb:** Wind Up

**Meaning:** Arrive somewhere after a series of actions

**Examples:**

Cindy forgot the way to her friend's house and **wound up** in a completely different neighborhood.

After looking at a hundred dresses for her prom, Rita **wound up** choosing the first dress she saw when she walked into the store.

Betty was attempting to make brownies but **wound up** just making a mess in the kitchen.

--

### 117. **English Phrasal Verb:** Work Out

**Meaning:** Exercise

**Examples:**

Jim liked to **work out** early in the morning.

Amy never liked **working out** over the weekend.

To stay healthy, it's a good idea to **work out** at least three times per week.

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