

Add fuel to the fire



To make a situation worse than it already is.

*His mild words only added fuel to the fire.
Isabelle was furious.*

Ask for trouble



To seem to be trying to get into trouble; to do something that would cause trouble.

*The guard asked me to leave unless I was
looking for trouble.*

To not bat an eyelash



To not show any shock or surprise.

*'So what did she say when you told her you
were leaving?' 'She didn't bat an eyelash.'*

Beat about the bush

To avoid talking about a difficult or embarrassing subject because you are worried about upsetting the person you are talking to.



Don't beat around the bush. Just tell me where my brother is.

Between you and me and the gate post



Something that you say when you're going to tell someone something you do not want them to tell anyone else.

Between you and me and the gatepost, I'm thinking of leaving.

Beyond the call of duty



To do much more than is expected.

If your waiter goes beyond the call of duty, leave a bigger tip.

Bite off more than one can chew

To take on more than one can deal with; to be overconfident.

Ann is exhausted again. She's always biting off more than she can chew.



Blessing in disguise

Something that at first appears to be bad or unlucky turns out to be good.

Losing his job was a blessing in disguise – he never would've started his own business if it hadn't happened.



Blow one's own trumpet

To tell other people how good and successful you are.

Anyone will tell you she's one of the best journalists we've got, although she'd never blow her own trumpet.



Bolt from the blue

Something that you do not expect to happen and that surprises you very much.



He seemed to be very happy in his job, so his resignation came as a bolt out of the blue.

Born with a silver spoon in one's mouth



Born into wealth and privilege.

James doesn't know anything about working for a living – he was born with the silver spoon in his mouth.

Buy a pig in a poke

To buy something without looking inside first.

If you don't get a good look at the engine of a used car before you buy it, you'll wind up buying a pig in a poke.



Have a card up one's sleeve

To have an advantage that other people don't know about.



I still had a card up my sleeve in the form of a letter from his father.

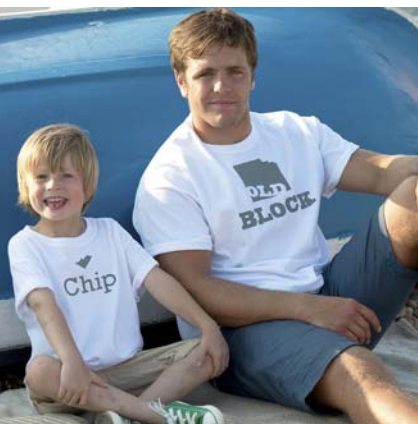
Caught with one's pants down



To be in a situation that embarrasses you.

My job was to get as much information as possible so that my boss would not be caught with his pants down.

Chip off the old block



Someone who is similar in character to their father or mother.

He enjoys bossing people around just like his father used to do – he's a real chip off the old block!

Chip on one's shoulder

A bad attitude that tends to get someone easily upset.

Why did you get so angry at the slightest criticism? You seem to have a chip on your shoulder.



Damn with faint praise

To praise something or someone in such a weak way that it is obvious you do not really admire them.

She damned Reynolds with faint praise, calling him one of the best imitators in the world.



Daylight robbery



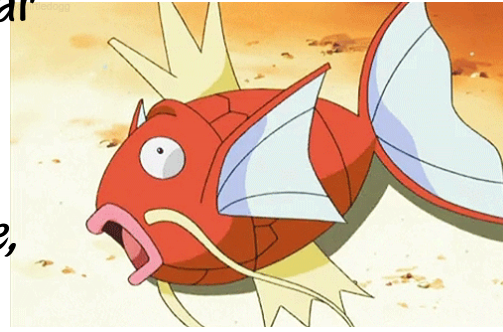
A situation in which you are charged much more for something than you think you should have to pay.

It is daylight robbery to charge that amount of money for a hotel room!

Fish out of water

Someone who is uncomfortable in a particular situation.

After living in Hong Kong for most of his life, Lee was a fish out of water in Los Angeles.



Fly off the handle

To lose one's temper.

Every time anyone mentions taxes, Mr. Brown flies off the handle. If he keeps flying off the handle like that, he'll have a heart attack.



Hammer away at

To do something with great energy and with all your attention.

She spent all weekend hammering away at her novel.



Not enough room to swing a cat

To not have very much space.

Their living room was very small. There wasn't enough room to swing a cat.



Keep an eye on

To watch someone or something; to monitor someone or something closely.



I'm keeping my eye on that apple tree. When the apples ripen, I will be the first to pick them.

Keep a low profile

To behave in a way that does not attract attention.

The local people are not always pleasant to strangers, who are warned to keep a low profile while visiting.



Rub salt in a wound

To deliberately make someone's unhappiness, shame or misfortune worse.

Bill is feeling miserable about losing his job and Bob is rubbing salt into the wound by saying how good his replacement is.



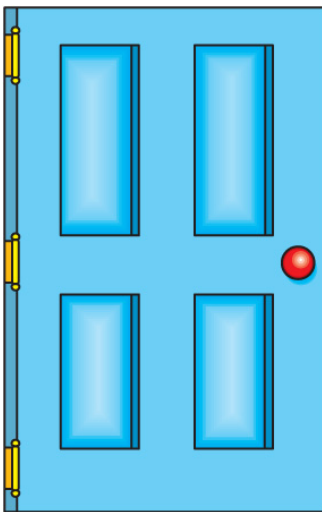
By leaps and bounds



Rapidly, by large movements forward.

The bush we cut back last fall is growing by leaps and bounds.

Behind closed doors



In secret; away from observers, reporters, or intruders, usually in a closed room.

They held the meeting behind closed doors, as the law allowed.

A lick and a promise

To do a job or piece of work quickly and not carefully.

We didn't have time to do much clearing up in the yard - just gave the grass a lick and a promise.



Lily-livered



Lacking courage; cowardly; timid.

That boy is lily-livered - he won't stand and fight!

Make a clean breast of it



To tell the truth about something, especially something bad or illegal that you have done, so that you do not have to feel guilty any more.

After months of lying about the money, he decided to make a clean breast of it and tell the truth.

Make a break for it

To run suddenly toward someone or something; to seize an opportunity to run toward someone or something.

Max made a break for the door.



Make a killing

To have a great success, especially in making money.

John is making a killing in selling insurance.



Null and void



Having no legal force; invalid

Render a contract null and void.

Show one the ropes

To explain to someone how to do a job or activity.

The new secretary started today so I spent most of the morning showing her the ropes.



Shut the stable door after the horse has bolted



To try to prevent something that has already happened; to act too late.

Improving security after a major theft would seem to be a bit like shutting the stable door after the horse has bolted.

Slip of the tongue

An error in speaking in which the speaker says something unintentionally.

I didn't mean to tell her that. It was a slip of the tongue.



Bark up the wrong tree



To make the wrong choice; to ask the wrong person; to follow the wrong course.

If you think I'm the guilty person, you're barking up the wrong tree.

Take the wind out of one's sails



To humiliate someone.

The sharp rebuke from the boss knocked the wind out of his sails.

To be under someone's thumb



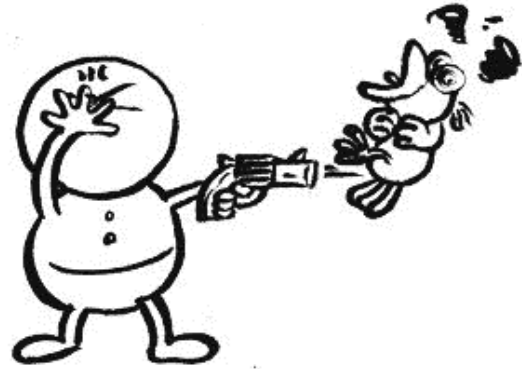
To be under someone's control and management.

You can't keep your kids under your thumb all their lives.

A shot in the dark

A very general attempt; a wild guess.

It was just a shot in the dark. I had no idea was exactly correct!



Stick out like a sore thumb

To be very obvious.

That pimple really sticks out like a sore thumb!



Let off the hook

To allow someone to escape from a difficult situation or to avoid doing something that they do not want to do.

John has agreed to go to the meeting in my place, so that lets me off the hook.

