

What is an idiom?

An idiom is a phrase where the meaning is not literal – the phrase is not describing something true that is happening, but refers to a hidden meaning. For example, the idiom *'it's raining cats and dogs'* does not mean that cats and dogs are falling from the sky like rain – the meaning is that it is raining a lot. Idioms are used frequently by native speakers of English and, when used correctly, can make your English sound more natural.

Look at these ten common idioms. Read the idioms (on the left) and match to the meanings (on the right.)

Best thing since sliced bread	Working late into the night.
Back to the drawing board	Feeling slightly unwell – feeling ill.
Jump on the bandwagon	Very expensive, a lot of money.
Cross that bridge when you come to it	To join in with what everyone else is doing, something popular.
Feel a bit under the weather	Succeed, meet expectations, behave adequately.
Best of both worlds	When something fails and you need to start again.
Cut the mustard	Dealing with a problem when it arises, not before.
Burn the midnight oil	A really good plan, product, idea or innovation.
Cost an arm and a leg	A way of asking what somebody is thinking.
A penny for your thoughts	Having all the advantages. Having two things you want.

Think of an example sentence using these idioms:

A penny for your thoughts

Best thing since sliced bread

Jump on the bandwagon

Cost an arm and a leg

Back to the drawing board

Best of both worlds

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Read through this short paragraph, then read again and fill the gaps with the idioms above.

I guess I was daydreaming when my mum said to me

_____.

I was thinking deeply about my upcoming exam and how I would probably fail it – I had hoped to have the _____ by relaxing all year and then studying hard before the exam.

So last night, I decided to _____ and study all night, but today I'm really tired and it looks like I will fail the exam after all, but I guess I will _____.

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