

Animal Idioms List with Meanings and Examples

Idiom / Phrase	Meaning	Example Sentence
a little bird told me	someone told me a secret	A little bird told me that you're getting a divorce.
ants in your pants	anxious or nervous	Frank had ants in his pants before taking his exam.
bark up the wrong tree	look in the wrong place or falsely accuse	He asked me if I broke his laptop. I said he was barking up the wrong tree.
beast of burden	someone carries others problems	I will never be your beast of burden. You have got to deal with your own problems.
beat a dead horse	dwelling on a topic beyond resolution	I told you several times that I won't do it. Don't beat a dead horse!
black sheep	unaccepted group member	Tom was the black sheep of the family and preferred to do things on his own.
cat nap	a short sleep	My father always takes a cat nap after work.
cat got your tongue	said when someone doesn't speak	What's wrong? Cat got your tongue? You haven't said a word since we arrived.
chicken out	avoid doing something because of fear	Mary was going to go skydiving, but she chickened out.
clam up	become quiet	Tom always clams up when you ask him about his ex-girlfriend.
copy cat	someone who copies another	You're such a copy cat! Do your own work!
crocodile tears	fake tears	Her little daughter always cries crocodile tears to get whatever she wants.
dog days	very hot days	The dog days of summer are really humid and uncomfortable.
don't count chickens before they hatch	don't plan for something that may not happen	Zoe bought the dress, before anyone asked her to the prom. I told her not to count her chickens before they hatch.
drop like flies	dye or give up quickly	The other candidates dropped like flies at the end of the election.

eager beaver	someone who is excited about something	She's such an eager beaver when checking updates on Instagram.
early bird	someone who likes to wake up early	Sara is such an early bird. She gets up before the sun rises.
elephant in the room	a sensitive unaddressed issue	The couple's money problem was an elephant in the room. They never talk about finances.
fishy	strange or suspicious	Something fishy is going on. He takes his wedding ring off when he leaves.
have a cow	get upset	Don't have a cow! It's not like I scratched the car on purpose!
hold your horses	wait and be patient	Hold your horses! I'll be ready in a minute.
holy cow	that is surprising	Holy cow! Did she really dye her hair blue?
horse around	play roughly	Stop horsing around kids. You're in the library.
in the dog house	in trouble	The coach won't let me play. I'm in the dog house.
kill two birds with one stone	accomplish two things at once	Why not kill two birds with one stone and brush your teeth in the shower?
kitty corner	diagonally across from	Starbucks is kitty corner to the gas station.
let the cat out of the bag	reveal a secret	Don't let the cat out of the bag about the birthday party.
lion's share	the majority of something	You took the lion's share of the money. All I got was a couple pennies.
monkey see, monkey do	silly people copy each other	Monkey see, monkey do. Your brother spilt ketchup on his shirt too.
nest egg	saved money	She has a huge nest egg, so she doesn't have to work anymore.
pig out	eat a lot	Last night, I pigged out on a bag of potato chips.
plenty of other fish in the sea	there are many other available partners	Don't worry. You'll find another girl. There are plenty of other fish in the sea.
raining cats and dogs	raining heavily	It's raining cats and dogs. Remember your umbrella.
rat race	competitive struggle	I escaped the rat race in the office and moved to Hawaii.

screw the pooch	fail	Carl really screwed the pooch on the exam. He's the only one who failed.
shooting fish in a barrel	easy or not challenging	For my brilliant little brother, setting up the Wifi connection is like shooting fish in a barrel.
sleep with the fishes	die	Before pulling the trigger, he told the gangster to sleep with the fishes.
smell a rat	suspect deception	I smell rat. I know I left my wallet on my desk, but it's gone.
straight from the horse's mouth	directly from the source	The boss said we're bankrupt. The news came straight from the horse's mouth.
take the bull by the horns	be brave and face a challenge	If you want to be rich, take the bull by the horns and work harder.
the birds and the bees	sex education	I remember learning about the birds and the bees in middle school.
the lion's share	the majority	She was upset because her sister got the lion's share of the inheritance.
until the cows come home	for a long time	She can watch Netflix until the cows come home.
water off a duck's back	a harmful remark that has no effect on someone	She insulted me but I didn't care. It was like water off a duck's back.
wild goose chase	lengthy undertaking that accomplishes little	Making the playoffs is now a wild goose chase. The team should focus on player development.