

Cambridge English Advanced

Certificate in Advanced English (CAE)

INTERCAMBIOIDIOMASONLINE

IDIOMS



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Idioms

Idioms are expressions that have much more meaning than the words alone. For example, *to spill the beans* does not mean to drop the beans; it means to reveal a secret to somebody. Idioms can never be tricky at first but with practice they come naturally and reveal a lot about the culture behind a language. For me they are what make a language fun and interesting.

Idioms are usually the main part of the transition of intermediate vocabulary into advanced level language. You need to incorporate them into your speaking and writing. This way your language will become far more colourful.

To use idioms well, what you need to do is practice using them in contexts. You must associate them with situations that you understand and link them to familiar vocabulary.



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Hobbies and free time

Be at a loose end – TO HAVE NOTHING TO DO

Let off steam – TO UNWIND

Put your feet up – TO RELAX

A couch potato – TO BE LAZY

Take five – TO TAKE A BREAK

Recharge your batteries – TO RECOVER

Surf the net – USE THE INTERNET

Variety is the spice of life – WHAT MAKES LIFE MORE ENJOYABLE

Be on the ball – TO BE ON FIRE

Jump the gun – TO JUMP AHEAD (precipitarse)



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Travel and getting around

Be down to earth – TO BE HUMBLE OR REALISTIC

As the crow flies – TO USE THE MOST DIRECT ROUTE

Go with the flow – TO BE EASY GOING

Be in the middle of nowhere – TO BE A IN THE STICKS

Have itchy feet – TO WANT TO MOVE OR PROGRESS

To take a short cut – TO TAKE A SHORTER ROUTE

Be a stone throw away – TO BE VERY CLOSE

Be a globetrotter – TO HAVE TRAVELLED A LOT



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Education and lifestyles

Hit the books – TO STUDY A LOT

Pull an all nighter – TO WORK ALL NIGHT

Be on the mark – TO BE CORRECT

Cover all the bases – TO DO A BIT OF EVERYTHING

Be ahead of the pack – TO BE BETTER THAN OTHER PEOPLE

With flying colours – TO DO SOMETHING WELL



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Work and obligations

Work like a dog – TO WORK HARD

All in good time – TO WAIT

Work 9-5 OR Work 24/7 – TO WORK LONG HOURS

Be for the time being – TO BE FOR NOW/IN THE MEANTIME

Work around the clock – TO WORK LONG HOURS

At the drop of a hat - IMMEDIATELY

Be a people person – TO BE SOCIABLE

Have the gift of the gab – TO BE CONVINCING

In donkey's years – SINCE A LONG TIME AGO

Be a big fish – TO BE AN IMPORTANT PERSON

Be a go-getter – TO BE AMBITIOUS



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Money and spending

Be a cheapskate – TO BE TIGHT/NOT LIKE SPENDING MONEY

Foot the bill – TO PAY FOR EVERYTHING

A drop in the ocean – A SMALL AMOUNT

Have an eye for – TO BE ABLE TO FIND CERTAIN THINGS WELL

Be pinching pennies – TO NOT HAVE A LOT OF MONEY

Go halves/50-50 – TO MEET HALF WAY

Line your pockets – TO EARN A LOT OF MONEY (FOR YOURSELF)

Six of one, half a dozen of the other – TO BE EQUALLY GOOD OR BAD

Be on the dole – TO BE UNEMPLOYED

Fall short – NOT BE ENOUGH

Break even – NO PROFIT BUT NO LOSS EITHER

Be skint – TO NOT HAVE A LOT OF MONEY



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Time

Around the corner – TO BE VERY SOON

In a flash – TO DO SOMETHING FAST

In the nick of time – TO BE JUST IN TIME

Lose track of time – TO NOT KNOW THE TIME

Before your time – TO BE TOO SOON

When pigs fly – TO RULE SOMETHING OUT/NEVER

For good - PERMANENTLY

Once in a blue moon – TO DO SOMETHING RARELY

On the spur of the moment - SUDDENLY



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Eating and drinking

Take with a pinch of salt – NOT TAKE SOMETHING SERIOUSLY

Be a piece of cake – TO BE EASY

Be tough to swallow – TO BE A DIFFICULT SITUATION TO ACCEPT

Give someone a taste of – SHOW SOMEONE A GLIMPSE OF SOMETHING

Take the biscuit – TO BE OUT OF ORDER/UNREASONABLE

Be as easy as pie – TO BE VERY EASY

Spill the beans – TO REVEAL/TELL A SECRET

Pig out – TO EAT A LOT

Cry over spilt milk – COMPLAIN ABOUT SOMETHING THAT ISN'T IMPORTANT

Not be someone's cup of tea – TO DISLIKE



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Health and fitness

Get your heart pumping – TO BECOME ACTIVE

Push yourself – TO MAKE AN EFFORT

Risk life and limb – TO TAKE A HUGE RISK

Give someone a taste of their own medicine – TREAT SOMEONE WHO IS BAD
IN A BAD WAY

Keep a straight face – TO REMAIN SERIOUS

Keep your hair on – TO REMAIN CALM

Never look a gift horse in the mouth – DO NOT COMPLAIN ABOUT SOMETHING
YOU ARE GIVEN

Grin and bear it – ACCEPT A DIFFICULT SITUATION



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People and their lives

Give a hand with sth – TO HELP WITH SOMETHING

Keep an eye on sb – TO OBSERVE SOMETHING

Have a cat nap – TO SLEEP FOR A SHORT TIME

Give the green light – TO GIVE PERMISSION

Be a busy body – TO BE NOSY/ TO GOSSIP ABOUT SOMETHING

Be a know it all – TO THINK YOU KNOW EVERYTHING



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Technological advances

Surf the net – USE THE INTERNET

Blow a fuse – TO BECOME FURIOUS

Pull the plug – TO GIVE UP OR STOP DOING SOMETHING

To make something tick – TO MAKE SOMETHING FUNCTION WELL

Know something inside out – TO UNDERSTAND OR KNOW SOMETHING 100%

Have a change of heart – TO CHANGE YOUR MIND ABOUT SOMETHING

Stick to your guns – TO BE TENACIOUS/DETERMINED

Turn over a new leaf – TO MAKE A BIG CHANGE IN YOUR LIFE



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Wildlife and the environment

Rain cats and dogs – TO RAIN A LOT

Be bucketing it down – TO RAIN A LOT

Touch wood – TO TRY AND HAVE GOOD LUCK

Out of the blue – SOMETHING UNEXPECTED

Face the facts – TO ACCEPT A REALITY

Come rain or shine – NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS

Have green fingers – BE GOOD AT GROWING PLANTS AND FLOWERS

An act of God – DUE TO NATURAL FORCES SUCH AS THE WEATHER

A leopard never changes its spots – PEOPLE DO NOT CHANGE



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Life, crime and society

Let the cat out of the bag – TO REVEAL A SECRET

Bury your head in the sand – IGNORE A SITUATION

Smell a rat – TO SENSE SOMETHING IS WRONG

Be under someone's thumb – BE CONTROLLED BY SOMEONE ELSE

Curiosity killed the cat – TO BE CURIOUS AND GET INTO TROUBLE

The powers to be – THE PEOPLE IN CONTROL

Copy cat – TO DO THE SAME AS SOMEONE ELSE

Smell something fishy – TO BE SUSPICIOUS

Turn a blind eye – TO NOT TAKE NOTICE OF SOMETHING

Pull a few strings – TO USE YOUR INFLUENCE TO YOUR OWN ADVANTAGE

Gain the upper hand – TAKE ADVANTAGE OF SOMETHING



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Design and creativity

Be dressed to kill – TO WEAR GOOD CLOTHES

Dress like a tramp – TO WEAR BAD CLOTHES

Out of this world – TO BE REALLY GOOD

See through rose-tinted glasses – TO SEE IN A POSITIVE WAY

Cost an arm and a leg – TO BE EXPENSIVE

Spend an arm and a leg – TO COST AN ARM AND A LEG

Clean as a whistle – TO BE VERY HONEST AND RESPECTABLE



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Happiness and relationships

Be over the moon – TO BE VERY HAPPY

Be on cloud noun – TO BE VERY HAPPY

See eye to eye – TO AGREE

Be in the clouds – TO BECOME DISTRACTED

Jump for joy – TO BE EXCITED

Get on like a house on fire – TO HAVE A REALLY GOOD RELATIONSHIP

Be an item – TO BE A COUPLE

Tie the knot – TO GET MARRIED

Be like two peas in a pod – TWO PEOPLE WHO LOOK OR BEHAVE THE SAME

Have butterflies in your stomach – TO BECOME NERVOUS

Be on the same wave length – TO UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER

Be your flesh and blood – BE RELATED TO YOU/TO BE IN YOUR FAMILY

Be on good terms – TO HAVE A GOOD RELATIONSHIP AFTER A DIFFICULT SITUATION