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 **Idiomatic expressions**

**Definition:** idiomatic expressions, also known as idioms, are phrases or expressions that have a figurative meaning that is different from the literal meaning of the individual words. These expressions often convey a specific cultural or social meaning that may not be immediately apparent to someone who is not familiar with the language or culture. Furthermore, idioms are used in everyday language to add color, emphasis, or a bit of cultural nuance to communication, they can be challenging for language learners because their meanings are not often deducible from the literal meanings of the words they contain. Moreover, idiomatic expressions can vary across languages and cultures, so it is important to be aware of them in the context of the language you’re learning

Learning idioms can enhance your understanding of the language and help you communicate more effectively.

**Figurative meaning:** the figurative meaning of a word or phrase is an abstract or metaphorical interpretation that goes beyond its literal definition. In figurative language, words or expressions are used in a way that deviates from their literal meaning to convey a more vivid, imaginative, or nuanced idea. Figurative language adds depth and richness to communication by relying on various literary devices such as metaphors, smiles, personification, and idioms.

* **Metaphor:** A metaphor involves making a direct comparison between two unrelated things to highlight a similarity. For example, saying "Time is a thief" is a metaphor, suggesting that time steals moments from our lives.
* **Simile:** Similar to a metaphor, a simile compares two things using the words "like" or "as." An example is "as brave as a lion," where the comparison emphasizes bravery.
* **Personification:** Personification gives human characteristics to non-human entities or abstract concepts. For instance, saying "The wind whispered through the trees" attributes a human quality (whispering) to the wind.
* **Hyperbole:** Hyperbole involves exaggeration for emphasis or effect. Saying "I've told you a million times" is a hyperbolic expression, emphasizing the frequency of communication.
* **Idiom:** Idioms are expressions where the figurative meaning is different from the literal meaning. For example, "kick the bucket" is an idiom for dying, but it has nothing to do with an actual bucket.

**Literal meaning:** The literal meaning of a word or expression is its most basic, straightforward, and non-figurative interpretation. It refers to the actual, concrete definition of a word or phrase as it is commonly understood. Literal meaning is the opposite of figurative meaning, where words or expressions are used in a symbolic or metaphorical sense.

For example:

**The literal meaning** of the word "book" is a physical object with pages that contain written or printed material.

**The literal meaning** of the phrase "break a leg" is an encouragement to someone to do well in a performance or endeavor, but when taken literally, it suggests causing physical harm, which is not the intended meaning.

Understanding the literal meaning of words is foundational to language comprehension, as it forms the basis for clear communication. However, effective communication often involves the use of figurative language to convey ideas, emotions, and nuances that go beyond literal descriptions.

**Common idiomatic expressions and their meanings:**

* Kick the bucket: this means to die

 Example: I don’t want to kick the bucket before I travel the world.

* Break a leg: this is a way to wish someone good luck.

 Example: you’re going to do great in the performance tonight. Break a leg!

* Cost an arm and a leg: this means something is very expensive.

 Example: getting my car repaired is going to cost an arm and a leg.

* Hit the hay: this means to go to bed or to go to sleep.

 Example: I’m exhausted; I think that I’m going to hit the hay early tonight.

* Bite the bullet: this means to endure a painful or difficult situation.

 Example: I have to work late tonight, so I guess I’ll just have to bite the bullet.

* Hit the nail on the head: this means to describe exactly what is causing a situation or a problem.

Example: you rally hit the nail on the head when you said our teams needs better communication.

* Burning the midnight oil: this means working late into the night or early morning hours.

 Example: I have a deadline tomorrow, so I’ll be burning the midnight morning hours.

* Cry over spilled milk: this means to be upset about something that has already happened and cannot be changed.

 Example: yes, the mistake was unfortunate, but there’s no use crying over spilled milk. Let’s focus on finding a solution.

* Piece of cake: this means something is very easy to do.

 Example: the exam was a piece of cake; I finished it in half the time.

* Throw in the towel: this means to give up or surrender.

 Example: after hours of trying to fix the computer, I finally threw in the towel and called for technical support.

* The ball is in your court: this means it’s now someone else’s turn to take action or make a decision.

 Example: I’ve done everything I can to help; now the ball is in your court.

* Cost a fortune: this means something is extremely expensive.

 Example: buying a new car can cost a fortune these days.

* A piece of the action: this means a share in an exciting or profitable activity.

 Example: I want to be a part of this new business venture; I want a piece of the action.

**Activities:**

**Exercise one:** Complete the sentences by choosing the correct idiomatic expression from the list provided.

1. I was so nervous about the interview, but when they offered me the job, I felt like I had \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

A. hit the nail on the head

B. bitten off more than I can chew

C. broken the ice

1. Learning to play the guitar may seem challenging at first, but with practice, it will become a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

A. piece of cake

B. cost an arm and a leg

C. cry over spilled milk

1. The team worked late into the night……………….to meet the project deadline.
2. Hitting the nail on the head.
3. Burning the midnight oil.
4. Throwing in the towel.

**Exercise two:** use the given idiomatic expressions to create your sentences.

* Idiom: Kick the bucket
* *Your Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*
* Idiom: Throw in the towel
* *Your Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*
* Idiom: The ball is in your court
* *Your Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*