

[A fresh pair of eyes](#)

A person who is brought in to examine something carefully is a fresh pair of eyes.

[A still tongue keeps a wise head](#)

Wise people don't talk much.

[About face](#)

If someone changes their mind completely, this is an about face. It can be used when companies, governments, etc, change their position on an issue.

[Absence makes the heart grow fonder](#)

This idiom means that when people are apart, their love grows stronger.

[After your own heart](#)

A person after your own heart thinks the same way as you.

[All ears](#)

If someone says they're all ears, they are very interested in hearing about something.

[All eyes on me](#)

If all eyes are on someone, then everyone is paying attention to them.

[All fingers and thumbs](#)

If you're all fingers and thumbs, you are too excited or clumsy to do something properly that requires manual dexterity. 'All thumbs' is an alternative form of the idiom.

[All heart](#)

Someone who is all heart is very kind and generous.

[All in your head](#)

If something is all in your head, you have imagined it and it is not real.

[All skin and bone](#)

If a person is very underweight, they are all skin and bone, or bones.

[Arm and a leg](#)

If something costs an arm and a leg, it is very expensive.

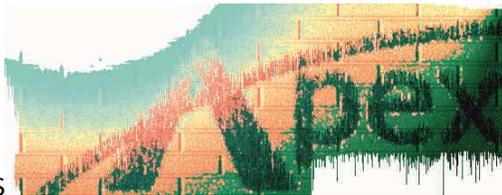
[Armed to the teeth](#)

If people are armed to the teeth, they have lots of weapons.

[At arm's length](#)

If something is at arm's length, it is a safe distance away from you.

[At each other's throats](#)



If people are at each other's throats, they are fighting, arguing or competing ruthlessly.

[At the top of my lungs](#)

If you shout at the top of your lungs, you shout as loudly as you possibly can.

[At the top of your lungs](#)

If you shout at the top of your lungs, you shout as loudly as you possibly can.

[At the top of your voice](#)

If you talk, shout or sing at the top of your voice, you do it as loudly as you can.

[Back foot](#)

(UK) If you are on your back foot, you are at a disadvantage and forced to be defensive of your position.

[Bad blood](#)

If people feel hate because of things that happened in the past, there is bad blood between them.

[Bad hair day](#)

If you're having a bad hair day, things are not going the way you would like or had planned.

[Bad mouth](#)

(UK) When you are bad mouthing, you are saying negative things about someone or something. ('Bad-mouth' and 'badmouth' are also used.)

[Bad taste in your mouth](#)

If something leaves you with a bad taste in your mouth, you feel there is something wrong or bad about it.

[Bag of bones](#)

If someone is a bag of bones, they are very underweight.

[Bag of nerves](#)

If someone is a bag of nerves, they are very worried or nervous.

[Bare your heart](#)

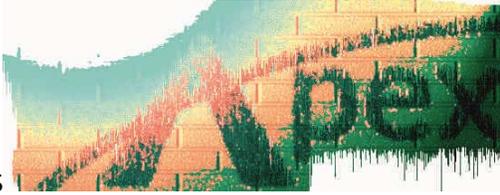
If you bare your heart to someone, you tell them your personal and private feelings. ('Bare your soul' is an alternative form of the idiom.)

[Bat an eyelid](#)

If someone doesn't bat an eyelid, they don't react or show any emotion when surprised, shocked, etc.

[Bated breath](#)

If someone says they're waiting with bated breath, they're very excited and find it difficult to be



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patient. ('Baited breath' is a common mistake.)

Be all ears

If you are all ears, you are very eager to hear what someone has to say.

Beat your brains out

If you beat your brains out, you think hard about something but cannot solve, understand or remember it.

Beauty is in the eye of the beholder

Beauty is in the eye of the beholder means that different people will find different things beautiful and that the differences of opinion don't matter greatly.

Beauty is only skin deep

This idiom means that appearances can be deceptive and something that seems or looks good may turn out to be bad.

Bedroom eyes

Someone with bedroom eyes has a sexy look in their eyes.

Behind someone's back

If you do something behind someone's back, you do it without telling them.

Belly up

If things go belly up, they go badly wrong.

Better than a kick in the teeth

If something is better than a kick in the teeth, it isn't very good, but it is better than nothing.

Better than a stick in the eye

If something is better than a stick in the eye, it isn't very good, but it is better than nothing.

Big nose

If someone has a big nose, it means they are excessively interested in everyone else's business.

Bit between your teeth

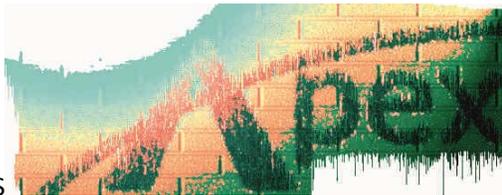
If you take or have the bit between your teeth, you take or have control of a situation. (Bit = piece of metal in a horse's mouth)

Bite someone's head off

If you bite someone's head off, you criticise them angrily.

Bite your lip

If you have to bite your lip, you have to make a conscious effort not to react or to keep quiet about something that displeases you.



[Bite your tongue](#)

If you bite your tongue, you refrain from speaking because it is socially or otherwise better not to.

[Bleed dry](#)

If you bleed someone dry, you extract all their available money from them.

[Bleeding edge](#)

Similar to 'cutting edge' or 'leading edge', this implies a technology or process that is at the forefront or beyond current practices. However, because it is unproven, it is often dangerous to use (hence the 'bleeding').

[Bleeding heart](#)

A bleeding heart is a person who is excessively sympathetic towards other people.

[Bless your pointy little head](#)

This expression is used as to patronise someone, especially when they don't realise that they're not very clever.

[Blind acceptance](#)

If people accept thing blindly, they accept them without questioning them at all.

[Blind leading the blind](#)

When the blind are leading the blind, the people in charge of something don't know anything more than the people they are in charge of, when they should have greater knowledge.

[Blink of an eye](#)

If something happens in the blink of an eye, it happens so fast it is almost impossible to notice it.

[Blood and thunder](#)

An emotional speech or performance is full of blood and thunder. [Blood from a turnip](#)

It is impossible to get something from someone if they don't have it, just as you cannot get blood from a turnip.

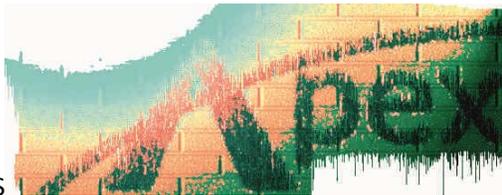
[Blood is thicker than water](#)

This idiom means that family relationships are stronger than others.

[Blood is worth bottling](#)

(AU) If an Australian says to you "Your blood is worth bottling", he/she is complimenting or praising you for doing something or being someone very special.

[Blood out of a stone](#)



If something is like getting blood out of a stone, it is very difficult indeed.

[Blood, sweat and tears](#)

If something will take blood, sweat and tears, it will be very difficult and will require a lot of effort and sacrifice.

[Blow your mind](#)

Something that will blow your mind is something extraordinary that will amaze you beyond explanation.

[Blue blood](#)

Someone with blue blood is royalty.

[Bone of contention](#)

If there is an issue that always causes tension and arguments, it is a bone of contention.

[Bone to pick](#)

If you have a bone to pick with someone, you are annoyed about something they have done and want to tell them how you feel.

[Born with a silver spoon in your mouth](#)

If you are born with a silver spoon in your mouth, you are born into a rich family.

[Brain drain](#)

When organisations or countries can pay higher salaries to attract talented people from poorer countries, there's a brain drain, a loss of talent.

[Brain surgery](#)

If something is not brain surgery, it isn't very complicated or difficult to understand or master.

[Brass neck](#)

(UK) Someone who has the brass neck to do something has no sense of shame about what they do.

[Break a leg](#)

This idiom is a way of wishing someone good luck.

[Break your heart](#)

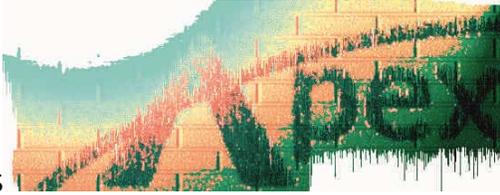
If someone upsets you greatly, they break your heart, especially if they end a relationship.

[Breakneck speed](#)

If something happens at breakneck speed, it happens very quickly, often at dangerous speed.

[Breathe down your neck](#)

If someone follows you or examines what you're doing very



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closely, they are breathing down your neck.

Bright-eyed and bushy-tailed

If someone's bright-eyed and bushy-tailed, they are full of energy and enthusiasm.

Bring someone to heel

If you bring someone to heel, you make them obey you. ('Call someone to heel' is also used.)

Brown nose

When someone tries to make themselves popular with somebody, usually in a position of authority, especially by flattering them, they are brown nosing.

Bums on seats

The people who have paid to watch a performance are bums on seats.

Bundle of nerves

Someone who is a bundle of nerves is very worried or nervous.

Burn your fingers

If you burn your fingers, you suffer a loss or something unpleasant as the result of something you did, making you less likely to do it again.

Burr up the ass

(USA) If you have a burr up your ass, you are very upset about something that has happened and intend to do something about it to correct it.

Bury your head in the sand

If someone buries their head in the sand, they ignore something that is obviously wrong.

Bust my chops

When someone says that they're not going to bust their chops, it means they are not going to work that hard or make much effort.

Butt naked

If someone is butt naked, they have no clothes on at all, often when they can be seen.

Butterfingers

Someone who has butterfingers is clumsy and drops things.

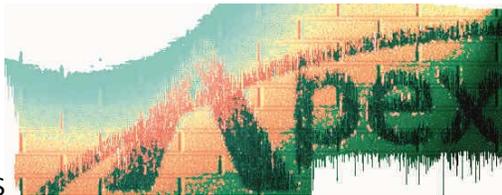
Button your lip

If you button your lip, you keep quiet and don't speak. It is also used as a way of telling someone to shut up.

By a hair's breadth

If a person escapes from some danger by a hair's breadth, they only just managed to avoid it.

The breadth is the thickness of a



hair, so they probably feel somewhat lucky because the margin between success and what could easily have been failure was so close.

[By heart](#)

If you learn something by heart, you learn it word for word.

[By the skin of your teeth](#)

If you do something by the skin of your teeth, you only just manage to do it and come very near indeed to failing.

[By word of mouth](#)

If something becomes known by word of mouth, it gets known by being talked about rather than through publicity or advertising, etc.

[Cast iron stomach](#)

A person with a cast iron stomach can eat or drink anything without any ill effects.

[Cast your eye over](#)

If you cast your eye over something, you look at it or check it quickly, without looking carefully at the details.

[Change of heart](#)

If you change the way you think or feel about something, you have a change of heart.

[Chaps my ass](#)

When something/someone really annoys you, it chaps your ass.

[Chase your tail](#)

If you are chasing your tail, you are very busy but not being very productive.

[Cheek by jowl](#)

If things or people are cheek by jowl, they are very close together.

[Chew on a bone](#)

If someone is chewing on a bone, he or she is thinking about something intently.

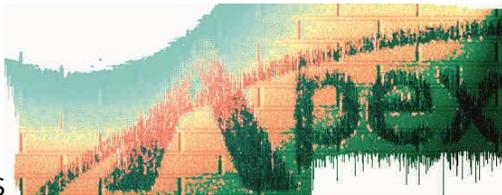
[Chip on your shoulder](#)

If someone has a chip on their shoulder, they are resentful about something and feel that they have been treated badly.

[Chomping at the bit](#)

If you are chomping at the bit, you are eager to start on a task immediately.

[Clean hands](#)



Someone with clean hands, or who keeps their hands clean, is not involved in illegal or immoral activities.

[Close at hand](#)

If something is close at hand, it is nearby or conveniently located.

[Close lipped](#)

A person who is reluctant to talk about a specific subject is close lipped.

[Close shave](#)

If you have a close shave, you very nearly have a serious accident or get into trouble.

[Close to your heart](#)

If something is close to your heart, you care a lot about it. ('Dear to your heart' is an alternative.)

[Cloth ears](#)

If you don't listen to people, they may suggest you have cloth ears.

[Cold feet](#)

If you get cold feet about something, you lose the courage to do it.

[Cold shoulder](#)

If you give or show someone the cold shoulder, you are deliberately unfriendly and uncooperative towards them.

[Cold sweat](#)

If something brings you out in a cold sweat, it frightens you a lot.

[Come on the heels of](#)

If something comes on the heels of something, it follows very soon after it.

[Come to heel](#)

If someone comes to heel, they stop behaving in a way that is annoying to someone in authority and start being obedient.

[Cool your heels](#)

If you leave someone to cool their heels, you make them wait until they have calmed down.

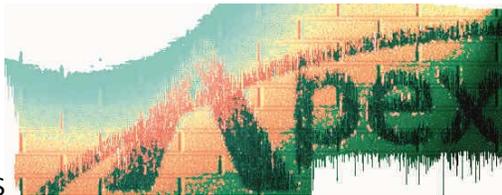
[Cross my heart and hope to die](#)

People say this to show how sincere their promise is.

[Cry your eyes out](#)

If you cry your eyes out, you cry uncontrollably.

[Curdle your blood](#)



If something is very frightening or disturbing, it curdles your blood.

[Cut off your nose to spite your face](#)

If you cut off your nose to spite your face, you do something rash or silly that ends up making things worse for you, often because you are angry or upset.

[Cut your teeth on](#)

The place where you gain your early experience is where you cut your teeth.

[Dead from the neck up](#)

Someone who's dead from the neck up is very stupid indeed.

[Deep pockets but short arms](#)

Someone who has money but never puts his hand in his pocket to pay for anything has deep pockets but short arms.

[Dip your toes in the water](#)

If you dip your toes in the water, you try something tentatively because you are not sure whether it will work or not.

[Discerning eye](#)

If a person has a discerning eye, they are particularly good at judging the quality of something.

[Don't bite the hand that feeds](#)

When someone says this to you, they are trying to tell you not to act against those on whom you depend.

[Don't stand there with curlers in your hair](#)

This means 'don't keep me waiting'. It's said to someone who is taking too long to get moving.

[Don't sweat the small stuff](#)

(USA) This is used to tell people not to worry about trivial or unimportant issues.

[Down in the mouth](#)

If someone is down in the mouth, they look unhappy or depressed.

[Drag your feet](#)

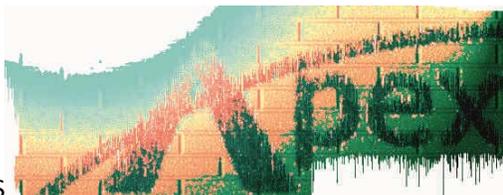
If someone is dragging their feet, they are taking too long to do or finish something, usually because they don't want to do it.

[Drop into your lap](#)

If something drops into your lap, you receive it suddenly, without any warning. ('Fall into your lap' is also used.)

[Dry as a bone](#)

If your lawn is as dry as a bone, the soil is completely dry.



Ears are burning

If your ears are burning, you sense or know that people somewhere else are talking about you in an unpleasant way.

Easy on the eyes

Someone who's easy on the eyes is pleasing to look at, an attractive person.

Eat your heart out

If someone tells you to eat your heart out, they are saying they are better than you at something.

Elbow grease

If something requires elbow grease, it involves a lot of hard physical work.

Elbow room

If you haven't got enough elbow room, you haven't got enough space.

Eye- wash

This expression 'eye-wash' is generally used to cover up the anxiety of a person who is seeking a concrete reply or justification for an act or an event that had affected his personal image or caused him a loss. The affected person usually represents his case to the higher-

ups and puts forth his demands for redressal. But the authority, in order to avoid embarrassment to his organisation or to himself, is not in a position to expose the entire material or evidence which in turn tell upon the credibility of the organisation. In such circumstances, he will usually call for an investigation to satisfy the complainant, but will not be keen in disposing the case. The authority will drag on the issue, (at the same time pretending to be serious) until the seriousness of the issue dies down and no finality is reached. So, ' The investigation on the issue by the authority is an eye-wash'.

Eyeball to eyeball

If you are eyeball to eyeball with an enemy or rival, you confront or face them down them directly.

Eyes are bigger than one's stomach

If someone's eyes are bigger than their stomach, they are greedy and take on more than they can consume or manage.

Face only a mother could love

When someone has a face only a mother could love, they are ugly.

Face value



If you take something at face value, you accept the appearance rather than looking deeper into the matter.

[Faint heart never won fair lady](#)

This means that you will not get the partner of your dreams if you lack the confidence to let them know how you feel.

[Fall on our feet](#)

If you fall on your feet, you succeed in doing something where there was a risk of failure.

[Fat head](#)

A fat head is a dull, stupid person.

[Feather-brained](#)

Someone who's feather-brained is silly, empty-headed and not serious.

[Fed up to the back teeth](#)

When you are extremely irritated and fed up with something or someone, you are fed up to the back teeth.

[Feet of clay](#)

If someone has feet of clay, they have flaws that make them seem more human and like normal people.

[Feet on the ground](#)

A practical and realistic person has their feet on the ground.

[Fight tooth and nail](#)

If someone will fight tooth and nail for something, they will not stop at anything to get what they want. ('Fight tooth and claw' is an alternative.)

[Find your feet](#)

When you are finding your feet, you are in the process of gaining confidence and experience in something.

[Fingers and thumbs](#)

If you are all fingers and thumbs, you are being clumsy and not very skilled with your hands.

[Fleet of foot](#)

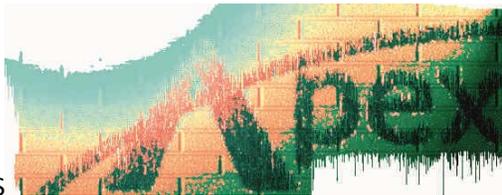
If someone is fleet of foot, they are very quick.

[Flesh and blood](#)

Your flesh and blood are your blood relatives, especially your immediate family.

[Follow your nose](#)

When giving directions, telling someone to follow their nose means that they should go straight ahead.



[Foot in mouth](#)

This is used to describe someone who has just said something embarrassing, inappropriate, wrong or stupid.

[Foot in the door](#)

If you have or get your foot in the door, you start working in a company or organisation at a low level, hoping that you will be able to progress from there.

[Four-eyes](#)

A person who wears glasses

[Friendly footing](#)

When relationships are on a friendly footing, they are going well.

[Frog in my throat](#)

If you have a frog in your throat, you can't speak or you are losing your voice because you have a problem with your throat.

[From the bottom of your heart](#)

If someone does something from the bottom of their heart, then they do it with genuine emotion and feeling.

[Full of piss and vinegar](#)

Someone who's full of piss and vinegar is full of youthful energy.

[Get it in the neck](#)

(UK) If you get it in the neck, you are punished or criticised for something.

[Get it off your chest](#)

If you get something off your chest, you confess to something that has been troubling you.

[Get on my last nerve](#)

(USA) If something is getting on your last nerve, you are completely fed up, ready to lose your temper. (Southern USA)

[Get on your nerves](#)

If something gets on your nerves, it annoys or irritates you.

[Get the nod](#)

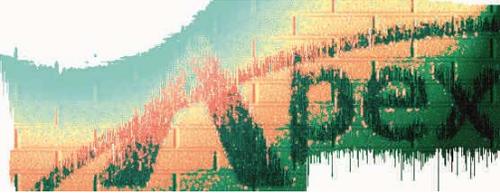
(UK) If you get the nod to something, you get approval or permission to do it.

[Get your feet wet](#)

If you get your feet wet, you gain your first experience of something.

[Get your hands dirty](#)

If you get your hands dirty, you become involved in something where the realities might compromise your principles. It can also mean that a person is



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not just stuck in an ivory tower dictating strategy, but is prepared to put in the effort and hard work to make the details actually happen.

[Get your head around something](#)

If you get your head around something, you come to understand it even though it is difficult to comprehend.

[Get your teeth into](#)

If you get your teeth into something, you become involved in or do something that is intellectually challenging or satisfying. ('Dig your teeth into' and 'sink your teeth into' are also used.)

[Gird one's loins](#)

If you gird your loins, you prepare for conflict or a difficult time.

[Give a big hand](#)

Applaud by clapping hands. 'Let's give all the contestants a big hand.'

[Give me a hand](#)

If someone gives you a hand, they help you.

[Give someone a leg up](#)

If you give someone a leg up, you help them to achieve something that they couldn't have done alone.

[Give the nod](#)

(UK) If you give the nod to something, you approve it or give permission to do it.

[Give your eye teeth](#)

If you really want something and would be prepared to sacrifice a lot to get it, you would give your eye teeth for it.

[Go for the jugular](#)

If you go for the jugular, you attack someone where they are most vulnerable.

[Go hand in hand](#)

If things go hand in hand, they are associated and go together.

[Go to your head](#)

If something goes to your head, it makes you feel vain. If alcohol goes to your head, it makes you feel drunk quickly.

[Good hand](#)

If you are a good hand at something, you do it well.

[Grease someone's palm](#)



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If you grease someone's palm, you bribe them to do something.

Great minds think alike

If two people have the same thought at the same time, one of them might say "Great minds think alike."

Growing pains

If a business is going through some growing pains, it is experiencing the typical problems that arise when a company becomes stronger and bigger.

Hair on fire

If something sets your hair on fire, it excites you or catches your attention urgently.

Hairy at the heel

(UK) Someone who is hairy at the heel is dangerous or untrustworthy.

Hale and hearty

Someone who is hale and hearty is in very good health.

Half a mind

If you have half a mind to do something, you haven't decided to do it, but are thinking seriously about doing it.

Hand in hand

Hand in hand= work together closely When people in a group, say in an office or in a project, work together with mutual understanding to achieve the target, we say they work hand in hand. There is no lack of co-operation and each synchronises the activity with that of the other.

Hand to mouth

Someone who's living from hand to mouth, is very poor and needs the little money they have coming in to cover their expenses.

Hands down

If someone is better hands down than everyone else, they are much better.

Handwriting like chicken scratch

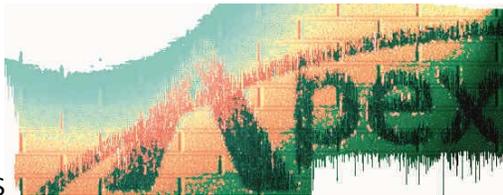
If your handwriting is very hard to read, it is like chicken scratch.

Hate someone's guts

If you hate someone's guts, you really hate them, hate everything about them.

Have a foot in both camps

Someone who plays a part or who is involved in two different groups of people, opinions, ways of thinking or living, etc, has a foot in both camps.



[Have a heart](#)

If someone has a heart, they are kind and sympathetic. If you say, 'Have a heart' to someone, you are asking them to be understanding and sympathetic.

[Have the guts](#)

Someone who has enough courage to do something has the guts to do it.

[Have your tail up](#)

If someone has their tail up, they are optimistic and expect to be successful.

[Head is mince](#)

(Scot) When someone's thoughts are in a state of abject confusion, especially when facing a severe dilemma, their head is mince.

[Head nor tail](#)

If you can't make head nor tail of something, you cannot understand it at all or make any sense of it.

[Head on a spike](#)

If someone wants a head on a spike, they want to be able to destroy or really punish a person.

[Head on the block](#)

If someone's head is on the block, they are going to be held responsible and suffer the consequences for something that has gone wrong.

[Head over heels in love](#)

When someone falls passionately in love and is intoxicated by the feeling has fallen head over heels in love.

[Heads will roll](#)

If heads will roll, people will be punished or sacked for something that has gone wrong.

[Heart in the right place](#)

If someone's heart is in the right place, they are good and kind, though they might not always appear to be so.

[Heart in your boots](#)

If your heart is in your boots, you are very unhappy.

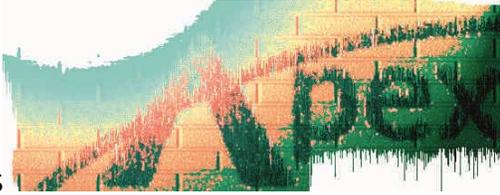
[Heart in your mouth](#)

If your heart is in your mouth, then you feel nervous or scared.

[Heart isn't in it](#)

If your heart is not in something, then you don't really believe in it or support it.

[Heart misses a beat](#)



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If your heart misses a beat, you are suddenly shocked or surprised. ('Heart skips a beat' is an alternative)

[Heart of glass](#)

When someone has a heart of glass, they are easily affected emotionally.

[Heart of steel](#)

When someone has a heart of steel, they do not show emotion or are not affected emotionally.

[Heart-to-heart](#)

A heart-to-heart is a frank and honest conversation with someone, where you talk honestly and plainly about issues, no matter how painful.

[Hide nor hair](#)

When there's no trace of something or a person, you haven't seen hide nor hair of it or them. ('Neither hide nor hair' is also used.)

[Hit a nerve](#)

If something hits a nerve, it upsets someone or causes them pain, often when it is something they are trying to hide.

[Hold your hands up](#)

(UK) If you hold your hands up, you accept responsibility for something you have done wrong.

[Hold your tongue](#)

If you hold your tongue, you keep silent even though you want to speak.

[Hollow leg](#)

Someone who has a hollow leg eats what seems to be more than his stomach can hold.

[Home is where you lay your hat](#)

Wherever you are comfortable and at ease with yourself is your home, regardless where you were born or brought up. ('Home is where you lay your head' and 'Home is where you hang your hat' are also used.)

[Hot foot](#)

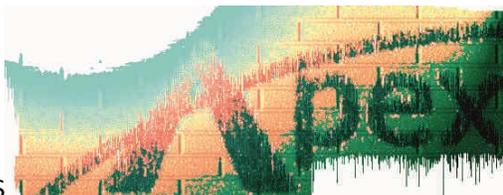
If you hot foot it out of a place, you leave very quickly, often running.

[Hot-blooded](#)

Someone who is hot-blooded is easily excitable or passionate.

[Hot-headed](#)

A hot-headed person gets angry very easily. (The noun 'hothead' can also be used.)



[I've got a bone to pick with you](#)

If somebody says this, they mean that they have some complaint to make against the person they are addressing.

[In a heartbeat](#)

If something happens very quickly or immediately, it happens in a heartbeat.

[In cold blood](#)

If something is done in cold blood, it is done ruthlessly, without any emotion.

[In one ear and out the other](#)

If something goes in one ear and out the other, you forget it as soon as you've heard it because it was too complicated, boring etc.

[In over your head](#)

If someone is in over their head, they are out of the depth in something they are involved in, and may end up in a mess.

[In that vein](#)

If you do something in that (or this) vein, you do it in the same distinctive manner or style.

[In the face of](#)

If people act in the face of something, they do it despite it or when threatened by it.

[In the flesh](#)

If you meet or see someone in the flesh you actually meet or see them, rather than seeing them on TV or in other media.

[In the land of the blind, the one-eyed man is king](#)

If surrounded by people less capable or able, someone who would not normally be considered special can shine.

[In the lap of luxury](#)

People in the lap of luxury are very wealthy and have everything that money can buy.

[In the twinkling of an eye](#)

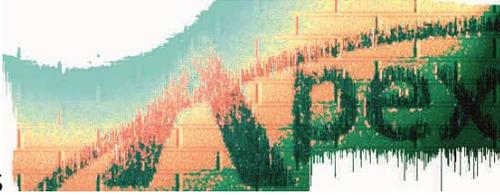
If something happens in the twinkling of an eye, it happens very quickly.

[In your blood](#)

A trait or liking that is deeply ingrained in someone's personality and unlikely to change is in their blood. A similar idiom is 'in his DNA.'

[In your face](#)

If someone is in your face, they are direct and confrontational. (It



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is sometime written 'in yer face' colloquially)

[Iron fist](#)

Someone who rules or controls something with an iron fist is in absolute control and tolerates no dissent. An iron fist in a velvet glove is used to describe someone who appears soft on the outside, but underneath is very hard. 'Mailed fist' is an alternative form.

[It cost an arm and a leg](#)

If something costs an arm and a leg, it is very expensive indeed.

[Itchy feet](#)

One gets itchy feet when one has been in one place for a time and wants to travel.

[Joined at the hip](#)

If people are joined at the hip, they are very closely connected and think the same way.

[Jump down someone's throat](#)

If you jump down someone's throat, you criticise or chastise them severely.

[Keep a straight face](#)

If you keep a straight face, look serious and do not laugh even though you want to.

[Keep an eye out](#)

If you keep an eye out for something, you are watching carefully to see if it happens.

[Keep body and soul together](#)

If you earn enough to cover your basic expenses, but nothing more than that, you earn enough to keep body and soul together.

[Keep someone at arm's length](#)

If you keep someone or something at arm's length, you keep a safe distance away from them.

[Keep someone on their toes](#)

If you keep someone on their toes, you make sure that they concentrate on what they are supposed to do.

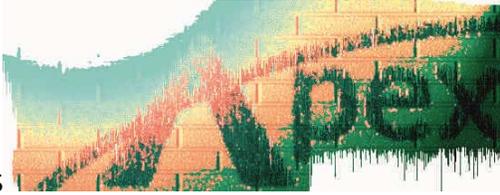
[Keep your chin up](#)

(UK) This expression is used to tell someone to have confidence.

[Keep your ear to the ground](#)

If you keep your ear to the ground, you try to keep informed about something, especially if there are rumours or uncertainties.

[Keep your eye on the prize](#)



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This means that you should keep your focus on achieving a positive end result.

[Keep your eyes peeled](#)

If you keep your eyes peeled, you stay alert or watchful.

[Keep your fingers crossed](#)

If you are keeping your fingers crossed, you are hoping for a positive outcome.

[Keep your hair on](#)

Keep your hair on is advice telling someone to keep calm and not to over-react or get angry.

[Keep your head](#)

If you keep your head, you stay calm in times of difficulty.

[Keep your head above water](#)

If you are just managing to survive financially, you are keeping your head above water.

[Keep your nose clean](#)

If someone is trying to keep their Nose Clean, they are trying to stay out of trouble by not getting involved in any sort of wrongdoing.

[Keep your nose to the grindstone](#)

If you keep your nose to the grindstone, you work hard and seriously.

[Kick in the teeth](#)

Bad news or a sudden disappointment are a kick in the teeth.

[Knee-jerk reaction](#)

A knee-jerk reaction is an instant, instinctive response to a situation.

[Knit your brows](#)

If you knit your brows, you frown or look worried.

[Knock something on the head](#)

If you knock something on the head, you stop it or stop doing it.

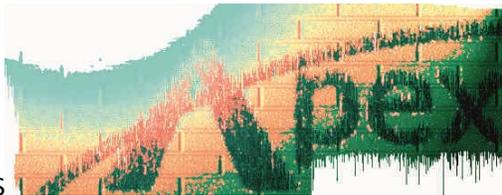
[Lead with the chin](#)

If someone leads with their chin, they speak or behave without fear of the consequences.

[Left hand doesn't know what the right hand is doing](#)

If the left hand doesn't know what the right hand is doing, then communication within a company, organisation, group, etc, is so bad that people don't know what the others are doing.

[Left-handed compliment](#)



A left-handed compliment is one that sounds like praise but has an insulting meaning. ('Backhanded compliment' is an alternative form.)

Lend an ear

If you lend an ear, you listen to what someone has to say. ('Lend your ear' is an alternative form.)

Let your hair down

If someone lets their hair down, they relax and stop feeling inhibited or shy.

Not have the heart

If you don't have the heart to do something, you don't have the strength or courage to do something. (Usually used in the negative)

Not to be sneezed at

If something is not to be sneezed at, it should be taken seriously.

Off the top of your head

If you say something off the top of your head, you don't think about it beforehand.

Off-hand

Off-hand means without preparation. People say that they don't know the answer off-hand,

meaning that they don't know it at that time.

On my back

If people are on your back, they are bothering or nagging you.

On the face of it

This idiom is used when describing the way a situation appears, while allowing for the possibility that things may be different: On the face of it, the company looks very profitable. (The company appears to be very profitable, but this may not be the case.)

On the nod

(UK) If something is accepted by parliament or a committee majority, it is on the nod.

On the nod

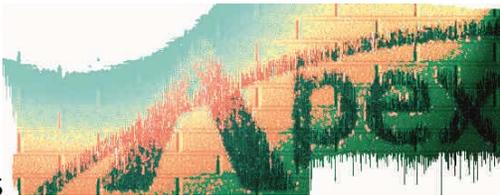
(UK) Someone who's on the nod is either asleep or falling asleep, especially when they shouldn't or are in a position unusual for sleep, like sitting or standing.

On the nose

This means right on time.

On the right foot

If you start something or set off on the right foot, you get off to a good start.



[On the tip of your tongue](#)

If a word is on the tip of your tongue, you know you know the word, but you just can't quite remember it at the moment.

[On your last legs](#)

If someone's on their last legs, they're close to dying.

[On your toes](#)

Someone on his or her toes is alert and ready to go.

[One hand washes the other](#)

This idiom means that we need other people to get on as cooperation benefits us all.

[One in the eye](#)

If you achieve something that will irritate someone because they did not think that you were capable it is one in the eye for them.

[Out of hand](#)

If something gets out of hand, it gets out of control.

[Out of your hair](#)

If you get someone out of your hair, you get them to stop bothering or annoying you. ('Stay/keep/get out of my hair!' can be used as imperatives)

[Out on a limb](#)

If somebody's out on a limb, they are in a very exposed position and could get into difficulties.

[Over your head](#)

If something is over your head, or goes over your head, it is too complex or difficult for you to understand.

[Pain in the neck](#)

If someone is very annoying and always disturbing you, they are a pain in the neck. Pain in the butt, or pain in the ass (USA), and Pain in the arse (UK) are less polite alternative forms.

[Pay through the nose](#)

If you pay through the nose for something, you pay a very high price for it.

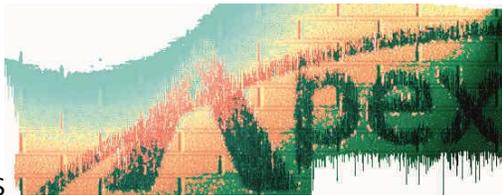
[Pick someone's brains](#)

If you pick someone's brains, you ask them for advice, suggestions and information about something they know about.

[Plain as the nose on your face](#)

If something is as plain as the nose on your face, it is very clear and obvious.

[Plastic smile](#)



When someone is wearing a plastic smile, they appear to be happier with a situation or events than they actually are. This is actually a description of the forced smile you might see in many photographs.

[Play into someone's hands](#)

If you play into someone's hands, you do what they were expecting you to do and take advantage of this.

[Play it by ear](#)

If you play it by ear, you don't have a plan of action, but decide what to do as events take shape.

[Play out of your skin](#)

If someone plays out of their skin, they give an outstanding performance.

[Point the finger](#)

When you point the finger at someone, you are accusing and blaming them for something.

[Pound of flesh](#)

If someone wants their pound of flesh, the force someone to pay or give back something owed, even though they don't need it and it will cause the other person a lot of difficulty.

[Powder your nose](#)

If somebody goes to powder your nose, it is a euphemism for going to the lavatory (toilet).

[Press the flesh](#)

When people, especially politicians, press the flesh, they meet members of the public and shake their hands, usually when trying to get support.

[Prick up your ears](#)

If you prick up your ears, you listen very carefully. ('Pick up your ears' is also used.)

[Pull someone's leg](#)

If you pull someone's leg, you tease them, but not maliciously.

[Pull the wool over someone's eyes](#)

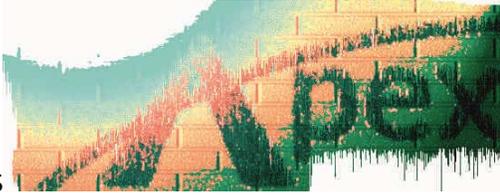
If you pull the wool over someone's eyes, you deceive or cheat them.

[Pull your finger out!](#)

(UK) If someone tells you to do this, they want you to hurry up. ('Get your finger out' is also used.)

[Put a bug in your ear](#)

If you put a bug in someone's ear, you give him or her a



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reminder or suggestion relating to a future event.

Put on a brave face

If you put on a brave face, or put a brave face on something, you behave confidently or cheerfully even though things are difficult. ('Brave front' is also used.)

Put or get someone's back up

If you put or get someone's back up, you annoy them.

Put somebody's nose out of joint

If you put someone's nose out of joint, you irritate them or make them angry with you.

Put your best foot forward

If you put your best foot forward, you try your best to do something.

Put your foot down

When someone puts their foot down, they make a firm stand and establish their authority on an issue.

Put your foot in it

If you put your foot in it, you do or say something embarrassing and tactless or get yourself into trouble.

Put your foot in your mouth

If you put your foot in your mouth, you say something stupid or embarrassing.

Put your hand on your heart

If you can put your hand on your heart, then you can say something knowing it to be true.

Put your heads together

If people put their heads together, they exchange ideas about something.

Put your money where your mouth is

If someone puts their money where their mouth is, they back up their words with action.

Put your shoulder to the wheel

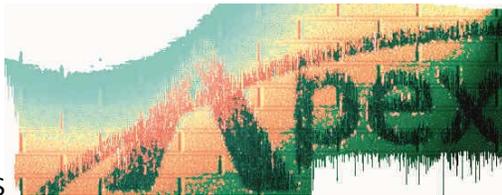
When you put your shoulder to the wheel, you contribute to an effort.

Put your thumb on the scales

If you put your thumb on the scales, you try to influence the result of something in your favour.

Rack your brain

If you rack your brain, you think very hard when trying to



remember something or think hard to solve a problem, find an answer, etc. ('Rack your brains' is an alternative.)

Raise eyebrows

If something raises eyebrows, it shocks or surprises people.

Rib tickler

A rib tickler is a story or joke that will make you laugh a lot. Alternately, a joke might "tickle your ribs".

Roll your eyes

If you roll your eyes, you show with your eyes that you don't believe someone or aren't interested in what they're saying.

Rub shoulders

If you rub shoulders with people, you meet and spend time with them, especially when they are powerful or famous.

Rule of thumb

Rule of thumb means approximately.

Run off your feet

If you are run off your feet, you are extremely busy and don't have enough time to do everything.

Run your mouth off

If someone runs their mouth off, they talk too much.

Safe pair of hands

A person who can be trusted to do something without causing any trouble is a safe pair of hands.

Save face

If someone saves face, they manage to protect their reputation.

Save your skin

If someone saves their skin, they manage to avoid getting into serious trouble.

Scales fall from your eyes

When the scales fall from your eyes, you suddenly realise the truth about something.

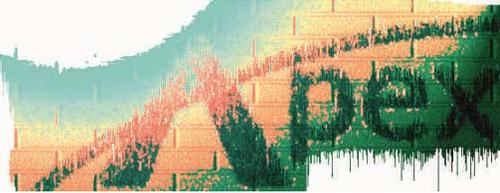
Scent blood

If you can scent blood, you feel that a rival is having difficulties and you are going to beat them.

Sea legs

If you are getting your sea legs, it takes you a while to get used to something new.

See eye to eye



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If people see eye to eye, they agree about everything.

Set your teeth on edge

If something, especially sounds, sets your teeth on edge, you react very negatively to it.

Shake a leg

If you shake a leg, you are out of bed and active. It can be used to tell someone to hurry up.

Shoot yourself in the foot

If you shoot yourself in the foot, you do something that damages your ambition, career, etc.

Shot in the arm

If something gives you a shot in the arm, it encourages you, gives you energy or improves morale.

Sight for sore eyes

Someone or something that is a sight for sore eyes is a pleasure to see.

Skin and bones

If someone is skin and bones, they are very underweight and look bad.

Skin in the game

A person who has skin in the game has invested in the company they are running.

Skin someone alive

If someone skins you alive, they admonish and punish you hard.

Slap on the wrist

If someone gets a slap on the wrist, they get a very minor punishment when they could have been punished more severely.

Sleight of hand

Sleight of hand is the ability to use your hands in a clever way, like a magician performing tricks you can't see.

Slip of the tongue

If you say something accidentally, it is a slip of the tongue.

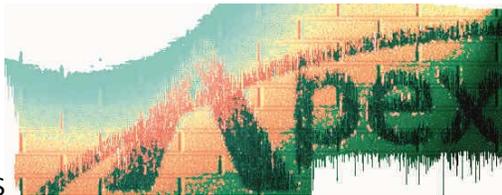
Slip through one's fingers

If something slips through one's fingers it escapes or is lost through carelessness.

Smack in the face

If something is a smack in the face, it is a shock, usually one that impedes progress.

Smooth as a baby's bottom



If something is smooth as a baby's bottom, it has a regular, flat surface.

[Speak with a forked tongue](#)

To say one thing and mean another, to lie, to be two-faced

[Spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak](#)

If the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak, someone lacks the willpower to change things they do because they derive too much pleasure from them.

[Spit blood](#)

If someone is spitting blood, they are absolutely furious.

[Spit it out](#)

People say this when someone has something to say but is too embarrassed, shy, etc, to say it.

[Split hairs](#)

If people split hairs, they concentrate on tiny and unimportant details to find fault with something.

[Stand head and shoulders above](#)

It means to stand apart from the rest (in a good way), or to be the best. For example, "With his amazing grasp on the subject,

John stood head and shoulders above the rest".

[Stars in your eyes](#)

Someone who dreams of being famous has stars in their eyes.

[Step on someone's toes](#)

If you step on someone's toes, you upset them, especially if you do something that they should be in charge of.

[Stick in your craw](#)

If someone or something really annoys you, it is said to stick in your craw.

[Stick out like a sore thumb](#)

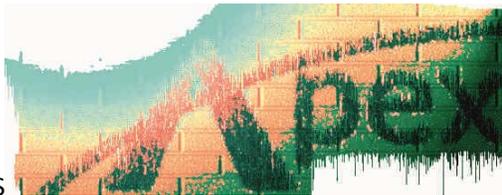
If something sticks or stands out like a sore thumb, it is clearly and obviously different from the things that are around it.

[Stick your neck out](#)

If you stick your neck out, you take a risk because you believe in something.

[Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me](#)

To be resistant to criticism. This is often said to young children upset over the fact that another child called them something that they did not like.



[Sticky fingers](#)

The tendency to keep (or steal) an object you touch. Also, to steal something quickly without anyone noticing. (ex: 'You stole that guy's wallet? You have some sticky fingers, my friend.')

[Stiff upper lip](#)

(UK) If you keep your emotions to yourself and don't let others know how you feel when something bad happens, you keep a stiff upper lip.

[Stiff-necked](#)

A stiff-necked person is rather formal and finds it hard to relax in company.

[Stir the blood](#)

If something stirs your blood, it arouses feelings or passions,.

[Stone deaf](#)

Someone who is stone deaf is completely deaf.

[Straight face](#)

If someone keeps a straight face, they remain serious and do not show emotion or amusement.

[Straight from the shoulder](#)

If someone talks straight from the shoulder, they talk honestly and plainly.

[Strain every nerve](#)

If you strain every nerve, you make a great effort to achieve something.

[Stuffed to the gills](#)

If someone is stuffed to the gills, they have eaten a lot and are very full.

[Suck hind teat](#)

A person who sucks hind teat is at a disadvantage or considered worse or less important than others.

[Sweat blood](#)

If you sweat blood, you make an extraordinary effort to achieve something.

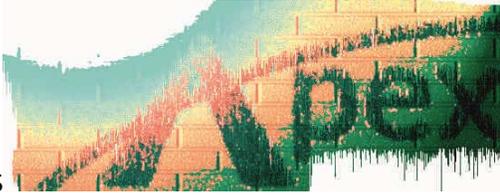
[Sweep off your feet](#)

If you are swept off your feet, you lose control emotionally when you fall in love or are really impressed.

[Sweet tooth](#)

If you have a sweet tooth, you like eating food with sugar in it.

[Take a nosedive](#)



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When things take a nosedive, they decline very quickly and head towards disaster.

[Take by the scruff of the neck](#)

If you take something by the scruff on the neck, you take complete control of it.

[Take guts](#)

If something takes guts, it requires courage in the face of danger or great risk. It takes guts for firemen to enter a burning building to save someone.

[Take it on the chin](#)

If you take something on the chin, something bad happens to you and you take it directly without fuss.

[Take someone under your wing](#)

If you take someone under your wing, you look after them while they are learning something.

[Talk a glass eye to sleep](#)

Someone who could talk a glass eye to sleep is very boring and repetitive.

[Talk out of the back of your head](#)

If someone is talking out of the back of their head, they are talking rubbish.

[Taste blood](#)

If someone has tasted blood, they have achieved something and are encouraged to think that victory is within their grasp.

[Tear your hair out](#)

If someone is tearing their hair out, they are extremely worried or agitated about something.

[Tears before bedtime](#)

(UK) This idiom is used when something seems certain to go wrong or cause trouble.

[Teething problems](#)

(UK) The problems that a project has when it is starting are the teething problems.

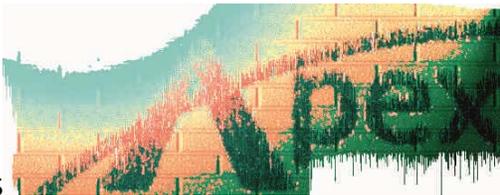
[Thick-skinned](#)

If a person is thick-skinned, they are not affected by criticism.

[Thin-skinned](#)

If somebody is thin-skinned, they are very sensitive to any sort of criticism.

[Through gritted teeth](#)



If you do something through gritted teeth, you accept or agree with it against your will and it is obvious to others how you really feel.

[Throw someone a bone](#)

If you throw someone a bone, you give them a small reward or some kind words to make them feel good even if they've not really contributed much.

[Thumb your nose at](#)

If you thumb your nose at something, you reject it or scorn it.

[Thumbs down & thumbs up](#)

If something gets the thumbs up, it gets approval, while the thumbs down means disapproval.

[Tongue in cheek](#)

If something is tongue in cheek, it isn't serious or meant to be taken seriously.

[Tongue-lashing](#)

If you give someone a tongue-lashing, you scold them.

[Tongue-tied](#)

If someone is tongue-tied, they are speechless or cannot say what they want, often through shyness or embarrassment.

[Tread on someone's toes](#)

If you tread on someone's toes, you upset them, especially if you do something that they should be in charge of.

[Tug at the heartstrings](#)

If something tugs at the heartstrings, it makes you feel sad or sympathetic towards it.

[Turn a blind eye](#)

When people turn a blind eye, they deliberately ignore something, especially if people are doing something wrong.

[Turn a deaf ear](#)

If someone turns a deaf ear to you, they don't listen to you.

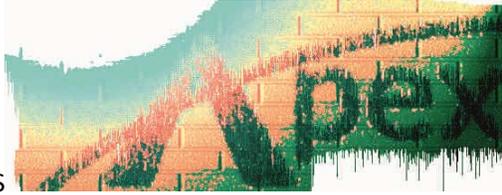
[Turn something on its head](#)

If you turn something on its head, you turn it upside down or reverse it.

[Turn the other cheek](#)

If you turn the other cheek, you are humble and do not retaliate or get outwardly angry when someone offends or hurts you, in fact, you give them the opportunity to re-offend instead and compound their unpleasantness.

[Turn your nose up](#)



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If someone turns their nose up at something, they reject it or look odwn on it because they don't think it is good enough for them.

Twinkling of an eye

If something happens in the twinkling of an eye, it happens very quickly.

Twist someone's arm

If you twist someone's arm, you put pressure on them to try to make them do what you want them to do.

Two left feet

A person with two left feet can't dance.

Under your nose

If something happens right in front of you, especially if it is surprising or audacious, it happens under your nose.

Under your skin

If someone gets under your skin, they really annoy you.

Under your thumb

Someone who is manipulated or controlled by another person is under his or her thumb.

Uneasy lies the head that wears the crown

This means that people with serious responsibilities have a heavy burden.

Up to the eyes

You you are up to your eyes in something, you are deeply involved or to have too much of something like work. ('Up the neck', 'up to the eyeballs' and 'up to the ears' are also used.)

Up to the neck

If someone's in something up to the neck, they are very involved in it, especially when it's something wrong.

Up to your eyes

When you've got too much work to do, you're up to your eyes in it.

Up to your neck

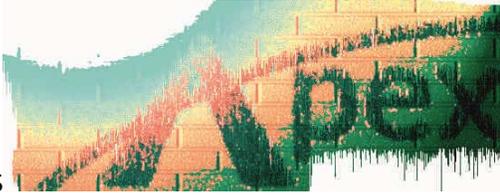
If someone is very involved in something, they are up to their neck in it, especially if it is something bad or immoral.

Upper hand

If you have the upper hand, you have the advantage.

Vent your spleen

If someone vents their spleen, they release all their anger about something.



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Vinegar tits

A mean spirited women lacking in love or compassion.

Voice in the wilderness

Someone who expresses an opinion that no one believes or listens to is a voice in the wilderness, especially if proved right later.

Volte-face

If you do a volte-face on something, you make a sudden and complete change in your stance or position over an issue.

Warm the cockles of your heart

If something warms the cockles of your heart, it makes you feel happy.

Warts and all

If you like someone warts and all, you like them with all their faults.

Wash your hands of something

If you wash your hands of something, you disassociate yourself and accept no responsibility for what will happen.

Waste of skin

If a person is referred to as a 'waste of skin', it means he is not worth very much.

Watch your back

If someone is after your job, or wants to harm you in any way, you need to "watch your back" to metaphorically see what is going on behind you

Water, water everywhere, nor any drop to drink

This is from The Rime of the Ancient Mariner, a poem by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and is used to suggest that despite being surrounded by something, you cannot benefit from it.

Weak at the knees

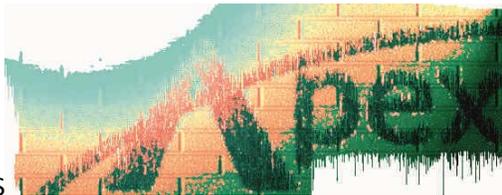
If people go weak at the knees, they have a powerful emotional reaction to something and feel that they might fall over.

Wear your heart on your sleeve

Someone who wears their heart on their sleeve shows their emotions and feelings publicly.

Weight off your shoulders

If something is a weight off your shoulders, you have relieved yourself of a burden, normally a



something that has been troubling you or worrying you.

Wet behind the ears

Someone who is wet behind the ears is either very young or inexperienced.

Win by a nose

If somebody wins by a nose, they only just beat the others.

Wipe the smile of someone's face

If you wipe the smile of someone's face, you do something to make someone feel less pleased with themselves.

Word of mouth

If something becomes known by word of mouth, it is because people are talking about it, not through publicity, etc.

Work your fingers to the bone

If you work your fingers to the bone, you work extremely hard on something.

Work your tail off

If you work your tail off, you work extremely hard.

World at your feet

If everything is going well and the future looks full of opportunity, you have the world at your feet.

Written all over your face

If someone has done something wrong or secret, but cannot hide it in their expression, it is written all over their face.

Wrong foot

If you start something on the wrong foot, you start badly.

You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours

This idiom means that if you do something for me, I'll return the favour.

You've got rocks in your head

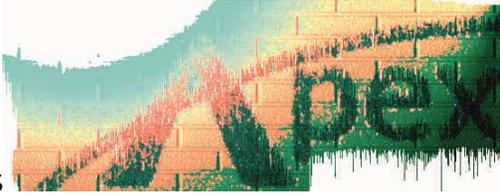
(USA) Someone who has acted with a lack of intelligence has rocks in their head.

Young blood

Young people with new ideas and fresh approaches are young blood.

Your belly button is bigger than your stomach

If your belly button is bigger than your stomach, you take on more responsibilities than you can handle.



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[Zip your lip](#)

If someone tells you to zip your lip, they want to shut up or keep quiet about something. ('Zip it' is also used.)

