

101 English Idioms (and Phrasal Verbs) For Professionals

Useful Phrases to Improve Your English, Yourself, and Your Career



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Note to readers:

Hello and welcome, Espresso English students! Thanks for downloading this report. I am glad you are serious about improving your English. If you want to get my very best English tips through email, you can visit: <http://englishformydream.com/tips.html> and enter your email address. I promise to give you great English content periodically.

In my five years' experience of teaching English, I've noticed that there are many phrases that we commonly use in business (and in everyday life) that are not taught in English textbooks. This book will help you speak English confidently.

Here are some quick notes about the book:

- There are **101 English phrases** in the list.
- The list is in **alphabetical order (from A to Z)**.
- The **left column** contains the **phrase (term)**, the **middle column** has the **meaning (definition)**, and in the **right column** is an **example sentence (sentence)**. It looks like this:

Term	Definition	Sentence
Apple	A fruit	I eat apples every day.

- The phrases are a mixture of **idioms, phrasal verbs** (two-word verb phrases), and **slang words**.
- The example sentences are in a **conversational setting (or tone), in a way that a native speaker might naturally speak**.
- Remember, with phrasal verbs, the **verb tense can change**. I've changed a few tenses in the examples to show you.
- If you have any questions, you can email me at hello@englishformydream.com. I read every email and will do my best to help you.
- Also, follow me on twitter **@EnglishForDream**. **And get my English tips here:** <http://englishformydream.com/tips.html>.
- If you like this book, share it with your English-learning friends!

Thank you, and good luck on your English journey!

Ryan (www.englishformydream.com)

List of 101 English Idioms and Phrases for Professionals

<u>Term</u>	<u>Definition</u>	<u>Sentence</u>
24/7	24 hours a day, 7 days a week	The convenience store is open 24/7 .
Acronym	An abbreviation usually consisting of the first letters of other words; sometimes pronounced as one word, sometimes pronounced as the letters themselves	SEC is an acronym for the “Securities and Exchange Commission.”
Ahead of (behind) the curve	Ahead of (or behind) current expectations, thinking, or current trends	Jed is smart; he is ahead of the curve . Our company has to adapt; we are behind the curve a little bit.
Anticipate	To expect or predict	We are anticipating a loss this quarter.
ASAP	An acronym meaning “as soon as possible”	We need to finish the report ASAP .
Back to square one	Back to where you started; back to the beginning	The project failed, so now we are back to square one .
Back to the drawing board	When an idea doesn’t work, we say this when we have to start over; similar to “back to square one”	The company rejected our proposal, so let’s go back to the drawing board .

Ballpark number/figure	An estimation of a number	“Can you please give me a ballpark figure how much it will cost?”
Behind the scenes	Out of sight from the public, in secret	John’s coworkers did a lot of work behind the scenes , but John got all the credit for the project.
Blue chip stocks	Giant stocks of companies with solid, great reputations	Apple and Microsoft are blue chip stocks .
Boneheaded move	A stupid action or idea	Wearing sneakers to the job interview was a boneheaded move!
Bookworm	Someone who loves to read books	Megan is a bookworm ; she’s read every <i>Harry Potter</i> book three times.
Brainstorm	Thinking about new ideas, usually in a group setting	We are brainstorming ways to get new customers.
Break-even	To earn as much money as you’ve spent; when revenues equal cost	The company broke-even last quarter; it neither gained nor lost money.
Bucks	Slang term for U.S. dollars	The ticket costs 100 bucks .
Burn the candle at both ends	To work so hard that you are exhausted, usually going to bed very late and getting up very early	She has been burning the candle at both ends by working and going to school.

Burn the midnight oil	To stay awake at night to work or study	John has been burning the midnight oil preparing for his exam.
Buy time	To waste time or delay for something; to stall	Our project is not finished yet. We need to buy some time to finish and to make our client happy.
Call it a day	To finish something, end the business day, or go home	We did a lot of work today. Let's call it a day .
Carte blanche	Complete freedom to act, make decisions, or do business as you think is right	The CEO has carte blanche over all business decisions.
Cash cow	A business (or product) that makes a lot of profit	That restaurant is such a cash cow; it's crowded almost every night.
Catch (someone) off guard	To make someone surprised or confused	The difficult interview question caught her off guard .
Catch up	To meet with a person after you haven't seen or spoken to them in a long time	"Hey, Mary. It's so good to see you again. I have a meeting now but why don't we catch up over coffee later today?"
Come up short	To fail to meet someone's expectations	The Yankees came up short this year by losing lots of easy games.
Corner the market	To dominate the market	Microsoft has been trying to corner the computer market for years.

Cut corners	To take shortcuts in order to save effort or money; to be lazy	The boss doesn't want to hire employees who cut corners .
Cut one's losses	To withdraw from a losing situation; to give up	The project is failing, so let's cut our losses and move on.
Draw a blank	To forget something you usually know; to not say anything	"What is his name? I know it, but I am drawing a blank right now."
Drop (someone) a line	To call someone or contact someone	"I am out of the office this week, but drop me a line next week and we can talk."
Facts and figures	Precise details/data, usually with graphs or pictures or charts	The presentation had a lot of facts and figures which made our decision easier.
Far-off	Not near one's expectations or agreement	He wants to do the work for \$10,000. We want can only afford to pay him \$2,000. Our numbers are too far-off , so we cannot do business with him.
Fifty-fifty (50/50)	When something is divided in half or split between two people; 50% for one person and 50% for the other person	We formed a partnership and split the profits fifty-fifty .
Follow through (with something)	To keep a promise; to execute, deliver, or provide a result	He did not follow through with his promises.

Game plan	A strategy or plan	We need a game plan to launch our new product.
Get back (to someone)	To reply or respond to someone, usually through phone or email communication	“I am away from my desk now. I will get back to you as soon as I can.”
Get the ball rolling	To start or begin something, like a meeting, project, etc.	We really need to get the ball rolling on our new project.
Give-and-take	To have mutual concessions; to communicate and compromise	Negotiation is a game of give-and-take .
Go broke	To lose all of your money	She will go broke if she keeps spending her money on fancy cars and trips.
Go for broke	To risk everything, usually with full effort [different from “go broke”]	The team was down by five runs in the ninth inning, so they went for broke and won the baseball game.
Go the extra mile	To go above and beyond one’s expectations, to do more than required	Our customer service representatives go the extra mile to satisfy our customers.
Goose egg	Slang for the number zero (0)	“Why is there a goose egg in our sales column?” asked the manager.
Grab a bite to eat	To eat food, usually with another person	Let’s go grab a bite to eat , I’m starving.

Grab a seat	To take a seat; to sit down	“Welcome. Grab a seat and let’s talk.”
Gray/Grey area	Something that is not easily defined or categorized	Our lawyers are not sure if this strategy is legal or not. They said it’s a gray area .
Happy hour	A period of the day at a bar or restaurant when drinks and food are discounted; Happy hours usually occur in the afternoon or evening	“Care to join me for happy hour after work today?”
Have a ball	To have fun, to enjoy oneself	I have a ball every time we do a product launch.
Have a blast	To have fun; to enjoy oneself; same meaning as “have a ball”	I had a blast at the company picnic.
Have deep pockets	To be very rich	My uncle has deep pockets so he gave me a generous Christmas present.
Hush money	Money paid to someone to keep embarrassing information a secret	The CEO paid his workers some hush money to not talk about the scandal.
In the black	Profitable; making money	Our company is in the black this quarter, so all of our jobs are safe.
In the long run	In the long term, in the future, extending over a long period of time	Taking care of customers is a good strategy in the long run .

In the red	Not profitable; losing money [opposite of in the black]	Sadly, our advertising department is in the red this quarter.
In the short run	In the short term [opposite of in the long run]	In the short run , eating junk food tastes good, but in the long run, it's unhealthy.
In the weeds	Slang used in the restaurant industry; when workers are really busy or backed-up; or having a difficult time at work	The staff in the kitchen is really in the weeds and our customers are getting angry.
Kill time	To do something while waiting for someone	My colleague's train was delayed, so I killed time by reading a book.
Kill two birds with one stone	To do two things at once; to solve two problems at one time	While I am in Florida on business, I can kill two birds with one stone by working on business and checking out retirement homes for my mother.
Look forward to	To await excitedly	I look forward to meeting you.
Look out for	To watch or expect something, usually with caution	When climbing a mountain, look out for falling rocks.
Loophole	When something in the law is unclear not certain; a technicality	Many companies use tax loopholes to save money on taxes.
Lose one's shirt	To lose lots of money, usually in the stock market	He lost his shirt in the 1987 stock market crash.

Make a killing	To make a lot of money	Apple seems to always make a killing on their new iPhone launches.
Meet-and-greet	An event (usually with food and drink) where people meet each other	I am going to the meet-and-greet tomorrow at the Hilton Hotel.
Morning person	Someone who loves to get up early [usually NOT a night owl]	I am not a morning person ; I love sleeping as much as I can.
Night owl	Someone who stays up late [usually NOT a morning person]	My neighbor is a night owl ; it seems like he never sleeps!
No brainer	An easy decision; so easy, it's like you don't even have to think about it	Going with a lower-cost firm who does better work is a no brainer .
On par with (something)	Equal to or comparable with something else	The service at this small hotel is on par with the service at a five-star hotel.
On point	Slang meaning perfect, delicious, well-done	The burgers at this restaurant are on point .
Pay dividends	To get a reward in the long term	Doing the hard work now will pay dividends in the future.
Pie chart	A graph in the shape of a circle (like a pie) that shows percentages	The pie chart shows that we spend 20% of our budget on research and development.
Pinch pennies	To be really frugal or cheap	My neighbor lost her job so now she has to pinch pennies until she finds a new one.

Play phone tag	When you try to call someone and leave a voicemail (message), and they call you back and leave a voicemail, and you can't get in touch with them easily	"We have been trying to speak on the phone for a week now. We are playing phone tag. "
Price hike	An increase in price	Did you notice the price hike in bus fare these days?
Pull a fast one	To trick someone or to lie/deceive someone	She pulled a fast one by saying she was sick when really she just wanted to relax at home.
Put (someone) on the spot	To ask an uncomfortable or surprising question to someone	The reporter put him on the spot by asking him about his recent divorce.
Right hand man	A helper or chief assistant	Joe Biden is President Obama's right hand man.
Sharing is caring	When you share something, you care about the other person	I bought a cake and shared it with my friends. Sharing is caring!
Skyrocket	To increase rapidly	Our sales skyrocketed after we were mentioned in the newspaper.
Slow and steady wins the race	This saying means that consistent effort over time is better than a lot of effort in the beginning and small or no effort later	Our competitor is ahead of us now, but they will lose focus. Slow and steady wins the race.

Small talk	Polite talk, about trivial things like the weather, in social occasions	The owner of the shop always makes small talk with her customers.
Snake oil salesman	Someone who sells fraudulent (fake/bad) goods or information	I think that person is lying about how his new health product can cure my disease. He sounds like a snake oil salesman .
Sold out	When all units available for sale have been sold	The tickets for the event sold out in less than one hour.
Stone cold	Completely	I was stone cold serious about the business idea, but all my friends thought I was joking.
Stretch (one's) budget	To make one's budget last longer than expected	"How can our company stretch its advertising budget ? Our costs are really high right now."
Suck up	To treat your superiors in a good way, solely for your own advantage or gain	Sucking up is not a good way to get a promotion; hard work is.
Swamped	Extremely busy	I apologize for the delay; I've been swamped with work.
Sweep (something) under the rug	To hide something embarrassing that you don't want others to know about	The president is trying to sweep this scandal under the rug .
Take a bath	Slang term meaning "to lose money"	I took a \$100,000 bath on that stock when it crashed.

Take a hike	To leave; get out of one's face; get away	"I am angry at your insults towards me. Go take a hike. "
Take a turn for the worse	When things are OK, or bad, and suddenly get worse	The economy just took a turn for the worse.
Take off	Slang term meaning "to go fast" or to grow quickly	The great idea took off and saved our company from bankruptcy.
The long and short of it	In summary	" The long and short of it is that we lost our best customer."
Tie up loose ends	To tidy up or finish something completely, even the minor details	Before resigning from the company, he tied up loose ends by apologizing to everyone.
To die for	Excellent, extremely good	The food here is to die for.
Touch base	To contact and communicate; to get in touch	Let's touch base next week.
Tough cookie	A person who is difficult to work with; an unpleasant person; someone who is not hurt easily	Some say that Steve Jobs was a tough cookie.
Under the table	Cash payment for wages that are not officially reported and is not taxed by the government	Many illegal immigrants get paid under the table.
Under wraps	To hide something or to control something	The terms of the new contract are under wraps until further notice.

Underwater	When an asset (like a home) has more debt than its market value	His mortgage is underwater , he bought his house for \$200,000 but now it's worth only \$140,000.
Wear down	To make an opponent tired or exhausted	She wore down her opponent until he gave up.
Wear out one's welcome	To stay too long at an event; to become unpopular after meeting someone	"I accidentally insulted the host of the party; I think I've worn out my welcome. "
Wrap up	To finish something, to conclude something; to get to the end of something	The presentation is going too long; I hope he wraps it up soon.
Zone out	To fall asleep or to not pay attention to someone or something	"What did you say? Sorry, I zoned out. "

Great job! Remember to look at this sheet often to improve your English vocabulary. If you have any questions, please ask me at hello@englishformydream.com and sign up for tips to improve your English at www.englishformydream.com/tips.html.