

# Glossary

The following is an alphabetical list of all the idioms mentioned in this book. Many of the meanings come from the *Scholastic Dictionary of Idioms* by Marvin Terban (Scholastic, 1996), which features over six hundred idioms, their meanings, and their origins.

## A

- Add fuel to the fire** to make a bad situation worse; to do or say something that causes more trouble, makes someone angrier
- Air your dirty laundry in public** to talk about your private disagreements or embarrassing matters in public, usually while quarreling
- Albatross around your neck** a very difficult burden that you can't get rid of or a reminder of something you did that was wrong
- All ears** eager to listen; sharply attentive; curious
- All thumbs** awkward and clumsy, especially with the hands
- Ants in your pants** extreme restlessness; overactivity
- Apple of your eye** a person or thing that is greatly loved, treasured, and adored
- As the crow flies** by the shortest and most direct route; measured in a straight, direct line between two places
- Asleep at the switch** not attending to one's job or failing to react quickly; not being alert
- At the end of your rope** at the limit of your ability, endurance, or patience to do something

## B

- Babe in the woods** a person who is inexperienced; a naive, trusting person
- Back to square one** return to the beginning because of a failure to accomplish the desired result
- Backseat driver** a bossy person who tells another person what to do; a person who gives unwanted advice and directions

**Bark is worse than your bite** the way a person sounds is much more frightening than the way she or he acts; the threat is often worse than the action taken

**Barking up the wrong tree** to direct your attention or efforts toward the wrong person or thing; to have the wrong idea about something

**Bats in your belfry** a person who has crazy ideas or acts irrationally

**Beat a dead horse** to pursue a useless goal; to continue fighting a battle which has been lost; to keep arguing a point which has already been decided

**Beauty is in the eye of the beholder** there is no standard for beauty, so what one person likes or sees in someone or something is not necessarily what others see; different people have different opinions

**Bee in your bonnet** a crazy idea; an obsession with an idea

**Beggars can't be choosers** needy people have to take whatever they can get and cannot be concerned about the quality if they cannot afford to buy it for themselves

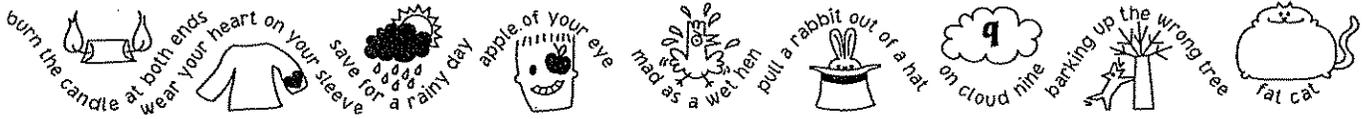
**Behind the eight ball** in trouble or out of luck; in a difficult position or in a bad situation with little hope of winning

**Below par** unsatisfactory; below expectations

**Better half** either partner in marriage

**Between a rock and a hard place** being in a very tight spot and faced with a difficult decision

**Bird in the hand is worth two in the bush** what you already have is better than what you might or might not get in the future; a guarantee is worth more than a promise



**Birds of a feather flock together** people who have things in common, such as interests and ideas, usually hang out together; people who are alike often become friends

**Bite off more than you can chew** to take on a task that is more than you can accomplish; to be greedy, overconfident, or too ambitious by taking on more jobs or responsibilities than you can deal with at one time

**Bite the bullet** prepare for an unpleasant experience; brace yourself to endure with courage something painful but necessary

**Bite the dust** to die; to fall in defeat; to fail to succeed

**Bite the hand that feeds you** to turn against someone who helps you; to do harm to someone who does good things for you

**Black sheep of the family** the most unsuccessful, least admirable member of a family or similar group; a disgraced person

**Bleeding heart** an extremely softhearted person who feels compassion or pity towards all people, including those who may not deserve sympathy

**Blood is thicker than water** one can expect more kindness from a family member than from a stranger; a person will do more for a relative than for anyone else

**Blow your stack** see *Hit the roof*

**Blue blood** of high or noble birth; an aristocrat; from the upper class of society

**Bolt from the blue** something sudden, unexpected, and shocking

**Born with a silver spoon in your mouth** born to wealth, comfort, and privilege

**Bowl of cherries** a wonderful, pleasant situation or position; an easy, comfortable life

**Bring down the house** to get an audience to clap enthusiastically or laugh loudly

**Bug off** to leave someone alone; go away; stop annoying someone

**Bull in a china shop** a clumsy person who deals too roughly with a delicate situation; a rough person who is near breakable things; a tactless person who says or does something that angers people or upsets their plans

**Burn the candle at both ends** to overwork yourself mentally or physically and until you're exhausted

**Burn the midnight oil** to stay up very late at night studying or working

**Burn your bridges behind you** to make a decision you cannot change; to commit oneself to a course of action

**Burn yourself out** to exhaust yourself by overworking physically or mentally

**Bury your head in the sand** to ignore danger by pretending you don't see it; to hide from obvious signs of danger

**Busy as a beaver** working very hard; extremely industrious

**Busy as a bee** see *Busy as a beaver*

**Butter someone up** to flatter someone; to try to get a favor by praising someone

**Butterflies in the stomach** a fluttery feeling in the stomach, usually caused by nervousness

**Button your lip** to stop talking; be quiet

**Buy a pig in a poke** to buy something without seeing or examining it

**By the skin of your teeth** by an extremely narrow margin; with practically no room to spare; just barely

## C

**Call it a day** to stop work for the day; to bring a project to an end for the time being

**Call the shots** to make the decisions; to be in charge; to give orders

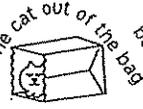
**Can't see the forest for the trees** to overlook the overall situation because of a focus on small details; to be so involved in details that you miss the whole picture

**Cast the first stone** to be the first to attack, blame, or criticize someone; to lead accusers against a wrongdoer

**Cat got your tongue?** Is there a reason that you're not speaking?

**Catch someone red-handed** to catch someone in the act of doing something wrong

**Chew the fat** to have a friendly, informal talk; to chat in a relaxed way



**Chew up the scenery** to overact; to exaggerate your emotions

**Chicken feed** a very small or insignificant amount of money

**Chickens come home to roost** words or actions come back to haunt a person; evil acts will return to plague the doer

**Chip off the old block** a child who resembles a parent in behavior, looks, or abilities

**Clean as a hound's tooth** completely free from dirt; perfectly neat (also *Clean as a whistle*)

**Climb the walls** to be frustrated or anxious during a challenging situation; to be unable to endure

**Cold turkey** the sudden stopping of any habit

**Come up smelling like a rose** to get out of a possibly embarrassing or disgraceful situation without hurting your reputation, and maybe even improving it

**Cook your goose** to put an end to; to ruin someone's plans

**Cool as a cucumber** very calm; not nervous or emotional

**Cost an arm and a leg** very expensive; high-priced, though possibly not worth the cost

**Crocodile tears** fake tears; false grief

**Cross that bridge when you come to it** don't predict problems until they actually happen; don't worry about future events now; don't deal with a difficulty until you have to

**Cut off your nose to spite your face** to injure yourself out of anger toward another; to make a situation worse for yourself when angry with someone

## D

**Dark-horse candidate** a contestant about whom little is known and who wins unexpectedly

**Dead as a dodo** totally dead or hopeless; without a chance of success (also *Dead as a doornail*)

**Dead duck** a person who is ruined; a person or project unlikely to continue or survive

**Dog days of summer** the hottest and most humid days of summer, usually much of July and August

**Dog-eat-dog world** a way of life marked by fierce competition in which people compete ruthlessly for survival or success

**Dog's life** a bleak, harsh, terrible existence without much happiness or freedom

**Don't count your chickens before they hatch** don't count on profits before you earn them or have them in hand

**Don't look a gift horse in the mouth** don't complain if a gift is not perfect; take what you've been given without criticism or emphasis on its worth

**Down in the mouth** sad and depressed (also *Down in the dumps*)

**Down the drain** lost forever; wasted

**Down the hatch** swallow a drink in one gulp

**Down-to-the-wire** running out of time; at the very last minute

**Dressed to the nines** wearing fashionable clothing; dressed to attract attention

**Drive you up the wall** to make someone angry or confused; to make somebody very annoyed or frustrated

**Drop you like a hot potato** to get rid of something or somebody as quickly as possible

## E

**Eager beaver** see *Busy as a beaver*

**Early bird catches the worm** a person who gets up early and starts a project ahead of others has the best chance of accomplishing his or her goal

**Eat crow** to be forced to do something very disagreeable; to acknowledge a mistake or defeat

**Eat your heart out** to feel extremely unhappy about a hopeless situation; to make yourself sick with grief and worry

**Eat your words** to have to take back what you said; to admit humbly that you were wrong

**Elbow grease** hard, energetic manual labor

**Eleventh hour** at the latest possible time, just before the absolute deadline

**Every cloud has a silver lining** there is something good in every bad situation



**Everything but the kitchen sink** practically everything there is; every possible object whether needed or not

**Eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth** revenge or punishment exactly like the original crime or offense

**Eyes in the back of your head** ability to sense what is happening outside one's field of vision; ability to know what happens when one's back is turned

## F

**Face the music** to endure the consequences of one's actions; to take what you have coming to you

**Fat cat** a wealthy person; a rich benefactor

**Feel your oats** to be in high spirits, energetic; to act in a proud way

**Field day** to have unlimited opportunities; to have it all your own way; to go all out and experience success at something

**Fifth wheel** an unneeded, extra person

**Fish or cut bait** do one thing or another, but stop delaying; make a choice; act now or give someone else a turn

**Fish out of water** a person who is out of his or her usual place; someone who doesn't fit in or is helpless in a situation

**Fly by the seat of your pants** to do something by instinct and feel without any earlier experience or instruction

**Fly in the ointment** a small annoyance that spoils an otherwise pleasant situation

**Foam at the mouth** to be uncontrollably furious, like a mad dog

**Follow your nose** to go straight ahead in the same direction

**For the birds** worthless; useless; stupid

**Forty winks** a short nap

**Four corners of the Earth** from all over the planet; all parts of a place

**From soup to nuts** the whole thing from beginning to end

**Full of beans** lively, happy and energetic, high-spirited

**Full of hot air** being foolish and talking nonsense; pompous; vain

## G

**Get a kick out of something** to enjoy doing something; to get a thrill out of something

**Get the pink slip** to be fired

**Get under your skin** to bother or upset someone

**Get your goat** to annoy very badly; to make a person angry

**Get your walking papers** to be fired

**Give me five** to slap a person's hand as a hearty greeting or a sign of solid agreement

**Give your eyeteeth for something** to want something very badly; to be willing to give up something valuable to get something else

**Go against the grain** to oppose natural tendencies; to oppose a person's wishes or feelings; to cause anger

**Go along for the ride** to watch but not take part in an activity; to keep someone company

**Go bananas** to be or go crazy

**Go climb a tree** go away; leave; stop bothering me

**Go fly a kite** see *Go climb a tree*

**Go fry an egg** see *Go climb a tree*

**Go jump in a lake** see *Go climb a tree*

**Go over like a lead balloon** to fail miserably

**Go over with a fine-tooth comb** to search with great care or attention

**Go to the dogs** to decline in looks or health; to be ruined or destroyed; to ruin oneself

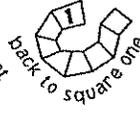
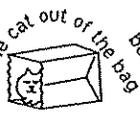
**Go yellow** to act cowardly

**Gone to pot** become ruined; to get worse and worse

**Goody-two-shoes** a person who thinks he or she is perfect and tries to be

**Green thumb** having a special talent for making flowers and green plants grow well

**Green with envy** extremely jealous



## H

- Hand-to-mouth existence** to spend your salary as fast as it's earned without saving any for the future
- Hard nut to crack** a problem that's very difficult to understand or solve; a difficult person
- Have other fish to fry** to have other things to do; to not bother with one thing because you have more important things to accomplish
- Have your cake and eat it too** to spend or use something up but still have it; to have two things when you must choose one
- Have your heart in your mouth** to be extremely frightened about something
- Head and shoulders above someone** far superior; much better than
- Head in the clouds** absent-minded; daydreaming; lost in thought
- Heart's in the right place** to be well-meaning and kindhearted; to have good intentions even though mistakes occur
- High horse** acting superior and arrogant as if you were better than other people
- Hit below the belt** to use unfair tactics or be unsportsmanlike
- Hit the books** study school assignments carefully; prepare for classes by reading and doing homework
- Hit the road** to begin a journey, to leave
- Hit the roof** to lose your temper suddenly; to become violently angry
- Hit the spot** to fully satisfy and refresh, especially with food or drink
- Hold your horses** slow down; wait a minute; be patient
- Hold your tongue** struggle not to say something you want to say
- Horse of a different color** a different matter altogether; something from a different nature from that being noticed
- Hot under the collar** very angry; upset

## I

- If at first you don't succeed, try, try again** don't give up; if you make a mistake you should keep working at it until you are successful
- If the shoe fits, wear it** if a remark applies to you, you should admit that it is true.
- In a pickle** see *Behind the eight ball*
- In hot water** in serious trouble or in an embarrassing situation with someone of authority
- In the doghouse** in disgrace or dislike; facing punishment
- In the driver's seat** in control; in the position of authority
- In the pink** in excellent health physically and emotionally
- It takes two to tango** two people are required to accomplish this deed

## J

- Jump down your throat** to talk or scream at someone in a sudden, angry way
- Jump on the bandwagon** to become part of the newest activity because many other people are

## K

- Keep something under your hat** to keep something secret
- Keep your ear to the ground** to pay attention and be well-informed
- Keep your fingers crossed** to wish for good luck and success for someone or something
- Keep your head above water** to earn enough to stay out of debt and avoid financial ruin; to do just enough to keep up with all of one's responsibilities
- Keep your nose to the grindstone** to force oneself to work hard all the time; to always keep busy
- Kill the goose that lays the golden eggs** to spoil or destroy something good out of stupidity, greed, or impatience
- Kill two birds with one stone** to do two things by one action; to get two results with just one effort
- Knee-high to a grasshopper** very young and, therefore, very short



## L

**Laugh out of the other side of your mouth** to be made to feel sorrow, annoyance, or disappointment after you felt happy; to cry at a change in luck after experiencing some happiness

**Lay an egg** to give an embarrassing performance

**Leave no stone unturned** to make all possible efforts to carry out a task or search for someone or something

**Lend an ear** to listen and pay attention to

**Let sleeping dogs lie** to not make trouble if you don't have to; to not make someone angry by stirring up trouble

**Let the cat out of the bag** to give away a secret

**Like two peas in a pod** identical; alike in looks and behavior

**Little pitchers have big ears** little children, listening to the conversations of older people, often hear and understand a lot more than people give them credit for

**Live high off the hog** to live in a rich style and own lots of expensive things

**Lock the barn door after the horse is out** to take careful precautions to do the right thing after it is too late

**Long in the tooth** old; aged

**Look down your nose at someone** to think of and treat people as if they were lower in quality or ability

**Look what the cat dragged in** a person who looks disheveled; the arrival of an unwanted person

## M

**Mad as a wet hen** very upset; extremely angry; ready to fight

**Make a mountain out of a molehill** to turn a small, unimportant issue into a big, important one; to exaggerate the importance of something

**Make a silk purse out of a sow's ear** to create something valuable or beautiful out of something practically worthless or ugly

**Make hay while the sun shines** to make the best of a limited opportunity

**Make it by a nose** to succeed at the very last moment

**Make waves** to cause trouble; to upset matters; to create a disturbance

**Make your mouth water** to look so attractive and desirable that it makes you want to have it very much; to want to eat or drink something that looks or smells delicious

**Monkey business** silliness or fooling around; dishonest or illegal activities; idiotic pranks

**More than meets the eye** there are hidden facts that can't be seen or understood right away

**More than one way to skin a cat** there are several different ways of reaching the same goal

## N

**Name is mud** the person is in trouble, possibly doomed and worthless

**Need something like a hole in the head** to have no need for something at all

**Need something like a third leg** see *Need something like a hole in the head*

**Needle in a haystack** something hard or impossible to find; anything hopeless (in a search)

**No skin off your nose** of totally no concern to you whatsoever; it doesn't matter to you one way or the other

**No spring chicken** not young anymore

## O

**Off the beaten track (path)** not well-known or used; an unfamiliar location; unusual; different

**Off the top of your head** stating something quickly and without thinking hard about it

**Off-the-wall** shocking; very unusual

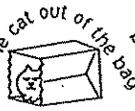
**Off your rocker** crazy; silly, foolish; not thinking correctly

**Old wives' tale** a superstition; a belief or practice not based on fact

**On cloud nine** blissfully happy; joyous

**On pins and needles** waiting anxiously for something; extremely nervous; in great suspense

**On the ball** alert; effective; skillful; knowledgeable



**On top of the world** feeling extremely happy

**Once bitten, twice shy** when something bad happens to you, you will think twice before putting yourself in the same situation

**Once in a blue moon** almost never; very seldom; hardly ever

**One good turn deserves another** one good deed should be paid back with another

**One-horse town** a place with few comforts and activities; a dull rural town

**One-track mind** always thinking about only one subject

**Open a can of worms** to cause trouble; to set unpleasant events in motion

**Out in left field** unusual; crazy; totally wrong

**Out of sight, out of mind** if you don't see something for a long time, you'll eventually stop thinking about it

**Out of the clear blue sky** suddenly and without any warning; totally unexpectedly

**Out of the frying pan and into the fire** from a bad situation into one that is worse

**Out of the mouths of babes** children can unexpectedly say very intelligent things

**Out of the woods** safe from trouble or danger

**Out on a limb** taking a chance; in a dangerous position from which it is hard to withdraw or change

**Over a barrel** helpless; in someone's power; at a disadvantage

**Over the hill** past one's prime; unable to function as one used to; too old

**Over your head** a risky situation that will lead to certain failure; beyond your ability to understand something

## P

**Pay through the nose** to pay too much for something

**People who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones** you should not criticize others if you are just as bad as they are

**Picture is worth a thousand words** to actually see or experience something is much better than to merely have it described to you

**Pie in the sky** something not possible; an unrealistic hope

**Play both ends against the middle** to pit two opponents against each other in such a way as to benefit yourself; to use each of two sides for your own purpose

**Play cat and mouse** to fool or tease someone by pretending to let her or him go free and then catching her or him again

**Play second fiddle** to be a follower; to be in an inferior position

**Play with fire** to take an unnecessary and dangerous risk; to court danger

**Poor as a church mouse** very poor; poverty-stricken

**Pot calling the kettle black** the person criticizing another person's faults is guilty of the same faults himself or herself

**Power behind the throne** the actual, but unrecognized, person in charge

**Pull a rabbit out of a hat** to produce something that is needed as if by magic; to unexpectedly find a solution to a problem

**Pull the wool over your eyes** to fool, deceive, or trick someone

**Pull your leg** to tease or fool someone; to jokingly try to lie to somebody

**Pull yourself together** to regain control over one's emotions and become calm after being very upset

**Put all your ducks in a row** to organize or finish things before moving on to something else

**Put the cart before the horse** to do things in the wrong order

**Put your money where your mouth is** to be willing to bet on or invest your money in something you support or believe in

## Q

**Quick on the draw** ready, alert, and quick to respond or react; mentally fast; quick to grasp information; touchy, sensitive

**Quiet as a mouse** silent or still; making very little noise; saying nothing; hushed, subdued



## R

**Raining cats and dogs** to rain very heavily; to pour

**Raise the roof** to be very angry, complain loudly, and make trouble

**Rat race** a fierce, unending, stressful competition in business or society

**Rats abandoning a sinking ship** disloyal people who desert a failing enterprise before it's too late

**Read between the lines** to discern the true, hidden meaning or fact in any document or action

**Red-carpet treatment** great respect and hospitality given to someone important; special treatment

**Red herring** something deliberately misleading to divert your attention from the main subject; something irrelevant that confuses an issue

**Red-letter day** a day remembered as especially happy and significant

**Red tape** excessive formality and time-consuming, rigid adherence to rules and regulations

**Right off the bat** immediately, spontaneously, and without delay

**Rock the boat** to make trouble and disrupt a stable situation; to risk spoiling a plan; to create a disturbance

**Rome was not built in a day** a difficult or important goal or task cannot be achieved quickly or all at once

**Rotten apple spoils the barrel** one bad person or thing may spoil an entire group

**Rub the wrong way** to annoy and irritate someone; to handle someone insensitively

**Run circles around someone** to easily do something far better than someone else

**Run off at the mouth** to talk too much; to talk nonstop

## S

**Save for a rainy day** to save for a time of need; to put something away for the future

**Saved by the bell** rescued at the last possible moment from an embarrassing or dangerous situation

**Scarce as hen's teeth** very, very rare or totally nonexistent

**See eye to eye** to agree fully; to have the same opinion

**See a pink elephant** to get so drunk you see things that don't exist

**Sell like hotcakes** to sell quickly, effortlessly, and in quantity

**Seventh heaven** being in an emotional state of extreme happiness

**Shake a leg** to hurry up; to go faster; to speed up

**Shoot the breeze** see *Chew the fat*

**Sick as a dog** very sick; suffering miserably without an ailment

**Sight for sore eyes** a most welcome, unexpected sight; a pleasant surprise

**Sink or swim** to fail or succeed by one's own efforts without anyone's help or interference

**Sitting duck** someone or something likely to be attacked and unable to put up a defense

**Six of one and a half dozen of the other** one and the same; nothing to choose between; equal

**Skate on thin ice** to take a big chance; to risk danger; to start out on a hazardous course of action

**Skeleton in your closet** a shameful and shocking secret that people try to keep hidden

**Smell a rat** to be suspicious; to feel that something is wrong

**Smell something fishy** see *Smell a rat*

**Snug as a bug in a rug** cozy and comfortable; safe and secure

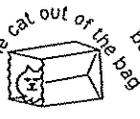
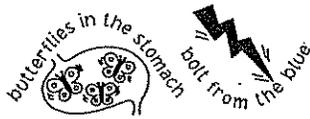
**Spare the rod and spoil the child** to physically punish children when they misbehave so they'll learn to behave properly in the future

**Spill the beans** to give away a secret to someone who is not supposed to know it

**Spitting image** a perfect resemblance; an exact likeness

**Still waters run deep** somebody can be more knowledgeable or emotional than he or she first appears to be; a silent person may be intelligent

**Stir up a hornet's nest** to make many people furious; to cause trouble



**Straight from the horse's mouth** directly from the person or place that is the most reliable source or the best authority

**Straighten up and fly right** to stop behaving foolishly and start acting serious

**Strike a happy medium** to find a compromise to a problem; to find a sensible solution midway between two opposite desires

**Strike while the iron is hot** to act at the most favorable time or moment to get the best results; to take advantage of favorable conditions

**Swallow hook, line, and sinker** to believe a story completely without questioning it; to be very gullible

**Swan song** the final, farewell performance of an actor or singer; one's last words or actions

**Sweep you off your feet** to make a favorable impression; to affect with strong emotion or enthusiasm; to overcome someone with feelings of love or happiness so strong that he or she can't resist you

## T

**Take a backseat** to be in an inferior position; to take second place to another person who is in control

**Take someone under your wing** to help, guide, or protect someone

**Take the bull by the horns** to act bravely in a troublesome situation; to face up to a difficult challenge by taking decisive action

**That's the way the ball bounces** that's the way life is; that's fate; things sometimes turn out a certain way and you can't do anything about it

**That's the way the cookie crumbles** see *That's the way the ball bounces*

**Throw a monkey wrench into the works** to interfere with a smoothly running operation; to upset something in progress

**Throw the baby out with the bathwater** to lose or throw out something valuable or useful when getting rid of something that is useless

**Throw the book at someone** to punish severely for breaking rules or the law; to give the maximum penalty

**Tickled pink** to be very amused or pleased; to be delighted, entertained, or extremely happy

**Till the cows come home** for a long, long time

**Too many cooks spoil the broth** a project is set back rather than helped by too many organizers; the more people who work on one project, the worse it will turn out

**Top banana** the leading comedian in a variety show; a boss

**Touch and go** very risky, uncertain, or critical

**Touch something with a ten-foot pole** to avoid at all costs; to stay far away from a difficult problem

**True-blue** very loyal, dependable, and faithful

**Turn up your nose at someone** to regard something with haughtiness; to be snobby; to show that someone or something is not good enough for you

**Two-faced** false; dishonest

**Two's company, three's a crowd** when you would like to do something with just one other person, a third participant would be unwelcome

## U

**Up a creek without a paddle** in deep trouble and unable to do anything about it; in serious trouble

**Up against the wall** in big trouble; in a difficult or desperate situation

**Upset the applecart** to spoil or interfere with a plan; to obstruct progress; to mess everything up by surprise or accident

## W

**Walk on eggs** to be very cautious; to proceed warily

**Walking on air** to be exuberantly happy, excited, and joyful

**Watched pot never boils** when waiting anxiously or impatiently for something to happen, it seems to take much longer

**Water under the bridge** something that happened in the past; it's too late to worry about something that already happened



**Wear your heart on your sleeve** to show one's emotions and feelings openly

**Wet behind the ears** young, inexperienced, and immature

**What's good for the goose is good for the gander** a rule or method of treatment that applies to one person or group must also apply to others, especially your mate

**When the cat's away, the mice will play** when the person in charge is absent, people will usually do as they please and take advantage of the freedom

**Where there's smoke, there's fire** there is always a basis for a rumor, no matter how untrue it appears; suspicious things usually mean that something is wrong

**White elephant** any possession that is useless, unwanted, or costs a lot of money to keep

**Wild-goose chase** a useless or hopeless search, especially because something does not exist or can't be found

**Wolf in sheep's clothing** somebody who appears to be harmless but is really dangerous

**Word of mouth** by one person telling another; by speaking, rather than writing

## Y

**You can lead a horse to water but you can't make him drink** you can encourage, but not force, someone to do something

**You can't teach an old dog new tricks** people who find it difficult or impossible to change their ways or adjust to new ideas

## Z

**Zipper your mouth** see *Button your lip*