

Useful American Idioms

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This handout was used over a five-day period as part of a one week intensive English class.

Useful American Idioms

These American idioms will be discussed in class and used in everyday conversational phrases. Students are encouraged to make up their own conversations using the American idioms.

Definition of Idiom: a word or group of words established by usage and having a meaning not understood from the word or words themselves; a certain type of expression common to a language or people.

Directions: Listen to the teacher explain the idiom and write down the definition on the first line. On the second line write your original sentence using the idiom.

1. A nut / nuts

2. All part of the game

3. Backfire

4. Back seat driver

5. Bank on

6. Bankroll

7. Beer belly / Pot belly

8. Behind the scenes

9. Benchmark

10. Better safe than sorry

11. Big mouth

12. Bite off more than you can chew

13. Blown out

14. Bottom line

15. Brand new / Second hand

16. Break the ice

17. Breathing room

18. Burn your bridges

19. Business as usual

20. By word of mouth

21. Calm before the storm

22. Chain-smoker

23. Chicken

24. Come out on the short end of the stick

25. Count on

26. Cover all the bases

27. Do the trick

28. Doggie bag

29. Don't hold your breath

30. Earmark

31. Elbow room

32. Fall through

33. Fat chance

34. Fed up with

35. Flash in the pan

36. Foot the bill

37. Freak out

38. Fried up

39. From hand to mouth

40. Gain ground / Lose ground

41. Get away with murder

42. Get burned

43. Get in over your head

44. Get the green light

45. Get to first base

46. Get your act together

47. Give a hand / Lend a hand

48. Go for broke

49. Go from bad to worse

50. Go off the deep end

51. Go over like a lead balloon

52. Gravy train

53. Green thumb

54. Handy

55. Have your cake and eat it, too

56. Head to head

57. Hear it through the grapevine

58. His days are numbered

59. Hit home

60. Hit the jackpot

61. In a nutshell

62. In one ear and out the other

63. In the red / In the black

64. In the same boat

65. Iron out

66. Just around the corner

67. Kick start / Jump start

68. Kill time

69. Keep an eye on

70. Landsl i de

71. Lay down the law

72. Long shot

73. Make a scene

74. Make both ends meet

75. Nest egg

76. New lease on life

77. No brainer

78. Nose-dive / Skyrocket

79. Not so hot

80. Odds and ends

81. On the right track

82. One track mind

83. Out of hand

84. Out of your mind

85. Out on a limb

86. Out to lunch

87. Over the hill

88. Par for the course

89. Pass the buck

90. Personal agenda

91. Play it by ear

92. Play with fire

93. Pot calling the kettle black

94. Pull no punches

95. Read between the lines

96. Red-light district

97. Redneck

98. Red tape

99. Right under my nose

100. Rock the boat

101. Rub it in

102. Run circles around

103. Scapegoat

104. Scratch the surface

105. Slush fund

106. Soapbox

107. Step up to the plate

108. Up the creek

109. Uphill / Downhill

110. Upper hand

111. Upside / Downside

112. Take it or leave it

113. Tear jerker

114. The ball is in their court

115. The jury is still out

116. The real world

117. The whole nine yards

118. Three time loser

119. Tie up loose ends

120. Tip of the iceberg

121. To be in a bind / To be in a jam

122. To blow up

123. To check out

124. To crack up

125. To do one調 homework

126. To draw a line

127. To drink like a fish

128. To fall back on

129. To go through the motions

130. To have one foot in the grave

131. To pass away

132. To play with fire

133. Track record

134. Treading on thin ice

135. Turn the tables

136. Wait and see

137. Watch your step

138. Water under the bridge

139. Watered down

140. Wear the pants

141. Wet blanket

142. When hell freezes over

143. Where there 調 smoke, there 調 fire

144. White elephant

145. Windfall

