



ENGLISH IDIOMS AND PROVERBS

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CC SAN JUAN GARCÍA - MADRID

- As mad as a hatter / a March hare.
- As flat as a pancake.
- As dead as a doornail.
- As heavy as lead.
- As light as a feather.
- As regular as a clockwork.
- As blind as a bat.
- As different as chalk from cheese.
- As clear as a bell. (Claro).
- As sound as a bell. (Completo).
- As plain as the nose on your face.
- As like two peas in a pod.
- As cunning as a fox / as cartload of monkeys.
- As hard as nails.
- As busy as a bee.
- As keen as mustard.
- As poor as church mouse.
- As steady as a rock.
- As deaf as a post. (... as a door-post).
- As fit as a fiddle.
- As pretty as a picture.
- As bold as brass. ("Caradura")
- As drunk as a lord.
- As cool as a cucumber. (Sangre fría).
- As cold as ice. (Temperatura).
- As fresh as a daisy
- As warm as toast.
- As old as the hills.
- As large as life.
- As silent as the grave.
- As good as gold.
- As white as snow / as a sheet.
- As black as coal. (Suciedad).
- As black as pitch. (Sin luz, oscuro).
- As brown as a berry. (Negro como un tizón).
- As clean as new pin.
- As clear as crystal.
- As clear as mud. (Inentiligible).
- As sweet as honey.
- As stubborn as a mule.
- As pale as ghost.
- As tough as leader.
- As soft as a putty.
- As happy as a sand-boy
- As sour as vinegar.
- As calm as mill-pond.
- As strong as a horse.
- As deep as the ocean.
- As brave as a lion.
- As sober as judge.
- As proud as a peacock.
- As true as steel.
- As dry as a dust / as a bone).
- As stiff as a poker.
- As weak as a flash.
- As easy as falling off a wall.
- As hungry as a hunter.
- As ugly as a sin.
- As quick as lightening.
- To be like a cat on hot bricks.
- To be like the cat that stole the cream.
- To be just a passing fancy.
- To do something of one's own accord.
- An / someone's Achilles' heel.
- The apple of someone's eye.
- To stick out a mile.
- Few and far between.
- A chip off the old block.
- Easier said than done.
- Actions speak louder than words.
- To get out of the bed on the wrong side.
- To be like a bull in a china-shop.
- To put one's foot in it.
- To be in someone's good / bad books.
- To be fighting a losing / an uphill battle.
- To be like carrying coals to Newcastle.
- The writing is on the wall.
- To hear something through the grape-vine.
- To be pushing 40 (50...)
- Donkey's years.
- To have your head in the clouds.
- To be spaced out (US).
- To be unable to make head or tail of something.
- Not to have a clue.
- To ring a bell.
- To be like looking for a needle in a haystack.
- To get a move on.
- To be off like the clappers.
- To be off like a shot.
- To be out like a light.

- To be stuck up.
- To hit the roof.
- To be like a bear with a sore head.
- To get someone's goat.
- To be like a red rag to a bull.
- To give somebody a good hiding.
- To fight like cat and dog.
- To be at loggerheads with someone.
- To come down on someone like a ton of bricks.
- To drink like a fish.
- To eat like a horse.
- To rain cats and dogs.
- To get on like a house on fire.
- To fit like a glove.
- To ask something point blank to somebody.
- To sell something like hot cakes.
- To be (very) on the ball.
- To be a pain in the neck.
- Beggars can't be choosers.
- To have your back to the wall.
- To be hard up.
- To be in one's birthday suit.
- To make ends meet.
- To be on the house.
- His bark is worse than his bite.
- To wear the trousers.
- To hit below the belt.
- To be the last straw. (That breaks the camel's back).
- To drop a hint.
- Out of the blue.
- To keep something quiet.
- To jump to conclusions.
- To get somewhere at all costs.
- (Not) To be a laughing matter.
- To give somebody the slip.
- To give somebody the cold shoulder.
- To keep the fingers crossed.
- To be in the same boat.
- To be on the spur of the moment.
- To be dead bet. (US).
- To be black and blue all over.
- To give someone the sack (to sack someone).
- To put all one's eggs in the same basket.
- To be a close shave.
- To be a bit out of sorts.
- To be hard up.
- To be in a bit steep.
- To get into hot water.
- To talk shop.
- To pull one's socks up.
- To call it a day.

MISCELLANEOUS EXPRESSIONS AND IDIOMS.

- She was unconscious. They couldn't *bring her round*. They tried smelling salts, cognac, everything.
- When does your school *break up*? (to break up – to close for the holidays).
- Derek was *called up* at the age of eighteen (ordered to join the Army). Alexander was *called up* at the age of twenty and he *got his commission* six months later (to be commissioned – to become an army officer).
- Duncan jokes never *came off* (were never successful; nobody ever laughed at them).
- Let's take *a short cut* through the park (go the shortest or nearest way).
- All Geoffrey's plans *fell through*. Their marriage *fell through* (was a failure). Herbert tried to start his own business, but it *fell through*.
- Laura *cut me dead* (passed me without acknowledging me).
- Audrey could easily *get round* her father (make her father do what she wanted).
- The defendant *got off* (was not punished).
- Never *give up* (never stop trying, or fighting, or making an effort).
- I'll *look in* tomorrow (come for a short time).
- Llewellyn *gets my back up*, when he *runs* England *down*.
- Ellen will always *back you up* (she will always support you).
- Gilbert can't *back out of* it now, because he has promised. Now that his wife has become un

- invalid, he's trying to *back out of* his marriage.
- Gordon looks *down-at-hell* (badly-dressed, scruffy).
 - Archibald *paid through the nose* for his taxi (he paid too much for it).
 - Francis is *a man after my own' heart* (the sort of man I like and admire).
 - Let's *toss up* for it; I'll *toss* you for it. *Heads or tails?*
 - Rupert is *tight-fisted* (selfish with his money) (mean).
 - Old Bessie *shook her fist* at the mischievous boys (to shake one's fist – to show one's displeasure).
 - Nancy is *two-faced* (deceitful).
 - Julian is *run out of* small change (no more coppers, silver).
 - I think I'll *turn it*; it's getting late.
 - Can you *put me up?* (Give me a bed – not necessarily a private room for one night). To *put someone's up* – to provide temporary accommodation).
 - We'll have to *put off* our game of tennis (to postpone).
 - The children are an awful *handful* (a lot of responsibility).
 - Helen was quite *taken aback* (surprised).
 - Basil often quarrelled with his wife, but their squabbles soon *blew over* (soon passed). He's had another *row* with his wife. They are always *rowing* (- quarrelling).
 - What a *row* those children are making! (What a noise).
 - Brian and Humphrey don't *hit it off*. They don't *get on* (they dislike each other and don't live or work happily together).
 - The Browns are *well off*. They are *well-to-do*. They are *rolling in money* (very rich).
 - Clive *stuck to his guns* (refused to be influenced or to change his opinion).
 - Don't be afraid of Alfred; *his bark is worse than his bite*.
 - Don't *count your chickens before they are hatched* (I advise you not to buy that Rolls-Bentley until you have actually received the money promised to you).
 - You're *casting pearls before swine* when you read Donne's poetry to those people. They *don't care tuppence* about poetry.
 - This weather is *trying*, isn't it? (trying, irritating). What a *trying* boy he is (exasperating, annoying).
 - Little Godfrey isn't ill; he's just *shamming* (pretending).
 - This so-called artist is *a sham, a fake*, a charlatan. He doesn't know, or care, anything about art really.
 - The money is *forged*. Daniel was goaled for *forging* checks.
 - What a *weird* story! It *makes my flesh creep*. It's *eerie*.
 - This *doubting Thomas* just doesn't believe anything anyone tells him.
 - It's *as easy as ABC*. It's *as easy as winking*.
 - I'm *racking my brains* but I can't remember his name.
 - Doreen waited half an hour for him, but he didn't *turn up*.
 - Barry's always in some *racket*. At the moment he's selling for the Olympic Games at £ 100 each. He's a *racketeer* (a racket – a dishonest but profitable business).
 - Enoch's *as mad as a hatter*. Albert's *as mad as a March hare*.
 - Belinda's absolutely *cracked*.
 - My dog has quite *taken to* you (has taken a liking to you; likes you).
 - The word's *on the tip of my tongue*, but I just can't remember it at the moment.
 - His youngest daughter is *the apple of his eye* (his favourite daughter).

- *It's not good crying over spilt milk* (the mistake has been made / the tragedy has happened – now forget about it).
- Archibald is a *sponger*. Claude is a *scrounger*; he is always *cadging* something.
- Don't let these people *impose on* you.
- Colin never hesitates *to call a spade a spade*. (Colin never hesitates to use unpleasant words for unpleasant things).
- *Drop me a line* when you have a spare moment (write me a letter).
- She's a great *match-maker*. Already four couples have been married as a result of her introductions.
- Cuthbert's been living in *a fool's paradise* for too long; now he'll have to face reality.
- What *cheek!* What *sauce!* What *a cheek!* What *a sauce!* (What imprudence!).
- A *cheeky* boy. A *saucy* girl. Audrey oughtn't to be *cheeky / saucy* to her parents.
- Lionel *left us in the lurch* (he left us without help, although he promised that he would help us).
- Harold has really *let* his family *down* (he has turned out to be unreliable, a cheat and a liar).
- Walter's *hen-pecked*, poor man. He can't do anything right in the eyes of his wife. She always criticizes him in public, etc., and he never tries to defend himself. What's worse she *wears the trousers*. It's she who makes all the decisions.
- In order *to keep the wolf from the door*, both he and his wife go out to work. (*To keep the wolf from the door* – to keep poverty away).
- Tom's *the black sheep of the family*. All her sons are honest except Tom, who has been in prison three times.
- Yvonne's a terrible *gold-digger* – she uses her sexual attractions to get money from men.
- For goodness sake, *mind your P's and Q's* (be careful of your manners) when we visit my aunt because she's rather *strait-laced* (over-formal – narrow-minded – old-fashioned in a rather silly way).
- *Take* most of what Arthur says *with a grain of salt*; he's a great joker, a great bluffer. He likes to have his little joke. Don't always believe what he tells you.
- You look *off colour* today. Perhaps you'd better stay in bed (off colour – unwell). Also: *out of sorts*.
- *It slowly dawned on him* (or) *dawned upon him* that he was dangerously and that the doctor couldn't save him. (To dawn on somebody – slow realization).
- *To and fro*. A pendulum swings *to and fro*.
- *Down and out*. During the *slump*, which followed the *boom*, many ordinary families became *down and out*. (Without work and money). A *down-and-out* knocked at the door and asked for a sandwich (a down-and-out – a poor, hungry man)-
- He's ninety years old, but still *hale and hearty* (in good health).
- Some people like to be *free and easy*; they hate suits and stiff collars, etc.
- Viola stuck to her husband *through thick and thin* (in good times and bad times).
- Noel's looked *high and low* (everywhere) for his briefcase, but he can't find it.
- Why not *kill two birds with one stone*? Read French History in French, then you'll learn some French History and some French.
- We haven't had a holiday for *donkey's years* (for a long time).

- Don't confide in him; he's an awful *blabber*. He's sure to *let the cat out of the bag* (give away the secret).
 - This part of the town has really *gone to the dogs* (become dirty and untidy and *slummy*). It used to be the best part of the town. A *slum* – an unkempt, dirty, neglected part of a town.
 - Harry's *daggers drawn* with his neighbour (always ready to quarrel with his neighbour).
 - Leonard is a *dark horse*. Nobody expected him to win the race. Not only did he win, but himself was certain that he would, although he mentioned his certainty to no one.
 - Eustace made *a mess* of his life. All his life has been unsuccessful, but he has only himself to blame.
 - What *a mess* this room's in how untidy – how dirty).
 - Eva's a *messy* worker. She always makes such *a mess*.
 - Julian has always been *mollycoddled* by his mother, and now he's *spoilt* and *soft*. He has no *guts* (courage). He hasn't any *backbone*. The trouble with him is that he was *born with a silver spoon in his mouth* (born very rich).
 - Mr. and Mrs. Moore spoiled their son and he *turned out* to be a *rake*. His *rakish* ways landed him in gaol (a rake – a profligate).
 - Alfred's a *plodder*. He isn't *bright* (intelligent), but he *plods* (he works well, slowly but surely).
 - Basil's going to *turn over a new leaf*; he's decided to stop smoking and drinking until he's passed all his exams (to turn over a new leaf – to make a fresh start in life and leave one's vices behind).
 - Beatrice must have *dropped off* (fallen asleep for a short time).
 - You can have whatever you *fancy*. Which one do you *fancy*?
- Well, I fancy the stripped one. It took my fancy, so I bought it (to fancy something – to desire or feel appetite for something).
- *Fancy* meeting you here! (What a surprise to meet you here).
 - Do you want the *fancy* ones (the decorated ones) or the *plain* ones? (plain – not decorated, without colour).
 - Shelley's father *cut him off with a shilling* when he received news of her elopement (stopped his allowance).
 - *I wouldn't dream of doing such a thing* (the idea of doing such a thing would never occur to me).
 - If you *put your back into it* you'd get better results (made more effort). Ada didn't *put her back into* what she was doing, she only half does things.
 - Keith promised to help, but now he is trying *to back out of it*. You can't *back out of* (get out of) your marriage now because you've promised to marry the girl.
 - Don't *back* (reverse) your car here or you'll crash into the lamp-post.
 - Which horse do you *back*? Oh, I *back* Black Bless. Well, *you've backed a winner!*
 - Don't *pull up* (stop, or slow down) too suddenly or the lorry behind us will *run into us*.
 - If you *lack* tools you can't build anything. We *lacked* the necessary tools so we couldn't finish the job.
 - His wife's intelligence *made up for* his own *lack* of it.
 - Ida's so mischievous. She's really a *tom-boy*, forever climbing trees, stealing apples and *playing tricks* on dogs and cats. (Girl who enjoys rough noisy games). She's always up to some mischief.
 - Idle gossip can cause mischief. Owens's a *mischief-maker*; he *sets people against one another*.

- Our efficient secretary will see *to it* (she will do what's necessary).
- In Central Africa petrol stations (or service stations) were *few and far between*.
- What time are you *off*? (Leaving). Well, *I'm off* now. Goodbye.
- Owen was *tongue-tied* when he stood up to speak in public (unable to speak or think or what to say).
- It would be *laying it on a bit thick* (exaggerating) to say that her husband's a monster. He's simply lazy and neglectful.
- Ralph's a *wash-out* (a failure). The play was a *wash-out* (a failure, a flop, a fiasco).
- Oliver says that he's glad, now, that Rebecca refused to marry him, because, anyway, she wouldn't have been intellectual enough for him. But we think it's a case of *sour grapes* (he pretends that what he cannot have is of little or no value or importance).
- We didn't complain when Richard helped himself to our cigarettes and constantly used our telephone, but when he drove off in my car without permission, *that was the last straw!* (That was a bit too much).
- Aunt Prudence is *having / taking a nap* at the moment (a short sleep).
- The exam was a *piece of cake* (very easy).
- Your suitcase is *as heavy as led* (very heavy).
- My bedroom is so small that there is *not enough room to swing a cat* (lack of space).
- The tunnel that the government built is a *white elephant* because nobody ever uses it (large, useless).
- I eat meat *once in a blue moon* (it happens very rarely).
- If you don't eat you'll look like a *bag of bones* (very thin).
- My brother's only 23 but he's *as bald a coot* (completely bald).
- Jane is *in charge* of the factory (she is the responsible for it).
- It's very late, *I'm off* to bed (I go).
- Last week I got flu, but now I *am on the mend* (get better after an illness).
- I had a terrible weekend, I was *under the water* (I felt unwell).
- Italian clothes are very *up to date* (very modern).
- It's five o'clock, time *to brew up* (to make a cup of tea).
- It was so funny I couldn't help *bursting out laughing* (begin to laugh).
- *Cheer up*, you'll soon feel better (become happier).
- When I missed the train I was *fuming* (very angry).
- We *gate crashed* a party on Sunday (go to a party without invitation or having paid for it).
- I'm a bit tired: I think I'll *have a kip / forty winks* (have a short sleep).
- When I told my mother I had crashed the car, she *hit the roof* (was very angry).
- My grandfather was ninety when he *kicked the bucket* (died).
- For my birthday I *splashed out* on a new car (spent money without worries).
- Dave didn't realize that we had got back, and he came out of his bedroom *on his birthday suit* (absolutely naked).
- The problem of car theft is growing; the police are *fighting un uphill battle* (struggle without much hope of success to achieve or prevent something).
- As soon as they first meet, they *got on like a house on fire* (quickly became very friendly).
- I don't mind helping Yves with his English, but what *gets my goat* is the way he seems to

- take my help for granted (annoys me).
- The news that the Prime Minister was going to resign come quite *out of the blue* (unexpectedly).
 - Well, I think we'd better *call it a day* now. We have done as much as we can for one day (stop working).
 - What's wrong with Mr. Barker this morning? He is *like a bear with a sore head* (so irritable).
 - I don't think I've met her, but her name *rings a bell* (sounds familiar).
 - Have you seen Mary? I've been looking for her all morning. – Sorry, John, *I haven't (got) a clue*, I'm afraid (I don't know).
 - Right everybody, place your orders. The drinks are *on the house* (free).
 - I hate going to parties with groups of teachers. They seem to spend most of the evening *talking shop* (talking about their job).
 - By the way, you've heard about Tom, haven't you? He's been *given the sack* from his job (dismissed).
 - The child was *given a good hiding* by his father for telling lies (beaten).
 - What's this supposed to mean? *I can't make head or tail of it* (I can't understand a word of it).
 - Incidentally, Rita and Jim have decided to get married. But *they kept it quiet* – it's supposed to be a secret (don't tell anyone).
 - You really *put your foot in it* when you asked Pam how her cat was. Didn't you know if got run over last week? (Blundered).
 - You are going to have to *pull your socks up* if you want to pass the exam (work much harder).
 - I'm not going to play football again. I was *black and blue all over* after the match last Sunday (covered with bruises).
 - I wish I hadn't taken that day off without asking for permission. I really *got into hot water* when Mr. Bradshaw found out (got into trouble).
 - I always seem to be *hard up* these days. I can't even afford to go to the pub at weekends (short of money).
 - What with rising prices and everything, I'm surprised that anyone can *make ends meet* nowadays (manage financially).
 - Charles and his wife are always *at loggerheads*. I really don't know why they got married in the first place (quarrelling).
 - I do wish our teacher wouldn't keep telling Jane how good she is. She's getting far too *stuck up* for words! (Conceited).
 - After running 20 kilometres yesterday afternoon I was absolutely *dead beat* (exhausted).
 - What's wrong with Sue? I said hello to her but she *gave me the cold shoulder* (completely ignored me).
 - My son was *a bit out of sorts* today, so I decided to keep him home from school (wasn't feeling very well).
 - You're *flogging a dead horse* trying to persuade Charles to come with us. You know he won't go anywhere without his wife (wasting your time).
 - My visits to my parents nowadays are, unfortunately, very *few and far between* (infrequent).
 - Look, if we don't *get a move on*, we're going to miss the last bus! (Hurry).
 - Of course Peter's in love with Joanna. *It sticks out a mile* (it's so obvious).

- A fool and his money are soon parted.
- When the cat is away, the mice will play.
- When there is a will there is a way.
- Rome was not build in a day.
- Charity begins at home.
- Don't count your chicken before / until they are hatched.
- It's always darkest before the dawn.
- It' too late to shut the stable door after the horse has gone.
- It's not good crying over spilt milk.
- Variety is the spice of life.
- Actions speaker louder than words.
- Give him an inch and he'll take a mile.
- You can't teach an old dog new tricks.
- Money can't buy happiness.
- All you need is love.
- Too many cooks spoil the broth.
- Many hands make light work.
- There's no smoke without fire.
- Blood is thicker than water.
- Don't look a gift horse in the mouth.
- Half a loaf is better than no bread.
- A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.
- As you make your bed, so you must lie on it.
- Beards of a feather flock together.
- You can't get blood out of a stone.¹
- Those who live in glass hoses shouldn't throw stones.
- All is not gold that glitters.
- When Greek meets Greek, then comes the tug of war!²
- Make hay while the sun shines³.
- Where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise.⁴
- It's an ill wind that blows nobody any good.⁵
- In for a penny, in for a pound.⁶
- As well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb.
- The labourer (US laborer) is worthy of his work.⁷ (Very unusual).
- What is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander.⁸
- Every cloud has a silver lining.⁹
- It's a long lane that has no turning.
- A miss is as good as mile.¹⁰
- A fault confessed is half redressed.
- Never say die.¹¹
- A rolling stone gathers no moss.
- A stitch in time saves nine.
- One man's meat is another man's poison.
- It never rains but pours.¹²
- Let no the sun go down upon thy wrath.
- He who pays the piper calls the tune.
- Nothing venture, nothing gain.
- A good example is better than a sermon.
- A man's home is his castle.
- Let keeping dogs lie.
- There is no accounting for taste.
- It takes all sorts to make a world.

⁴ *Bendita ignorancia.*

⁵ *Incluso en lo peor, otro puede sacar algo bueno.*

⁶ *De perdidos, al río. (Esta y la siguiente).*

⁷ *Al César lo que es del César.*

⁸ *Lo que es bueno para uno lo es para todos.*

⁹ *No hay mal que 100 años dure. (Esta y la siguiente).*

¹⁰ *Lo mismo da equivocarse por poco que por mucho si el resultado final es el mismo.*

¹¹ *La esperanza es lo último que se pierde.*

¹² *Las desgracias nunca viene solas.*

¹ *"No pidas peras al olmo", referido a la crueldad de las personas.*

² *The tug of war: la lucha de la cuerda, encarnizada y prolongada.*

³ *Carpe diem*

- No man is a hero to his valet.
- Everything comes to him who waits.
- More haste, less speed.
- The road to the Hell is paved with good intentions.
- Hitch your wagon to a star.
- Every Jack has his Jill.
- You must know how many beans make five.
- A little learning is a dangerous thing.
- One must draw the line somewhere.
- Needs must when the devil drives. (Very unusual).
- Never do things by halves.
- No news is good news.
- Prevention is better than cure.