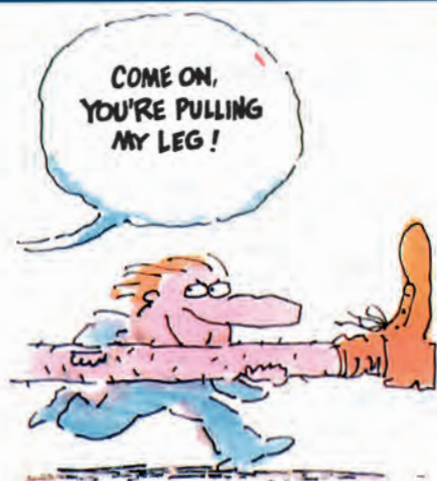


101 American English Idioms

Understanding and Speaking English Like an American



Different strokes for different folks



Straight from the horse's mouth



Harry Collis

Illustrated by Mario Riso

101 American English Idioms

Understanding and Speaking
English Like an American

Harry Collis

Illustrated by Mario Risso

Contents

Foreword

v

Section One:

It's a Zoo Out There 1–10

Smell a Rat □ Go to the Dogs □ Fishy □ Take the Bull by the Horns □ Horse of a Different Color □ Let the Cat Out of the Bag □ For the Birds □ Straight From the Horses's Mouth □ Horse Around □ Cat Got Your Tongue?

Section Two:

The Body Has Many Uses 11–22

Get in Someone's Hair □ Shoot Off One's Mouth □ Jump Down Someone's Throat □ Pay Through the Nose □ Tongue-In-Cheek □ Pull Someone's Leg □ Play It by Ear □ Stick Out One's Neck □ Shake a Leg □ All Thumbs □ Not Have a Leg to Stand On □ Get Off Someone's Back

Section Three:

That's Not Nice 23–30

Drive Someone Up a Wall □ String Someone Along □ Sell Someone Down the River □ Leave Someone High and Dry □ Sell Someone Short □ Snow Job □ Spill the Beans □ Feed Someone a Line

Section Four:

People Do the Strangest Things 31–44

On Ice □ Shoot the Breeze □ Bite the Dust □ Bend over Backwards □ Hit the Hay □ Cough Up □ Jump the Gun □ Scratch Someone's Back □ Hit the Ceiling □ Fork Over □ Turn Someone Off □ Go Fly a Kite □ Kick the Bucket □ Raise a Stink

Section Five:

Clothes Make the Man (and Woman) 45–54

Wet Blanket □ Keep Under One's Hat □ Up One's Sleeve □ Dressed to Kill □ Give Someone the Slip □ Knock Someone's Socks Off □ Talk Through One's Hat □ Lose One's Shirt □ In Stitches □ Dressed to the Teeth

Section Six:

When Things Go Wrong

85–88

Lemon □ Out of the Woods □ Get Up on the Wrong Side of the Bed □ Out on a Limb □ Eating Someone □ Get the Ax □ In the Hole □ Bite the Bullet □ Face the Music □ Blow It □ At the End of One's Rope □ On One's Last Legs □ Hot Under the Collar □ On the Line

Section Seven:

When Things Go Well

89–78

For a Song □ Make a Splash □ Have the World by the Tail □ Sitting Pretty □ Feel Like a Million Dollars □ Kick Up One's Heels □ Bury the Hatchet □ Paint the Town Red □ Get Away Clean □ Come Alive

Section Eight:

Do Your Best

79–90

Toot One's Own Horn □ Stick to One's Guns □ Get the Ball Rolling □ Mind One's P's and Q's □ Hang On □ Give It One's Best Shot □ Make Ends Meet □ Get the Jump on Someone □ Pull Strings □ Spread Oneself Too Thin □ Go to Bat for Someone □ Duck Soup

Section Nine:

You Don't Say

91–101

Money Talks □ Let Sleeping Dogs Lie □ Shape Up or Ship Out □ If the Shoe Fits, Wear It □ Different Strokes For Different Folks □ Bark Worse Than One's Bite □ Eyes Are Bigger Than One's Stomach □ Put One's Money Where One's Mouth Is □ The Early Bird Catches the Worm □ People Who Live in Glass Houses Shouldn't Throw Stones

Index to Idioms

102

Foreword

Nonnative speakers of English can reach a point in their knowledge of the language where they feel comfortable with standard literary speech; however, they're liable to find themselves in hot water when confronted with idiomatic expressions. When hearing an idiom or colloquialism they may feel frustrated and confused, since the true meaning of the idiom generally cannot be determined by a knowledge of its component parts. In many cases an attempt on the part of the learner to tie down a definition of an idiom that would work in all instances is a futile undertaking.

When used by native speakers, idioms sound natural and fit the occasion, since Americans instinctively feel the imagery and impact of what they are saying. A nonnative speaker of English, on the other hand, may know the basic meaning of such expressions as "I gave it my best shot" or "dressed to kill," but still not be able to use them appropriately. For example, if at a formal gathering an American says to the wife of a foreign diplomat that her gown is elegant, or that she looks lovely, and in appreciation for the compliment her answer is, "Thank you, I gave it my best shot!" or "Thanks, I dressed to kill!", the chances are that the American would be trying his hardest to hold back peals of laughter. Even with a fairly accurate idea of the meaning of an idiomatic expression, the nonnative lacks the intuitive feel for its impact or for the "picture" it creates.

101 American English Idioms is designed to help bridge the gap between "meaning" and "thrust" of American colloquialisms by providing a situation and a graphic illustration of that situation, so that the imagery created by the expression can be felt, rather than simply learned as a stock definition.

The book is divided into nine sections. The title of each section reflects a notion or a manifestation of the physical world, the world of behavior, or the world of the senses with which the reader may easily identify.

It is hoped that the natural tone of the language of the situations in which the idiom is presented will help to convey the *feeling* of the idiom and the circumstances under which it may be used. The illustrations graphically depicting the meaning of the components of the expressions not only add an element of humor, but also serve to highlight the contrast between the literal and actual meaning of the idioms as presented in the text.

An index is included to facilitate recall and location of the expressions.

101 American English Idioms is intended primarily for all students of English. Nevertheless, because of the graphic humor of the idioms in caricature, native speakers of English will also find the book refreshingly entertaining.

Section One

It's a Zoo Out There

Smell a Rat



(feel that something is wrong)

How come the front door is open? Didn't you close it before we went shopping?

I'm sure I did. I can't understand it.

Frankly, I **smell a rat**.

Me, too. I'm **convinced that something is definitely wrong** here.

We'd better call the police.

Go to the Dogs



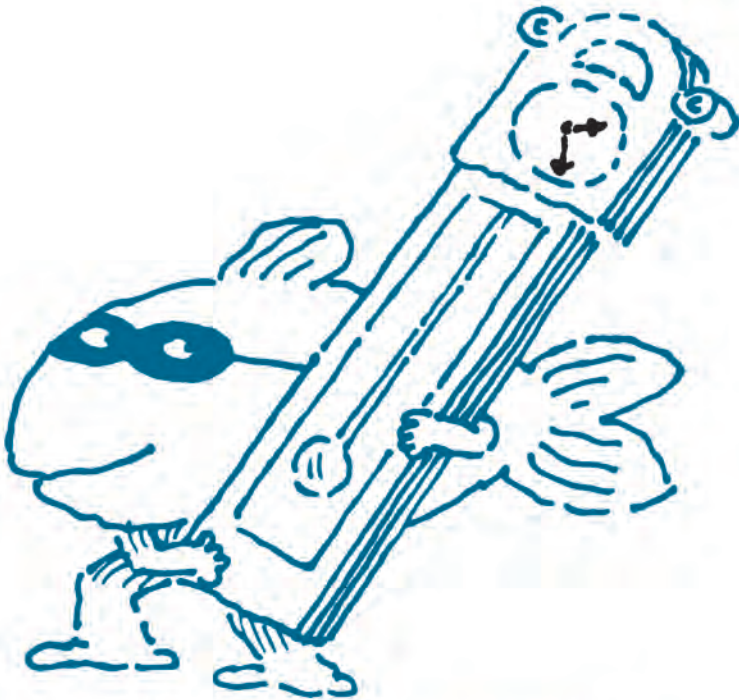
(become run-down)

Have you seen their house lately? It's really **gone to the dogs**.

It's true that it has **become run-down and in serious need of repair**, but I'm sure that it can be fixed up to look like new.

I guess with a little carpentry work and some paint it could look pretty decent.

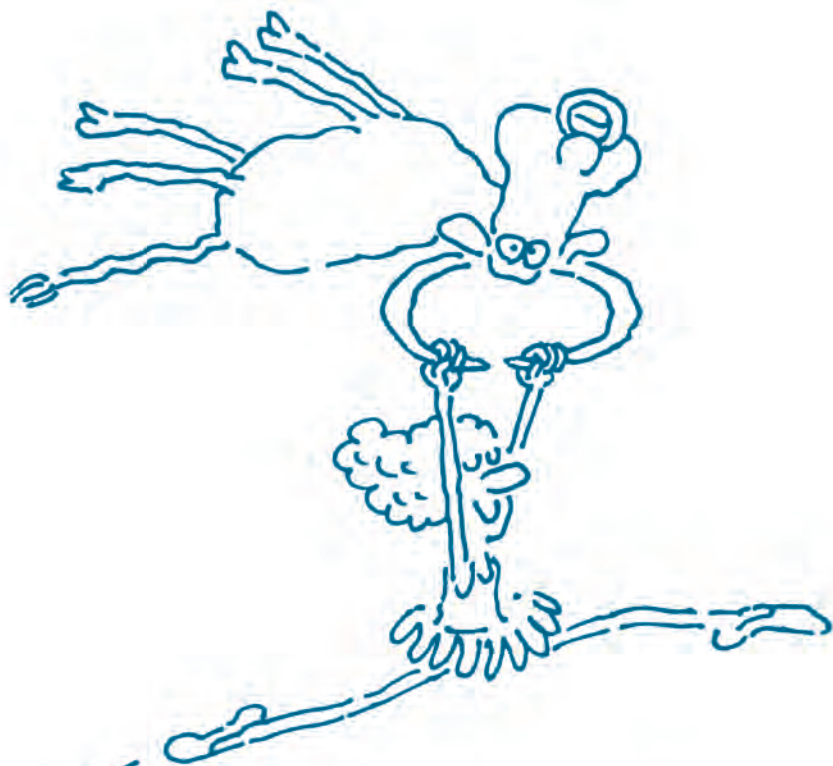
Fishy



(strange and suspicious)

When the security guard saw a light in the store after closing hours, it seemed to him that there was something **fishy** going on. He called the central office and explained to his superior that he thought something **strange and suspicious** was occurring.

Take the Bull by the Horns



• (take decisive action in a difficult situation)

Julie had always felt that she was missing out on a lot of fun because of her clumsiness on the dance floor. She had been putting off taking lessons, but she finally **took the bull by the horns** and went to a professional dance studio for help. She was tired of feeling left out and **acted decisively to correct the situation.**



This Book Will **Knock Your Socks Off!**

Here is a refreshing **tongue-in-cheek** look at American idioms, presented in a lively caricature.



American English Idioms, a whimsical collection of colloquialisms, is sure to delight you—and provide real insight into American idioms, customs, and humor.

Harry Collis has arranged common everyday idioms into nine lighthearted sections—including: ■ The Body Has Many Uses ■ People Do the Strangest Things ■ When Things Go Wrong ■ When Things Go Well ■ and more. And he has turned them over to the expert hands of Mario Rizzo, whose wonderfully humorous cartoons illustrate what Americans say and what they *really* mean.

Each idiom has a standard English “translation” and is placed in a real-life context, either in a natural dialogue or narrative. These facilitate understanding and make the idioms come alive!

The cartoons, dialogues, and narratives are sure to help non-English speakers increase their sensitivity to American English at its most colorful—while native speakers will enjoy seeing common idioms illustrated with such wit and whimsy. With this book in hand, **you've got the world by the tail!**

