

Sports Idioms List with Meanings and Examples

Idiom / Phrase	Meaning	Example Sentence
ace in the hole	a hidden strength or advantage	They'll win the game since their rookie goalkeeper is an ace in the hole.
call the shots	make the decisions	The new coach is calling the shots.
chip in	donate money or time	Why don't you chip in and support the refugees?
down to the wire	to the end	The game is coming down to the wire and nobody has scored.
front runner	favorite to win	The stallion is the front runner. He'll be hard to beat.
get a head start	start before others	Don always gets a head start and wakes up at dawn.
get a second wind	have new energy after an attempt	I was exhausted after 3 kilometres of running, but I got a second wind after I passed the beach.
get into the full swing	be comfortable doing something after some time	It took her a month to get into the full swing of things. Now she is the best employee.
give it your best shot	try your hardest	I know the homework is difficult but give it your best shot.
give someone a fair shake	give someone a chance	He never got a fair shake. He got fired after a week.
give someone a run for their money	try hard to defeat another person	Connor is going to give Floyd a run for his money.
go to bat for someone	defend someone	His colleague went to bat for her and testified on her behalf.
hat trick	three goals by one player	Ronaldo scored several hat tricks last season.
have the upper hand	have a better chance of winning	The experienced boxer has the upper hand.
hit a snag	face a sudden problem	We've hit a snag. I don't think we can finish it on time now.
hit below the belt	do something that is unfair	You hit me below the belt when you said that lie about me.
hold all the aces	expected to win	The home team holds all the aces. I don't think the other team will win.

hot shot or big shot	very confident or successful person	All the hot shots in New York live on the Upper East Side.
jump the gun	begin too soon	If you jump the gun then you may make a mistake. Go at your own pace.
keep your head above water	try not to fall behind	It's hard to keep your head above water when you are already down by 3 goals.
learn the ropes	learn new things	I spend the whole morning learning the ropes for the job.
level playing field	equal chance	The team leveled the playing field after the penalty kick.
long shot	difficult thing to accomplish	It will be a long shot to finish in the top three positions.
make the cut	chosen to be part of a group	I don't think I made the cut. Other people will probably get hired instead.
neck and neck	very close	The race cars were neck and neck until the end.
no sweat	no problem	Sara said it would be no sweat to finish the assignment on time.
not playing with a full deck	lower mental ability	George isn't playing with a full deck. He forgot to wear his socks.
not up to par	not good enough	If you're not up to par by the end of the month, you're fired.
on the ball	ready and able	I'm on the ball today. I finished everything before lunch.
out in left field	strange or unconventional	His response was so way out in left field that everyone couldn't stop laughing.
out of my league	not as good as someone else	She's way out of my league. There's no way she'll go out with me.
settle a score	get even	It's time to settle the score. I'm sick of losing against these guys.
shot in the dark	guess	It was a shot in the dark, but her answer was correct.
skate on thin ice	do something risky	He was skating on thin ice when he insulted the boss.
start the ball rolling	start something	Let's get the ball rolling and start with some ice breakers.
step up to the plate	take responsibility	Yuna is going to step up to the plate and admit that her team's decision was wrong.

take the bull by the horns	attempt the challenge	Let's take the bull by the horse and get started on the project.
take the wind out of my sails	to feel deflated	You really took the wind out of my sails when you laughed at my new invention.
the ball is in your court	the decision is up to you	We offered him an extra million dollars. The ball is in his court if he wants to sign the contract.
the home stretch	near the end	We're on the home stretch now. We'll be there in a few minutes.
throw in the towel	give up	Rocky never threw in the towel during his fighting career.
time out	break	Can we take a time out and work on this later in the afternoon?
to be off base	not making a fair statement	Mandy was off base when she said that I needed a hair transplant to get the acting role.
under the table	concealed or by secret	We should keep this under the table until we know it's safe to tell everyone.
win hands down	easy victory	The team one hands down because their opponents had three red cards.