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Gigantic List of Common Sayings-Idioms-Clichés

A **SAYING** is a commonly used proverb or adage.

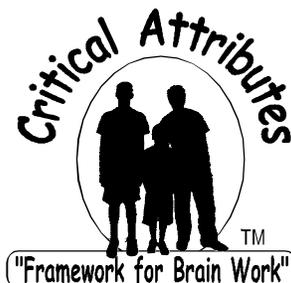
"You can't teach an old dog new tricks."

An **IDIOM** is a figure of speech which makes no literal sense. An **IDIOM** is usually a type of metaphor, but the connection between the two things being compared is often obscure, especially for non-native speakers.

"It's raining cats and dogs."

A **CLICHE'** is an over-used phrase. Often a **CLICHE'** reinforces stereotyping.

"Have a nice day."





GIGANTIC List of

Sayings-Idioms-Cliches

SAYING/IDIOM/CLICHE

WHAT IT MEANS

- A -

A little birdie told me

A wing and a prayer

Ace up your sleeve

Achilles' heel

Add fuel to the fire

Air your dirty laundry in public

Albatross around your neck

All ears

All that glitters is not gold

All thumbs

Alligator tears

Ants in your pants

Apple of your eye

As the crow flies

Asleep at the switch

At the drop of a hat

At the end your rope

Ax to grind

Someone told me, but I won't say who

Maybe it will turn out okay, but it doesn't look good

Hiding something you plan to use later for your advantage

A weakness; a weakspot. (Taken from Greek mythology)

To make something worse or more intense

To talk about personal or family problems in public

A difficult burden which is with you all the time

Listening intently, trying to hear everything

Don't get fooled - things are not always as they appear

Clumsy, as if you have no fingers. Keeps dropping things

Big, phony tears. Trying to appear sad, but faking it

Fidgety; can't sit still; squirming around constantly

Someone's favorite person or thing

In a straight path from here to there; shortest route

Not ready to react when necessary; shirking your duty

In an instant; without hesitation

You have run out of options, opportunities, or patience

You have a grudge. Something needs to be settled

- B -

Babe in the woods

Back to square one

Back seat driver

Bad egg (or rotten egg)

Bag of bones

Baker's dozen

Bark is worse than your bite

Barking up the wrong tree

Batten down the hatches

Beat the band

Beat your swords into plowshares

Beating a head horse

Beating around the bush

Beauty is as beauty does

Beauty is in the eye of the beholder

Beauty is more than skin deep

Bed of roses

Bee in your bonnet

Beggars can't be choosers

Behind the eight ball

Naive; unaware of everything involved in a situation

Things haven't gone well; must start over, as in a game

Someone who tries to tell others how to do something

Someone that is spoiling it for everyone else

Not in good health; skinny; just skin and bones

A dozen, plus one more thrown in for the same price

Sounds rough and tough, but is really not that bad

Mistaken; won't get the correct results

Get ready for trouble; a "storm" is on the way

To do something enthusiastically, with a lot of energy

Stop preparing for war; see *butter not bullets*

Time to let an idea go; leave it and get on with something else

Not getting to the point. Unimportant conversation

How a person behaves makes them beautiful, not their looks

Everyone has a different opinion.

Character is more important than the way a person looks

Something that's easy or comfortable

Bothered about something; irritated

If you take what someone gives you, don't complain

At a disadvantage, making it tough to win

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GIGANTIC List of

Sayings-Idioms-Cliches

SAYING/IDIOM/CLICHE

WHAT IT MEANS

| | |
|---|--|
| Bells and whistles | Extra things; not necessary, but usually desirable |
| Better half | A complimentary way of referring to someone's spouse |
| Between a rock and a hard place | None of our choices sound too good |
| Between the devil and the deep blue sea | None of our choices sound too good |
| Beware of Greeks bearing gifts | If offered something unexpectedly, it might be a trick |
| Bird in hand is worth two in the bush | Be satisfied with what you have |
| Birds of a feather flock together | People who are alike hang out together |
| Bite off more than you can chew | To try to do something beyond your capability |
| Bite the bullet | Do what you have to do, though it may be difficult |
| Bite the dust | To die. |
| Bite the hand that feeds you | To be ungrateful when people do things for you |
| Bite your tongue | Don't say anything. Keep your comments to yourself |
| Black sheep of the family | One that is different from the rest |
| Bleeding heart | Overly compassionate for every cause, deserved or not |
| Blessing in disguise | Something that appears bad may turn out to be good |
| Blind leading the blind | You're following someone who doesn't know more than you |
| Blood is thicker than water | Loyalty to your family is stronger than to your friends |
| Blow your own horn | To brag about your own achievements and capabilities |
| Blue blood | Someone of high or noble birth, not used to physical labor |
| Boogie man | Something bad that scares children |
| Bolt out of the blue | Coming from "nowhere"; unexpected; shocking |
| Born with a silver spoon in your mouth | Born into a rich family. Unaware of the effects of poverty |
| Bottom line | What it's all about. The end result |
| Break a leg | A term in the theater meaning "good luck" |
| Break the ice | Getting things started to make everything easier |
| Bring down the house | To receive an enthusiastic reaction from an audience |
| Bring home the bacon | Bringing home a paycheck |
| Buck stops here | Taking responsibility for what happens |
| Bug off | Go away; stop bothering me |
| Bug someone | To bother someone; nagging |
| Bull in a china shop (closet) | Not being careful about the effect of your actions |
| Burning the candle at both ends | Working on so many things at once that you get exhausted |
| Burning the midnight oil | Staying up late to get something done |
| Burning your bridges behind you | Destroying relationships you may need later |
| Burr under his saddle | Something is irritating him, making him difficult to deal with |
| Bury the hatchet | Forgive and forget; stop being mad at each other |
| Bury your head in the sand | To ignore what's going on around you |
| Busy as a beaver | Working hard |
| Butter someone up | To flatter someone in order to get something from them |
| Butterflies in the stomach | Feeling nervous; that tingling feeling in your stomach |
| Button your lip | Stop talking. Don't say anything |
| Buy a pig in a poke | Agreeing to accept something you haven't seen |



GIGANTIC List of

Sayings-Idioms-Cliches

SAYING/IDIOM/CLICHE

WHAT IT MEANS

By hook or by crook
By the skin of your teeth

Get something done in any way necessary
Just barely; by the slimmest of margins

- C -

Cabin fever
Call it a day
Call the shots
Call your bluff
Called on the carpet
Calm before the storm
Can of worms
Can't fight city hall
Can't hit the side of a barn
Can't hold a candle to
Can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear
Can't make heads or tails out of it
Can't put my finger on it
Can't see the forest for the trees
Can't teach an old dog new tricks
Carry the ball
Cast your pearls before swine
Cast the first stone
Cast your bread upon the waters
Cat got your tongue?
Catch more flies with honey than vinegar
Catch you later
Caught red-handed
Chomping at the bit
Chew the fat
Chewed out
Chicken (Chickened out)
Chicken feed
Chickens come home to roost
Chill out
Chip off the old block
Chip on his shoulder
Chips are down
Chomping at the bit
Clam up
Clean as a whistle
Clean bill of health
Clear the decks

Restless from being cooped up too long; need to get out
Time to quit; it's over
To be in charge; direct what's happening; give orders
When someone wants you to do what you say you can do
To get in trouble; called to account for your actions
It's under control now, but it's going to get worse
A real mess; something hard to figure out or unravel
That's the rule, and we can't do anything about it
Such a bad shot that you can't hit anything you aim at
No comparison; one is way better than the other(s)
Can't make something valuable out of something worthless
I don't understand it; it makes no sense to me
I can't quite figure it out; don't know exactly what it is
It's obvious, but you still can't see it
It's hard to change how someone is used to doing things
Be responsible for getting the job done
To waste something valuable on one who is unappreciative
To be the first one to accuse someone of something wrong
The kindness that you do will be returned with kindness
Why can't you speak? Do you have nothing to say?
If you want something, be nice to people
Goodbye; see you later
Caught in the act. No question of guilt
Anxious to get started; hard to hold back
Talk and gossip just for the pleasure of it
Scolded severely
Scared; didn't attempt something due to fear
Being paid next to nothing; an insignificant amount of money
Trouble will come back to you if you cause trouble
Relax; stay "cool"; calm down
Just like your parents
Bad attitude; feels like others are out to get him
This is it; it's time to make it happen
Anxious to go; enthusiastic about getting started
Stop talking; shut up
Very clean; perfectly neat
Declared to be healthy; nothing wrong
Get everything finished up and out of the way



GIGANTIC List of

Sayings-Idioms-Cliches

SAYING/IDIOM/CLICHE

WHAT IT MEANS

| | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Climbing the wall | Restless; frustrated or anxious |
| Clip your wings | Take away your privileges or freedom |
| Cloak-and-Dagger | Secret plots; the scheming of spies |
| Close call (shave) | Almost happened |
| Cold feet | Frightened; (<i>see chickened out</i>) |
| Cold turkey | Without any preparation. Just do it |
| Come again | Repeat what you just said; say that again |
| Come apart at the seams | Upset, unable to keep going, emotional breakdown |
| Come up for air | Slow down a little; see what else is going on |
| Come up smelling like a rose | It looked bad, but everything turned out okay |
| Cooked your goose | It's over, and you're in trouble |
| Cooking with gas | Now you're really performing well |
| Cool as a cucumber | Very "cool"; calm; having self control |
| Cool it | Calm down; relax; stop doing what you're doing |
| Cooling your heels | Being made to wait, usually by someone with power over you |
| Cool your jets | Slow down; take a deep breath; relax a little |
| Cost an arm and a leg | Very expensive; painfully high price |
| Could eat a horse (or bear) | Extremely hungry |
| Cream always rises to the top | It will be obvious when someone is the best |
| Cream puff | Someone who is easy, not tough, weak |
| Cross that bridge when you come to it | Don't worry about a problem until it happens |
| Cry wolf | Calling for help when you don't really need it |
| Crying crocodile tears | Fake tears; pretending to cry |
| Crying over spilled milk | To keep fussing about something in the past |
| Cut off your nose to spite your face | Doing something to be stubborn, for no good reason |
| Cut the mustard | Able to get the job done |
| Cut your eyeteeth on something | Learned how to do something at a young age |
| Cuts (goes) against the grain | Goes against what is right, appropriate, or expected |
| Cutting edge | At the forefront; most advanced; newest development |

- D -

| | |
|---|---|
| Dark horse candidate | The candidate not expected to win |
| Day late and a dollar short | You missed the opportunity; too late to make a difference |
| Dead as a doornail | Totally hopeless; completely dead; no hope of reviving |
| Do or die | Risking everything; it's all success or all failure |
| Dog days of summer | Hot, lazy days in the summer |
| Dog-eat-dog world | Everyone only cares about themselves |
| Dog's life | Things are bad; not much freedom or happiness |
| Don't count your chickens before they hatch | Things don't always turn out the way we hope |
| Don't judge a book by its cover | Don't judge people or things just by how they look |
| Don't look a gift horse in the mouth | If someone gives you something, be grateful |



GIGANTIC List of

Sayings-Idioms-Cliches

SAYING/IDIOM/CLICHE

WHAT IT MEANS

Don't take any wooden nickels
Dot your i's and cross your t's
Down a rat hole
Down but not out
Down in the dumps
Down the drain
Down the hatch
Down to the brass tacks
Down-to-the-wire
Drawing the line
Drives a hard bargain
Driving me crazy
Drop in the bucket
Drop like a hot potato
Dull as dishwater
Dutch treat
Dyed-in-the-wool

Watch out for those who might try to trick you
Pay careful attention to even the smallest details
Wasted; totally lost
Suffering, but still fighting to win
Sad; depressed, melancholy
Wasted; totally lost
Swallow a drink in one gulp
Take on the important things without delay
At the very last minute; almost running out of time
Setting a limit; the boundary which can't be crossed
Difficult to negotiate with; usually gets what he wants
Something or someone is annoying me - a lot
Just a little bit, but many drops together will fill up a bucket
Get rid of someone or something as quickly as possible
Very plain; not interesting or inspiring in the least
Everyone pays his own way and his own expenses
Completed committed; permanent; stubborn

- E -

Early bird catches the worm
Easy come, easy go
Eat crow
Eat humble pie
Eat out of your hand
Eat your hat
Eat your heart out
Eat your words
Eating me out of house and home
Egg on your face
Elbow grease
Eleventh hour
Every cloud has a silver lining
Every Tom, Dick, and Harry
Everything but the kitchen sink
Everything is coming up roses
Face the Music
Eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth
Eyes are bigger than your stomach
Eyes in the back of her head

Don't wait; get going before it's all gone
It's easy to get, but it's also easy to lose
You were wrong; you have to take back what you said
Having to admit that you were wrong; being humiliated
Under your control; able to manipulate someone
Sure you're right; no danger of being proven wrong
To be very sad; anguished; jealous, regretful
You were wrong; you have to take back what you said
Eats so much I can't afford to feed him
Everyone knows you did or said something foolish
To put effort into getting something done
Near the end; the last possible opportunity
Look for something good to come out of something bad
Everybody; all the common folks; not exclusive
A lot of stuff; Everything you could possibly need
Everything looks good; things are working out well
Accept the consequences
Do the same thing back to someone they did to you
Took more than you could eat
Seems to always know what's going on everywhere

- F -

Face the music

Take responsibility; get the consequences coming to you



GIGANTIC List of

Sayings-Idioms-Cliches

SAYING/IDIOM/CLICHE

WHAT IT MEANS

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Fair-weather friend | Not a true friend; only there in good time, not bad times |
| Famous last words | Sarcastic remark; he doesn't know what he's talking about |
| Fat cat | An obviously wealthy person |
| Feast or famine | Either a lot or none at all; no middle ground |
| Feather in your cap | An achievement to be proud of |
| Feather your nest | Making only yourself more secure or comfortable |
| Feeling your oats | Energetic; in high spirits; acting in sort of a proud way |
| Feet of clay | A character flaw; a weakness that may be hidden |
| Fiddling while Rome burns | Playing around and not taking care of urgent business |
| Fifth wheel | Unnecessary; an extra person |
| Fighting tooth and nail | Really going at each other fiercely |
| Fills (fits) the bill | Just the perfect thing that is needed |
| Finger in the too many pies | Involved in too many things |
| Fish or cut bait | Make a choice and get it done, or step aside for others |
| Fish out of water | Someone who is in unfamiliar circumstances or surroundings |
| Fit as a fiddle | In good shape |
| Fix your wagon | Teach you a lesson; get even with you |
| Flash in the pan | Famous or popular only for a short time |
| Fly-by-night | Unreliable, dishonest; here today - gone tomorrow |
| Fly by the seat of your pants | Make it up as you go; no plan |
| Fly in the ointment (milk) | A problem is spoiling things |
| Fly off the handle | Getting angry easily causes you to act without thinking |
| Fly the coop | Escape; leave suddenly without notice |
| Foaming at the mouth | Very angry; or anxious to get or do something |
| Follow your nose | Just start moving forward and keep going |
| Food for thought | Something that makes you think |
| Footloose and fancy free | Free from obligations or someone telling you what to do |
| For the birds | Worthless; stupid; useless |
| Forty winks | A short nap |
| Four corners of the earth (wind) | From all parts of the world; from everywhere |
| Four eyes | A slang term for someone who wears glasses |
| Four sheets to the wind | Drunk |
| From soup to nuts | Everything you can think of; very complete |
| From the frying pan into the fire | To go from one bad situation to another bad situation |
| From the git-go | Right from the beginning; without delay |
| Full of beans (prunes) | Foolish; dishonest; don't know what you're talking about |
| Full of hot air | Bragging about things; exaggerating, maybe lying |
| Full of prunes (beans) | Foolish; dishonest; don't know what you're talking about |

- G -

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Gave up the ghost | Died; can also mean to quit doing something |
| Get a handle on something | Figure it out; know how to do something |
| Get a kick out of something | To be amused; to like something |



GIGANTIC List of
Sayings-Idioms-Cliches

SAYING/IDIOM/CLICHE

WHAT IT MEANS

| | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Get away with murder | Do something bad and get away with it |
| Get in on the ground floor | Be there when something is getting started |
| Get onto the swing of things | Get used to how things are done, the routine |
| Get off the hook | No longer responsible for something |
| Get out of my face | Leave me along; stop harassing me |
| Get real | Face reality; stop living in a fantasy world |
| Get something off your chest | Relieved from anxiety; feeling better; free of a burden |
| Get the lead out | Hurry up |
| Get to the bottom of it | Find out what's going on, what's the cause of something |
| Get under your skin | Irritated by someone's actions or words |
| Get-up-and-go | Energy, motivation, enthusiasm, ambition |
| Get your feet wet | Get started; jump right into something; stop hesitating |
| Get your goat | Makes you upset, annoyed, angry |
| Gift of gab | A good talker |
| Gilding the lily | Spoiling something by unnecessarily adding more to it |
| Give me five | Instead of a handshake, slap my hand with your hand |
| Give someone the shirt off your back | Very generous |
| Give your eyeteeth for something | To want something badly; will to do anything to get it |
| Go (cut) against the grain | Irritating; not going along with the program |
| Go along for the ride | Interested in watching but not participating |
| Go fly a kite | Go away; do something else; leave me alone |
| Go for broke | Risk everything; try your hardest |
| Go over like a lead balloon | To fail miserably |
| Go over with a fine-tooth comb | Look at all the little details very carefully |
| Go to the dogs | Turn bad; ruined |
| Going bananas (bonkers) (nuts) | Going crazy |
| Golden Rule | Do unto others as you want them to do unto you |
| Gone to pot | Become ruined; gotten worse |
| Goody-two-shoes | A person who tries to be perfect all the time |
| Got up on the wrong side of the bed | In a bad mood |
| Going around in circles | Working hard, but making no progress (also see rat race) |
| Grasp at straws | Trying to save yourself by reaching for anything |
| Gravy train | Good pay for little work |
| Green thumb | Able to grow just about anything |
| Green with envy | Extremely jealous |
| Grit your teeth | Bear the pain and meet the challenge courageously |
| Gum up the works | Mess things up; causing confusion or malfunction |

- H -

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Handle with kid gloves | Treat something or someone gently |
| Hand-to-mouth existence | Barely staying alive; having nothing in reserve |
| Handwriting on the wall | Foreshadowing or warning of something to come |



GIGANTIC List of

Sayings-Idioms-Cliches

SAYING/IDIOM/CLICHE

WHAT IT MEANS

| | |
|--|--|
| Hang in there | Don't give up |
| Hang out your shingle | Go into business for yourself |
| Hanging by your fingernails (a thread) | In a dangerous situation; very little is keeping you safe |
| Hard nut to crack | A problem that is difficult to solve |
| Hat in hand | To beg or ask for a favor in a humble way |
| Have a bone to pick with you | We have a problem; let's get it settled |
| Have a nice day. | I hope your experiences today are good ones |
| Have a screw loose | A little bit crazy, odd, or foolish |
| Have your cake and eat it too | Get what you wanted without having to compromise |
| Have your heart in your mouth (throat) | Extremely frightened; worried about the outcome |
| Having a field day | Having success; having fun - things are going your way |
| Head and shoulders above the crowd | You stand out in a crowd because of your qualities |
| Head honcho | The chief or boss - the person in charge |
| Head in the clouds | Daydreaming instead of taking care of business |
| Head over heels in love | Helplessly and completely in love |
| Heart is in the right place | To have good intentions, though it may not turn out right |
| Heavens to Betsy | Wow - can you believe it?! |
| High as a kite | Feeling good; happy; optimistic |
| High horse | Acting like you're better than others; arrogant |
| Highway robbery | Extremely high price for something people need to have |
| Hit below the belt | To play dirty; breaking the rules without regard for others |
| Hit the books | Study hard, usually for an upcoming exam |
| Hit the hay | Go to bed |
| Hit the jackpot | To be very lucky or achieve great success |
| Hit the nail on the head | What you said is true and accurate |
| Hit the road | Get going; begin a journey |
| Hit the roof | Get very angry very fast; lose your temper |
| Hit the spot (bullseye) | Just what you wanted or needed |
| Hitch in my get-along | A physical problem that makes it hard to get around |
| Hitch your wagon to a star | Aim for high goals; work to make your dream come true |
| Hold the fort | Don't give up; responsibility for something until help comes |
| Hold your horses | Wait; be patient |
| Horse of a different color | That's an entirely different kind of situation |
| Hot to trot | Ready to go; you want to get started |
| Hot under the collar | Angry |
| Humdinger (Doozie) | Something or a result that is fantastic; exceptional |
| Hungry enough to eat a horse | Really hungry |
| Hunker down | Get serious and get to work; don't quit; overcome |

- I -

If the shoe fits, wear it

If it applies to you, admit it



GIGANTIC List of

Sayings-Idioms-Cliches

SAYING/IDIOM/CLICHE

WHAT IT MEANS

Ignorance is bliss
In a nutshell
In hot water
In over your head
In the bag
In the doghouse
In the driver's seat
In the limelight (spotlight)
In the pink
In the same boat
In the tall cotton
It takes two to tango
It's Greek to me

It's better to not know something that will make you unhappy
A simple way of saying it; concise summary
In trouble
Too much for you to handle with your experience or resources
Everything ends the way you wanted it to; done
In trouble; someone wants to punish you
In control; in a position of authority
Getting all the attention
In excellent health; healthy
People are sharing the same problem or circumstance
Things look good; you can easily get what you want
The situation is caused by both of you
I don't understand any of it

- J -

Jack of all trades
Jet set
Jump down your throat
Jump off the deep end
Jump on the bandwagon
Jump the gun
Jump to conclusions

A person who can do just about anything well
People who can afford to travel whenever they want for fun
Verbally attacked by someone who is angry or upset
Go into something in the most dangerous way
Do something just because others are doing it
Start too soon without waiting for the correct time
Make the wrong assumption before learning the facts

- K -

Keep a stiff upper lip
Keep a straight face
Keep an eye on
Keep body and soul together
Keep something under your hat
Keep the wolf from the door
Keep up with Joneses
Keep your ear to the ground
Keep your fingers crossed
Keep your head above water
Keep your head down
Keep your knees loose
Keep your nose to the grindstone
Keep your shirt on
Key to the city
Kick the bucket
Kick up your heels
Kill the goose that layed the golden egg

Act brave; don't reveal your emotions
Don't laugh; don't reveal your emotions
Watch closely
Keep from dying
Keep it a secret
Keep from starving or from those who mean you harm
Buying things just because others have them
Listen and watch for signs
Hope for the best; hope for good luck
Stay alive; don't drown in a sea of trouble
Don't do anything dangerous or draw attention to yourself
Stay warmed up and ready to go
Keep working hard
Wait; be patient
You are a guest in our city; anything you want is yours
Die
Celebrate; have a good time
Destroy your source of wealth



GIGANTIC List of

Sayings-Idioms-Cliches

SAYING/IDIOM/CLICHE

WHAT IT MEANS

Kill two birds with one stone
Killing (fighting off) alligators
Knee high to a grasshopper
Knock on wood

Do two things with one effort
Busy dealing with important problems
Short because you are very young
Hopefully, if I don't have bad luck

- L -

Labor of love
Laugh out of the other side of your mouth
Lay an egg
Lay (put) your cards on the table
Lead a horse to water- can't make him drink
Lead around by the nose
Leave no stone unturned
Leave someone holding the bag
Left out in the cold
Lend an ear
Let sleeping dogs lie
Let the cat out of the bag
Let the chips fall where they may
Let your hair down
Light at the end of the tunnel
Like a bump on a log
Like it or lump it
Like two peas in a pod
Little pitchers have big ears
Live high off the hog
Lock, stock, and barrel
Lock the barn door after the horse is out
Long in the tooth
Look down your nose at someone
Lord willing and the creek don't rise
Lose your shirt
Low man on the totem pole
Lower the boom

Done because you want to, not because you will get paid
You're laughing now, but you might be crying later
Didn't do well; an embarrassing performance
Reveal your intentions, plan or purpose
Offer the opportunity, but you can't make someone do it
To be bossed around or controlled by someone else
Look everywhere; consider every possibility
Shirk responsibility, leaving someone in a bad situation
Excluded from something
Listen and pay attention
Don't look for trouble; leave a situation alone
Reveal a secret
Whatever happens will happen; don't try to manipulate it
Be informal and relaxed
There's hope if you keep moving forward
Doing nothing; making no contribution
It doesn't matter if you don't like it, that's how it is
Just alike in looks or behavior
Children are listening when we don't think they are
Living with style; spending money on nice things
Everything
It's too late; the damage is already done
Old; a person who has lived a long life
Think you're better than someone else
Barring an unforeseen circumstance that would prevent it
Lose everything you own, usually due to taking a risk
The least important person; having the least authority
Punish or scold someone severely

- M -

Mad as a hatter
Mad as a wet hen
Make a federal case out of something
Make a mountain out of a molehill
Make ends meet
Make hay while the sun is shining

Crazy (Sometimes it can mean very angry)
Very upset; angry
To make a big deal out of something minor
Turn no big deal into a problem
Pay your bills; have enough money to live
Take advantage of a situation while you can



GIGANTIC List of

Sayings-Idioms-Cliches

SAYING/IDIOM/CLICHE

WHAT IT MEANS

Make no bones about it
Make waves
Makes my mouth water
Messing with someone
Midas touch
Mincing your words
Mind your P's and Q's
Miss the boat
Monkey business
More than meets the eye
More than one way to skin a cat
Mum's the word

Clearly stated; cannot be misunderstood
Cause trouble or a disturbance
Makes me very hungry
To annoy, hassle, or deliberately irritate someone
Everything he does turns out as good as gold
Not coming directly to the point or saying what you mean
Mind your manners; be nice and do thing correctly
Lose out on an opportunity; too little too late
Foolish or idiotic behavior; dishonest or illegal activities
It looks one way, but it may be a different way
More than one way to get something done
Keep it quiet; don't say anything about it

- N -

Name is mud
Necessity is the mother of invention
Need that like I need a hole in the head
Needle in a haystack
Nickle and dime
Nitty Gritty
No brainer
No dice
No quarter asked, none given
No skin off my nose
No spring chicken
Not my cup of tea
Not the sharpest tool in the shed
Nothing new under the sun
Nothing to sneeze at
Nothing ventured, nothing gained
Nutty as a fruitcake (nuts)

You're in trouble; you have lost respect
We are most likely to be creative when we need something
I have no need for it, at all; in fact, having it may be bad
Hard to find
Unimportant, cheap, trivial, small-time
The heart of the matter; what really matters
Anyone can figure it out; obvious
Absolutely not
No one will ask for mercy and no one will give mercy
It doesn't matter to me
Not young any more; getting older
Not what I'm interested in or good at
Not very bright; a little dumber than most
People have always been the same, throughout history
Pretty good; don't underestimate it
You have to risk failure in order to gain something
Crazy; unpredictable

- O -

Off the beaten path
Off the cuff
Off the top of my head
Off-the-wall
Off your rocker
Old hat
Old wives' tale
On a shoestring
On cloud nine
On pins and needles

Going somewhere or doing something differently
Without thinking about it; spontaneous
Without researching it; first response
Weird; unexpected; not usually done that way
Crazy
An idea that is old or worn out
A superstition, not based on fact
Just barely; usually refers to money
Very happy
Nervous; anxious



GIGANTIC List of

Sayings-Idioms-Cliches

SAYING/IDIOM/CLICHE

WHAT IT MEANS

| | |
|---|--|
| On someone's case | Nagging, finding fault, or scolding someone constantly |
| On the ball | Sharp; knows what's going on all the time |
| On the double (double time) | Hurry up; pick up the pace; do it fast |
| On the fence | Undecided; can't make up your mind |
| On the fritz | Not working properly or at all |
| On the horns of a dilemma | Hard to make a decision, but a decision must be made |
| On the hot seat | In a difficult situation requiring difficult answers |
| On the Q.T. | Keep it quiet |
| On the rocks | Having trouble; ready to break apart |
| On the ropes | Things don't look so good, but you're still fighting back |
| On the skids | Not doing well; heading for disaster |
| On the spur of the moment | Short notice; no advance warning; spontaneous |
| On the warpath | Infuriated; ready to act out your anger |
| On top of the world | Feeling good, like you are king of the world |
| Once in a blue moon | Very seldom |
| One bad apple spoils the whole barrel | One person can be a bad influence on everyone in the group |
| One brick short of a full load | Not very smart; a little crazy |
| One can short of a six pack | Not very smart; a little crazy |
| One good turn deserves another | Return kindness with kindness |
| One-horse town | Very, very small town |
| One-track mind | Focusing on only one thing; obsessed with something |
| Other side of the coin | The opposing argument; different opinion |
| Ounce of prevention worth a pound of cure | Preventing a problem is easier than dealing with a problem |
| Out behind the wood shed | Being punished |
| Out in left field | Don't really know what's going on; off target |
| Out in the boondocks | Out in the country; uncivilized |
| Out of here | I'm leaving, going somewhere else |
| Out like a light | Soundly asleep or unconscious |
| Out of bounds | Uncalled for; beyond what is reasonable or expected |
| Out of sight, out of mind | You'll eventually stop thinking about someone or something |
| Out of the (clear) blue (sky) | Suddenly and without warning |
| Out of the mouth of babes | Wisdom expressed in simple terms from an unexpected source |
| Out of the woods | Out of danger |
| Out on a limb | Taking a risk |
| Over a barrel | In a tough situation |
| Over the hill | Old; too old to do something like you did when young |

- P -

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Pain in the neck (butt) | A pest; someone or something that is annoying |
| Par for the course | That sounds about right; normal, typical, expected |
| Pass the buck | Not take responsibility, but expect someone else to do it |
| Pass the hat | Ask for a donation or beg |



GIGANTIC List of

Sayings-Idioms-Cliches

SAYING/IDIOM/CLICHE

WHAT IT MEANS

| | |
|---|--|
| Paying through the nose | Pay too much for something |
| Pen is mightier than the sword | What people write can hurt more people than a weapon |
| Penny for your thoughts | Will you tell me what you are thinking? |
| Penny-wise and pound-foolish | Paying attention to little things but not the important things |
| People in glass houses shouldn't throw stones | Don't criticize others because you are just as bad |
| Pie in the sky | An impossible dream; wanting too much |
| Piece of cake | Very easy and pleasant |
| Piece of the pie | A share of something |
| Pink elephant | Symbolizes someone being drunk |
| Play the field | To keep your options open; not going with anyone special |
| Playing both ends against the middle | Trying to manipulate a situation |
| Playing cat and mouse | Trying to keep from losing to someone; toying with them |
| Playing fast and loose | Being careless without regard for the consequences |
| Playing second fiddle | Not in the lead; subordinate to someone else |
| Playing with fire | Doing something that could get you hurt; dangerous risk |
| Point of no return | Too late to turn back, may as well keep going |
| Poor as a church mouse | Extremely poor, having nothing; poverty stricken |
| Pounding sand down a hole | Pointless; nothing will come from your efforts |
| Pour out your heart | Tell someone your innermost feelings and deepest thoughts |
| Power behind the throne | The unseen person who is actually in charge |
| Proof of the pudding is in the eating | Try something before you make a judgement |
| Pull a fast one | Trick someone dishonestly |
| Pull a rabbit out of a hat | Make something happen that seems impossible |
| Pull no punches | Tell it like it is, even though it may hurt |
| Pull out all the stops | Hold nothing back; do whatever is necessary |
| Pull strings | Ask for favors; manipulate the situation |
| Pull the rug out from under you | Take away support that was expected or promised |
| Pull the wool over your eyes | To be deceived by someone |
| Pull your leg | To pretend something is true, usually just for fun |
| Pull your leg | To fool or trick someone; jokingly lie to someone |
| Put all your eggs into one basket | Do not have a backup plan; if it doesn't work, all is lost |
| Pull up stakes | To leave and start over somewhere else |
| Put your best foot forward | Make a good impression |
| Put your foot down | Make something stop or change; no further discussion |
| Put your money where your mouth is | Stop talking and do something; back up what you say |
| Put your shoulder into it | Work harder - use all your strength |
| Put your shoulder to the wheel | Get to work; don't give up - keep working at it |
| Pull yourself together | Regain control over your emotions and actions; calm down |

- Q -

| | |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|
| Quick on the draw | Fast to react |
| Quiet as a mouse | Very quiet, not making a sound |



GIGANTIC List of

Sayings-Idioms-Cliches

SAYING/IDIOM/CLICHE

WHAT IT MEANS

- R -

Rain check
 Rain or shine
 Raining cats and dogs
 Raise Cain
 Rally around the flag
 Rat race
 Rats abandoning the ship
 Reading between the lines
 Reading the riot act
 Real McCoy
 Red carpet treatment
 Red Herring
 Red-letter day
 Red Tape
 Right off the bat
 Rings a bell
 Rocking the boat
 Roll with the punches
 Rolling stone gathers no moss
 Rome was not built in a day
 Rotten apple spoils the whole barrel
 Round peg in a square hole (or vice-versa)
 Rub elbows with someone
 Rubs the wrong way
 Run off at the mouth
 Running circles around someone

A promise that you can do or have something later
 Nothing will stop it from happening, not even the weather
 Raining very hard; big raindrops
 Cause trouble
 Come together to show support and unity
 The daily routine; boring and repetitive
 Leaving before it's too late; being disloyal in bad times
 Inferring what something means, though it is not stated
 Severely scolding or warning someone
 The real thing; not fake; good quality
 Treated like royalty; very special special welcome
 Something that confuses the issue, or is misleading
 Very special day; happy and significant day to remember
 Complications; rules and regulations
 Immediately, from the beginning
 Sounds familiar
 Making trouble; causing a disturbance; disrupting
 Go along with whatever happens
 Keep busy and you may avoid some problems
 Everything takes time; be patient
 A bad person or thing should be removed
 A person who thinks or acts differently than others
 Associate with someone; do as they do
 To irritate; goes against what is appropriate
 Talk too much; say things that don't need to be said
 Doing something faster or better than someone else

- S -

Salt of the earth
 Save for a rainy day
 Saved by the bell
 Sawing logs
 Scarce as hens' teeth
 Scraping the bottom of the barrel
 Scratch the surface
 Security blanket
 See eye to eye
 Selling like hotcakes
 Set your teeth on edge
 Settle an old score
 Shake a leg

Solid members of society
 Keep it in case you need it later
 Almost lost, but just barely hung on and survived
 Sleeping soundly; heavy breathing while sleeping
 Very, very rare; hard to find; nonexistent
 The worst of the bunch; the least desirable
 Barely dealing with an issue; there's much more to do
 Something that provides emotional comfort and support
 Agree on something
 Selling something very fast; many people want it
 To make nervous or anxious or irritable
 To get revenge for something that happened in the past
 Hurry up



GIGANTIC List of

Sayings-Idioms-Cliches

SAYING/IDIOM/CLICHE

WHAT IT MEANS

| | |
|--|---|
| Shape up or ship out | Do it right or don't do it at all |
| Shoe on the other foot | The situation is turned around |
| Shoot from the hip | Do or say something without thinking or taking aim |
| Shot in the arm | Increased energy; revived |
| Show must go on | Nothing can stop it; it is important to continue |
| Showing your true colors | Revealing what you are really like |
| Sick as a dog | Extremely and miserably ill |
| Sight for sore eyes | Glad to see it |
| Sing for your supper | Perform a service in return for something you want |
| Sink or swim | To succeed or fail based on your own efforts |
| Sitting duck | Defenseless to an attack |
| Sitting pretty | In pretty good shape; well positioned for success |
| Six of one and half-dozen of the other | Both options are the same; neither is better or worse |
| Skeleton in your closet | You have a secret you want no one to know |
| Skating on thin ice | Taking a risk; could turn out badly |
| Skinned alive | In a lot of trouble |
| Sky's the limit | Unlimited potential; who knows how good it can be? |
| Sleep on it | Think about it overnight |
| Slim pickin's | Not much to choose from; small return for your effort |
| Slinging hash | Working as a waiter in an inexpensive restaurant |
| Slinging mud | Saying bad things about someone; harmful gossip |
| Slow on the draw | Slow to understand or respond |
| Smell a rat | Something doesn't seem right |
| Smelling like a rose | Things are turning out well |
| Snake in the grass | Deceitful, untrustworthy, sneaky |
| Snotty nosed kid | Youngster with no experience |
| Snug as a bug in a rug | Very comfortable, safe, and secure |
| Soft soap | Gently urging someone; persuading through flattery |
| Sow your wild oats | To act irresponsibly, causing later consequences |
| Spare the rod and spoil the child | Discipline children so they grow up with good character |
| Spick and span | Very clean; tidy and neat |
| Spill the beans | Tell a secret |
| Spitting image | Looks just like another; a perfect resemblance |
| Splitting hairs | Arguing about minor, unimportant differences |
| Stick-in-the-mud | Old fashioned, ignoring progress; holding everyone back |
| Stick to your guns | Don't give in; stick to what you believe and/or say |
| Stick your neck out | Take a risk |
| Sticks to your ribs | A hearty meal; keeps you from being hungry a long time |
| Still waters run deep | People who don't talk a lot do a lot of thinking |
| Stir up a hornet's nest | Cause trouble; get people angry at you |
| Stitch in time saves nine | Take care of a problem while it is still relatively small |
| Straight from the horse's mouth | Accurate information from the source |



GIGANTIC List of

Sayings-Idioms-Cliches

SAYING/IDIOM/CLICHE

WHAT IT MEANS

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Straight from the shoulder | Honestly; to tell the truth; tell it like it is |
| Straighten up and fly right | Do the right thing |
| Straw that broke the camel's back | The thing that finally made a situation unbearable |
| Strike a happy medium | Compromise; find a solution that is not too extreme |
| Strike while the iron is hot | Do it now, while you have the opportunity |
| Stuffed shirt | Formal; not casual; usually not fun to be around |
| Sucking up gas | Tired; huffing and puffing; trying to breathe |
| Swallow hook, line, and sinker | Believe everything someone tells you |
| Swan song | The final farewell; the last words or performance |
| Swept you off your feet | Strongly attracted to someone; can't resist |
| Sweet tooth | Craving for sweet tasting foods |

- T -

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Take a back seat | To defer to someone else; in an inferior position |
| Take a powder | Leave quickly; sneak out quietly |
| Take a shine to | Like very much |
| Take it to the hoop | Score; get the job done; accomplish the task at hand |
| Take your hat off to someone | Expressing respect and appreciation for an accomplishment |
| Take someone under your wing | Help someone by protecting and teaching them |
| Take the bitter with the sweet | You have to take the good along with the bad |
| Take the bull by the horns | Take on a situation, even if it is difficult |
| Take with a grain of salt | Don't take it too seriously; maybe true, maybe not |
| Takes the cake | Wins the prize; the most, best, or worst of something |
| Talk through your hat | Talk about something of which you have no knowledge |
| That's the way the ball bounces | That's just how it is; something out of your control |
| Through the grapevine | Through rumors and common knowledge |
| Throw a curve | To mislead; situation requiring a change of plans |
| Throw a monkey wrench into the works | Mess something up |
| Throw caution to the wind | Do something without considering the consequences |
| Throw cold water on something | Do something that damages enthusiasm |
| Throw in the towel | Quit before it's over |
| Throw the baby out with the dishwater | Give up on a good idea because of related problems or confusion |
| Throw the book at someone | Hold someone accountable for everything; no slack |
| Throw your hat into the ring | Join in a contest |
| Throw your weight around | Influence a situation; sometimes it means being a bully |
| Tickled pink | Very happy; amused or pleased |
| Tickles your funny bone | Something that is funny; makes you laugh |
| Tied to someone's apron strings | Dependent on someone else - usually your mother or wife |
| Tighten your belt | Things are getting tough financially; we have to adjust |
| Till the cows come home | For a long time; seems like it will never end |
| Tip of the iceberg | It seems simple, but it's more complicated than that |
| Tongue-in-cheek | Said in a humorous way; sarcastic |



GIGANTIC List of

Sayings-Idioms-Cliches

SAYING/IDIOM/CLICHE

WHAT IT MEANS

Tongue-tied

Can't speak

Too big for your britches

Thinking you're more important than you are; conceited

Too many cooks spoil the broth

If too many people are involved, it gets complicated

Top banana (dog)

Most important; leader; boss; performer with top billing

Top drawer

The best; highest quality

Touch and go

Risky; looks bad, but might turn out okay

Touch something with a ten-foot pole

Risky or dangerous; don't get involved

Trip the light fantastic

Dance

True-blue

Very loyal and dependable

Turn over a new leaf

Start behaving differently

Turn the other cheek

Don't fight back; kindness will win over aggression

Turn the tables

Switch roles

Turn up your nose at someone

Rude and stuck-up; think you're better than someone

Two-faced

A liar; tells different things to different people

Two left feet

Clumsy; can't dance

- U -

Under the table

Unofficially; not accounted for; usually not legal

Under the weather

Feeling sick, tired, or depressed

Until I was blue in the face

Kept trying until I was exhausted; put all my effort into

Until the cows come home

For a long, long time; all day; as long as it takes

Up the creek without a paddle

Took a risk and lost; little hope

Up against the wall

The odds are against you; you are being attacked

Upper crust

High society; hoity-toity; social elite

Upset the apple cart

Disturb or spoin things; mess everything up

- W -

Waiting for the other shoe to drop

Waiting in suspense for the next thing to happen

Walk a mile in his shoes

Try understanding his problems before you judge him

Walking on eggs

Being very cautious

Walking on air (the clouds)

Very happy; excited, pleased, joyful

Wash your hands of something

No more responsibility for the outcome

Watch your lip (mouth)

Be careful what you say

Watched pot never boils

Relax; it takes time, so don't worry about it

Water over the dam (under the bridge)

It's already happened; you can't change it

Wearing your heart on your sleeve

Letting your feeling and emotions show

Wet behind the ears

Young and inexperienced

Wet blanket

Someone who dampens enthusiasm

What's good for goose is good for gander

The same thing applies to everyone

Wheeling and dealing

Agressively manipulating a situation, usually involving money

When the cat's away the mice will play

When a person in authority is absent, others do as they please

Where there's smoke, there's fire

Something is suspicious; there is some basis to the rumor



GIGANTIC List of

Sayings-Idioms-Cliches

SAYING/IDIOM/CLICHE

WHAT IT MEANS

White (or gray) beard

Old man

White elephant

An unusual and unique item; usually unwanted

Wide place in the road

A very small town or place of business

Wild-goose chase

An effort that is pointless or fruitless

With flying colors

With great success, with no doubt about the outcome

Without batting an eyelash

Without hesitation

Wolf in sheep's clothing

Pretending to be something you're not, with bad intentions

Word of mouth

People telling other people

Worth your salt

Having character; strong personal value

Wrong side of the tracks

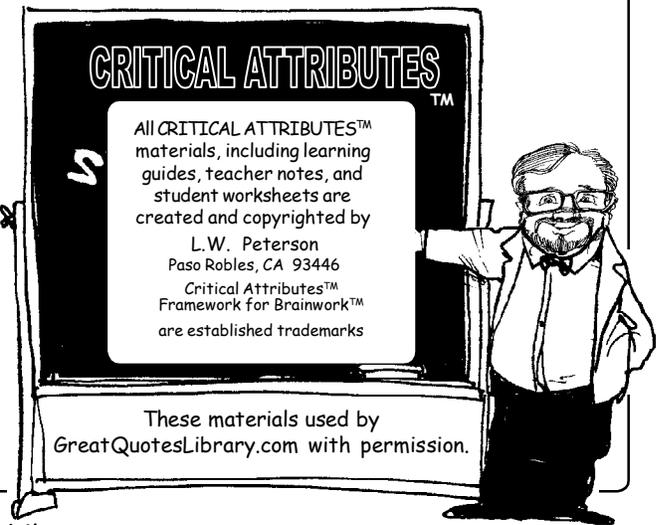
From an undesirable part of town or social class

- Y -

Your goose is cooked

It's over, and you're in trouble

If you think of another saying, idiom, or cliché, write it in this space. Then turn back to where it would appear alphabetically and place an asterisk (to remind you to look on this page).



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