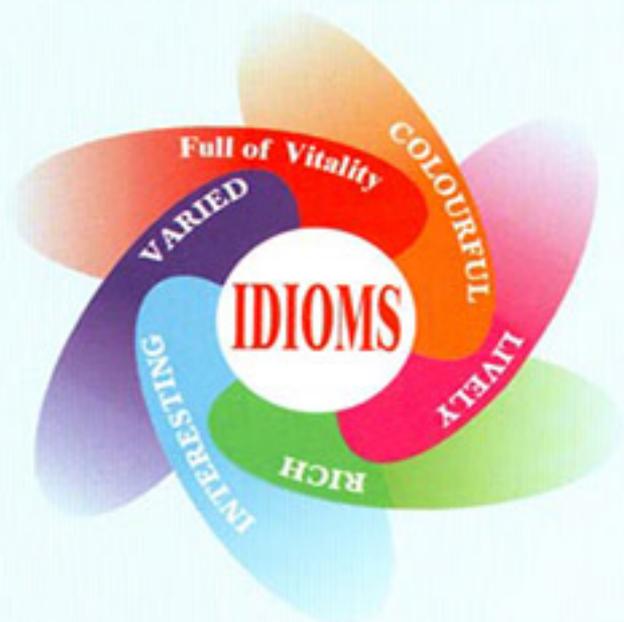




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A Comprehensive Book Of **IDIOMS**



Pushkar Dinesh Chandra

PREFACE

Before the learner of the English language understands the importance of the present book and uses it in a profitable and rewarding manner, it is important for him to know what an idiom is. The syntax, grammar and forms of expression are peculiar to every language and this peculiarity distinguishes one language from another. Even if you have a rich vocabulary of a language at your command, you may not be able to express yourself in it with ease, lucidity and fluency. The reason is that you have not been able to grasp and imbibe ‘the idiom’ of that language. Unless you assimilate it into your verbal resources, you will remain unsure of yourself, you will keep faltering and floundering.

Strictly speaking, an idiom is an expression with a meaning which cannot be guessed at or derived from the meanings of the individual words which form it. Some short expressions which are used for a particular purpose are also called idioms. Certain phrases have a fixed form and can, therefore, be included in the category of idioms.

Loosely, we can attach the tag of an idiom to any expression which differs even slightly from a phrase having a literal meaning. For clarity and precision, however, an idiom must be differentiated from (a) standard phrases that are considered separate words, (b) phrasal verbs, and (c) sayings and proverbs, all of which have their own importance. A few sayings or proverbs have been included in this book, just to show that they actually fall in another category. Sometimes, there may be some confusion as to whether a phrase is an idiom or a phrasal verb. It has been considered advisable to include such phrases in this book, for the simple reason that they have a practical value.

English is particularly rich in idioms and idiomatic English has a rare vitality, liveliness and colourfulness. Idioms have nothing to do with grammatical rules — they have to be learnt. The present book guides you through the amazing and interesting world of idiomatic expressions in English. All idioms

have been used in expressive sentences so that the learner may understand exactly in which context they should be used. **Select idioms** given at the end of all the listed idioms under each letter of the alphabet will, hopefully, prove to be extremely useful.

The book specifically aims at enhancing the learner's power of expression and enabling him to make his writing lively and colourful. He is advised to use a few idioms, on a regular basis, in his day-to-day composition. Before writing anything, he should think how best he can express his ideas idiomatically.

It must be emphasized here, at the risk of being considered repetitive, that learning idioms is only one aspect of the whole process of learning English. Besides increasing your 'word power' in a direct way, you should also learn synonyms and antonyms, exercises in one-word substitution, phrasal verbs and collocations. Since many foreign words and phrases are now commonly used in English, it is important to learn them as well. What ultimately makes your expression correct and faultless, and, of course, lively, vibrant and dynamic, is your ability to familiarize yourself with current English usage.

Finding an idiom in the book may pose a problem for the learner. He will have to look for it under all the main words that constitute it. No cross-references have been given for reasons of space. Idioms are sometimes listed under the first word and sometimes under what is considered to be the most important word in the whole phrase. Repetitions have been avoided. For instance, "**What the heck/hell!**" is given under "**Heck**" and not under "**Hell**". Sometimes one word of an idiom can be replaced by another. In some idioms many alternatives are possible.

It is sincerely hoped that the book will prove to be useful to those who want to learn English idioms and idiomatic expressions and intend to make their writing lively, colourful and effective. If errors and omissions are pointed out and if suggestions for improvement are given, they will be gratefully acknowledged.

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A

A

From A to Z (thoroughly): He knows the subject from A to Z.

A1 (excellent): I am feeling A1.

ABC (basic knowledge): I do not know the ABC of Economics.

ABOVE

Above all (more than anything else): Above all, keep in touch.

Above oneself (conceited): He has got above himself since his father went abroad.

ABREAST

Keep abreast of something (know the latest developments): She tries to keep abreast of the changing trends in fashion.

ACCIDENT

By accident (by chance): We met by accident at the airport.

ACCORD

Of one's own accord (without being asked or forced): He came back to the discussion table of his own accord.

With one accord (with everybody in agreement): With one accord they all stood up and cheered him.

ACCOUNT

By/From all accounts (in everyone's opinion): By/from all accounts, he is the best surgeon in the city.

Call / Bring somebody to account (require an explanation): His boss called him to account for the delay in doing the job.

Give a good/bad/poor account of oneself (give a good/ bad/poor performance): Our team gave a wonderful account of themselves.

Of little/no account (unimportant): The description given by the witness is of little/no account.

On somebody's account (for somebody's sake): Please do not cancel your programme on my account.

On account of/On this/that account (because of; for this/that reason): We had to abandon the trip on account of bad weather.

On no account (not for any reason): On no account should you open the door for a stranger.

Take something into account/ Take account of something (consider): You must take his mental condition into account.

Turn/Put something to good account (use well and profitably): You can turn your talent for music to good account.

ACE

An ace up one's sleeve (something effective kept in reserve): He is so confident; it seems he has an ace up his sleeve.

Hold all the aces/cards (have all the advantages): We cannot do anything; our rival holds all the aces.

Play one's ace (use one's best resource): I will play my ace only when all other methods fail.

Within an ace of something/doing something (on the verge of): He was within an ace of winning the game, but he committed a mistake.

ACHILLES

Achilles' heel (a person's weak or vulnerable point): He is quite ruthless, but his love for his only daughter is his Achilles' heel.

ACID

The acid test (conclusive proof): The acid test of an honest man is whether he successfully resists the temptation to earn easy money.

ACT

An act of God (a happening beyond human control): Man is helpless against an act of God.

Get in on the act (join somebody in doing something profitable): Now that my small venture is successful, you want to get in on the act.

Get one's act together (organize oneself): Before starting something so uncertain and risky, you should get your act together.

Catch in the act (discover somebody doing something wrong): She was caught in the act of shoplifting.

Put on an act (pretend): I know you are not ill; you are just putting on an act.

ACTION

A piece / slice of the action (a share or role in something profitable): Foreign companies would like a piece of the action if the airports are privatized.

ADAM

Not to know somebody from Adam (not to recognize): I wouldn't know Mr Kharbanda from Adam, even if he was standing before me.

ADD

Add fuel to the fire / flames (make a situation even worse): They are already at loggerheads; do not add fuel to the fire by calling them cowards.

Add insult to injury (further offend or harm): The mechanic damaged my TV set and then demanded visiting and repairing charges. It was nothing but adding insult to injury.

ADVANTAGE

Take advantage of somebody / something (use for one's benefit): People tend to take advantage of a kind and generous man.

To advantage (in a way that shows the best aspect): The dress showed her figure to advantage.

AEGIS

Under the aegis of (with the support of): This health camp is being organized under the aegis of a charitable organization.

AFRAID

I am afraid (I regret, I am sorry to say): I can't help you, I am afraid.

I am afraid not (no): Is there anything left? I am afraid not.

I am afraid so (yes): "Will the police arrest him?" "I am afraid so."

AFTER

After all (in spite of any indications or expectations to the contrary; for the reason that): So you have passed the exam, after all! You got a good price for your car. It is very old, after all!

Be after someone or something (pursue, chase):

1. The police are after his accomplice who is absconding. 2. What are you after?

AGE

Act one's age (behave appropriately for one's age): Don't be childish; act your age.

Come of age (to be considered legally an adult): Her uncle will look after her inheritance until she comes of age.

Under age (too young, especially legally): Legally, he cannot drive a car, as he is under age.

AGONY

The agony aunt / uncle (a person who answers letters sent in to an agony column, or who gives similar advice on radio or TV): Winfrey Oprah is a very popular agony aunt.

The agony column (the part of a magazine, newspaper, etc where letters describing the problems of readers are printed along with advice from an agony aunt/uncle): Almost all magazines and newspapers publish the agony column.

AID

Aid and abet (help and encourage someone to do something wrong or illegal): She aids and abets her husband in his illegal activities.

What is something in aid of? (What is the reason for, or purpose of, something?): What is this hullabaloo in aid of?

AIR

Airs and graces (an affectation of superiority): He is a big star now, but he has no airs and graces.

In the air (noticeable all around): There is a match between India and Pakistan and a lot of excitement is in the air.

On / Off the air (being / not being broadcast on radio or television): We will be back on [the] air tomorrow morning.

Put on airs / Give oneself airs (affect superiority): Don't put on airs; nobody cares for you. She always gives herself airs.

Up in the air (not yet decided): Our travel plans are still up in the air.

AISLE

Go/Walk down the aisle (get married): John and Mary went / walked down the aisle last week.

Lead someone up the aisle (get married): When George led Catherine up the aisle, everybody present there felt

happy.

ALERT

Be on the alert / Be on full alert (be watchful and ready to face any possible danger): Be on the alert for the robber. The police are on full alert for any terrorist attack.

ALIVE

Alive and kicking (very active, healthy and popular): The pop singer is still alive and kicking.

Bring something alive (make something interesting): Beautiful photographs bring the book alive.

Come alive (become interesting and exciting): The match came alive in the last ten overs.

ALL

All but (almost): The function was all but over when we reached there.

All in (1. physically tired; 2. including everything): 1. You look all in. What is the matter with you? 2. The dinner cost us Rs 2500 all in.

All along (all the time, from the beginning): I knew all along that your plan wouldn't succeed.

All around/round (everywhere, in all respects): All around, the situation seems to be grave. It was a good performance all round.

All for something (extremely enthusiastic about something): They are all for economic reforms.

All over (finished): It (the relationship) is all over between Vivek and Leena.

All over something (everywhere in or on it): Pieces of paper were strewn all over the floor. People came to see the Trade Fair from all over the country. The bank has branches all over the world.

All over somebody (excessively demonstrative towards somebody): He was all over her at the party.

All over the place/map/shop (in a disorganized muddle, in a state of disorder): His office is very dirty and untidy — there are files, books and papers all over the place / map / shop. [*All over the shop*' on page 382 has a different meaning]

All and sundry (everyone): Banks are giving easy loans to all and sundry.

All in all (when everything is considered, on the whole): All in all, we have done quite well.

All the better, easier, harder, more... , etc (so much better, easier, harder, more, etc): It will be all the better if you join me in this project. We will have to work all the harder for better results. Her success is all the more pleasing when we consider her circumstances.

All/Just the same (nevertheless, anyhow): We decided to leave our children behind, but all the same it proved to be quite painful. It was a very difficult job, but all the same we managed to finish it. I don't want a lift, but thanks all the same.

All told (including everything or everyone, taking everything into account): The trip cost me three thousand all told. There were twenty three persons present, all told. It was a good day for me, all told.

All very well (apparently satisfactory, but not really satisfactory for some reason) : What you are saying is all very well, but it does not dispel my doubts.

All the best (good luck!): You are going on an important mission. All the best!

One's all (one's whole strength or resources): Mother Teresa gave her all to the cause of the poor and deprived.

For all (in spite of): For all her strictness, she is very kind at heart.

For all I, he, etc care, know / cares, knows (without upsetting me, etc in the least): For all I care, you may do whatever you like. I could be dead for all he cares!

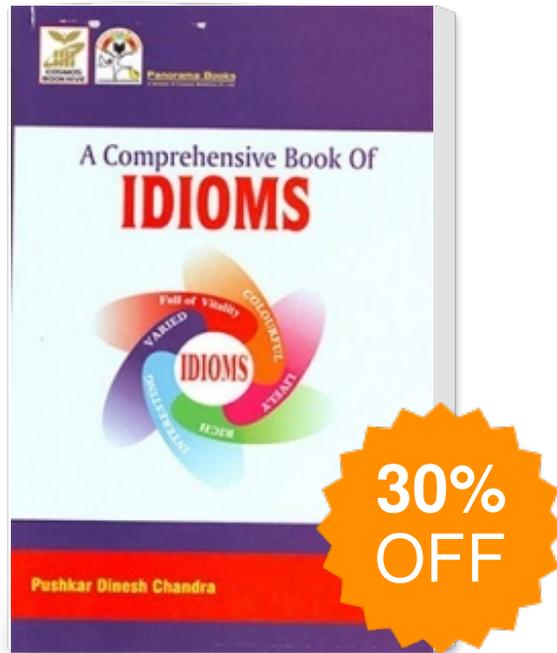
Go all out (use the greatest effort possible): He went all out to beat his rival. She is very kind and helpful and if you convince her of your difficulty, she will go all out to help you.

That is somebody all over (that is typical of somebody): He was late by two hours, but that is Siddhartha all over!

It is all the same to me (I do not mind what decision is made, it makes no difference to me): Whether we eat at home or go to a restaurant, it is all the same to me.

It is all up with somebody (at an end, beyond all hope): It is all up with the underworld don — he has been

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