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IDIOMS & PHRASES



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Big Cheese

Meaning: To be an important and successful individual.

Usage: Donald Trump has been a big cheese even before the elections, now he also has a position to his name.



Bun in the oven

Meaning: To be pregnant or expecting a baby.

Usage: She was happy to announce to her parents that they would soon be grandparents as she had a bun in the oven.



Bad Egg

Meaning: A dishonest or ill-behaved person.

Usage: We could tell he was a bad egg even at a young age.



Cream of the crop

Meaning: The best of a particular group.

Usage: This B-school's graduates are considered to be the cream of the crop and can get jobs wherever they want to.



Egg someone on

Meaning: To urge someone to do something, often something mischievous.

Usage: The two boys kept throwing stones because the other children were egging them on.



Full of Beans

Meaning: To be full of energy and in high spirits.

Usage: Kelly's outstanding results in her finals made her parents full of beans.

Assignment: Ants in one's pants



The Gravy Train

Meaning: A position, state or job in which one makes an excessive amount of money without expending much or any effort.

Usage: I'll be on the gravy train once I get paid from the settlement of the lawsuit!



Be Nuts about

Meaning: To be very passionate and enthusiastic about something or in love with someone.

Usage: My brother is nuts about sports — he's currently playing soccer, tennis and also taking swim lessons.



Use one's Noodle

Meaning: To use one's own intelligence, intellectual ability or brain.

Usage: Come on, Rahul, I know you can figure this out on your own. Use your noodle for a change!



One Smart Cookie

Meaning: A clever and intelligent person.

Usage: Anyone who made billions in the Russian oil industry is clearly a smart cookie.



Soup up

Meaning: To modify something in order to increase its power or performance.

Usage: We've souped our computers up to run incredibly complex programs at lightning speeds.



Take with a pinch of salt

Meaning: To not completely believe something that you are told, because you think it is unlikely to be true.

Usage: Take whatever that paper publishes with a pinch of salt—it's really a propaganda.



The Bird and The Bees

Meaning: Lessons about sex & reproduction, such as are typically taught to children or young adults.

Usage: He's twenty years old and still doesn't understand about the birds and the bees!



Cat got your tongue?

Meaning: A humorous question directed at one who is not speaking very much or at all.

Usage: The shy boy was afraid to speak up and his mates kept asking him "Cat got your tongue?".



The Dog days

Meaning: The hottest days of summer.

Usage: It is advisable to drink lots of water and eat food that cools you down during the dog days of summer.



Have a cow

Meaning: To get very upset about something, often more than what is expected.

Usage: My mother will have a cow if we get a stain on the new table cloth.



The lion's share

Meaning: The largest part or portion of something.

Usage: I earn a lot, but the lion's share goes for taxes.



Pig out

Meaning: To eat (a specific thing) gluttonously or to excess.

Usage: Once a month, my friends and I get together and pig out on pizza and watch cheesy horror movies.

Assignment: Bursting at the seams



Straight from the horse's mouth

Meaning: Directly from the original source.

Usage: You need not believe me. Go talk to him and hear it straight from the horse's mouth.



All ears

Meaning: Very keen to hear/paying special attention.

Usage: I was all ears when my father was telling about his adventure trip to Himalayas in his youth.



Flesh & Blood

Meaning:

1. One's family member or a relative.
2. To have human flaws and thus be imperfect.

Usage:

1. She's our flesh and blood, so let's all try to get along with her while she's in town.
2. I know you idolize me, but I'm flesh and blood, just like you—I make mistakes too.



Get cold feet

Meaning: To experience nervousness or anxiety before one attempts to do something.

Usage: He got cold feet when heard the news of his transfer to remote area of the country which is hundreds of miles from his home town.



Keep one's chin up

Meaning: To be courageous in difficult situation.

Usage: Being a wife of an army officer she kept her chin up when she heard about the enemy attack on the military camp, where here husband was staying.



Neck of the woods

Meaning: A neighbourhood or nearby area or the area around where one lives.

Usage: Are there any nice restaurants in your neck of the woods?

Assignment: Out of the woods



Play something by ear

Meaning: Proceed instinctively according to the circumstances rather than according to rules or a plan.

Usage: We'll just have to play it by ear until we can get a formal problem statement.

Assignment: Off the cuff



By the skin of teeth

Meaning: Barely or by just a narrow margin. (Often used to describe something that almost didn't happen.)

Usage: I passed my calculus class by the skin of my teeth.



Stick one's neck out

Meaning: To personally expose oneself to some risk, danger, or responsibility.

Usage: Why should I stick my neck out to do something for her? What's she ever done for me?



Sight for sore eyes

Meaning: Someone or something that one is excited or overjoyed to see, often after a long absence or separation.

Usage: There is Peter with a tray of food, it is a sight for sore eyes! I am starving!



Dig Heels in

Meaning: To firmly resist something or be stubbornly unyielding.

Usage: Although it would have been easier to fly to the destination, my father dug heels on going by train because it would be cheaper.



Grease palm

Meaning: To bribe someone discreetly.

Usage: I regret choosing the easy route of greasing a police officer's palm to get the work done. That was illegal.



Heads will roll

Meaning: People will be punished severely. (hyperbolic allusion to the punishment of beheading)

Usage: Heads will roll when the principal sees the damaged classroom.



Itchy feet

Meaning: The urge to stray from one's routine, often by traveling.

Usage: Hearing the train whistle at night gives me itchy feet.



Wet behind the ears

Meaning: Inexperienced or new at something.

Usage: From the way the soldier handled the gun, everyone could tell that he was wet behind the ears.



Yellow belly

Meaning: Cowardly.

Usage: I'm not surprised that Tom didn't come to the debate, he's too yellow-bellied to defend his beliefs in public.



Black and Blue

Meaning: Hurt or bruised either physically or mentally.

Usage: I have been beaten black and blue by the Boxing team players but I still love the game.



A grey/gray area

Meaning: A concept or topic with no clear rules or defined answers.

Usage: There's a lot of gray area regarding whether the use of the new surveillance technology is lawful.



In the red

Meaning: In debt or losing lots of money.

Usage: Electricity distribution companies have been operating in the red since last several years.



Below the belt

Meaning: To unfairly target or hit another person's weakness or vulnerability. (Boxing rule's allusion)

Usage: Ahead of the elections, politicians won't hesitate to aim below the belt.



Deep pockets

Meaning: To have access to lot of money.

Usage: You will need a deep pocket to turn this shabby old building into an attractive store.

Assignment: Burn a hole in the pocket



In one's birthday suit

Meaning: Completely naked. (Alludes to the fact that one is born without clothing)

Usage: The towel fell off, and there he was in his birthday suit!



Hit the hay/sack

Meaning: To get into bed and sleep.

Usage: I have to get up early for work tomorrow, so I think I'd better hit the hay.



Get wind of

Meaning: To become aware of something being kept secret, through indirect means.

Usage: If the press gets wind of this scandal, his Presidential campaign will be over.



Call the shots

Meaning: To take a decision on the course of action; to be in charge.

Usage: Ask Mom — she's the one who calls the shots around the house.



Chip in

Meaning: To contribute to something being undertaken by a group, such as a task or collection.

Usage: If everyone chips in to help, we can clean this garage in no time.



Go overboard

Meaning: To do something in a way that is excessive or extreme or to do too much of something.

Usage: Just don't go overboard with decorations or elaborate cards.



Dead in the water

Meaning: Unable to function, move or progress.

Usage: Oh, that product idea from last week's meeting is dead in the water now that the CEO has vetoed it.



Cook the books

Meaning: To falsely represent records in financial statements.

Usage: The committee admitted that, in its recent trials, many officials cooked the books.



Feather one's own nest

Meaning: Acquire wealth for oneself, especially by taking advantage of one's position.

Usage: Many politicians feather their own nest at the expense of the people they were supposed to be helping.



For a song

Meaning: To get something for a surprisingly low price.

Usage: The clothes of my favourite brand are going for a song in the neighbourhood shop.

Assignment: Talk Turkey





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